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**"Think Tanks" and the National Security Strategy
formulation process:
a comparison of current American and French patterns.**

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ICAF Class of 1995

The research organizations known as "Think Tanks" are considered as specific of the American policy-making process, even if somehow equivalent institutions can be found in France. The policy-making processes are different in these two countries. The essay analyses first how these processes produce national security strategy formulations, in the case of the 1994 Presidential report to the Congress on one hand, and the "Livre Blanc" on Defense on the other hand, issued by the U.S. and French executives respectively in July and March 1994. Then, the specific input of Think Tanks in these processes is assessed, and analyzed according to the main characteristics of these organizations, in the U.S. and in France. Finally, the comparison of the two nations patterns shows that the interaction of Think Tanks in the policy-making process is essentially dependent on the specific ways of making policy, reflecting different systems of government, on both sides of the ocean.

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**"Think Tanks" and the National Security Strategy
formulation process:
a comparison of current American and French patterns.**

1 - INTRODUCTION.

We did not have to wait for a long time after the collapse of the Soviet Union to see the so-called New World Order both illustrated and challenged by very different experiences: the overwhelming coalition military victory in the Persian Gulf on one hand, and the pitiable failure of Western countries to cope with the Yugoslavian crisis on the other send us contradictory messages that we must carefully decipher. The euphoria resulting from the former may well be as misleading as the acrimony we see arising from the latter.

As a result of this turmoil, formulating the national security strategy has become a much more difficult and subtle exercise than it used to be with the traditional "strategy of containment." The policy-maker has now to integrate many different perspectives to get a better grasp of this increasingly complex art. This short essay aims to investigate the process by which the national security strategy is formulated; more precisely, it will look at the specific input to this process from the organizations known as "Think Tanks". It will also attempt to compare the ways Think Tanks influence the national security strategy formulation process in the

U.S. and in France. This investigation will focus, as examples, on two documents that were issued within a few months interval. The first one is the White House report to the Congress entitled: "A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement," issued in July 1994. As a coincidence, the French government issued in March 1994 its "Livre Blanc sur la Défense," that, despite some meaningful differences from the White House report, shows no less significant similarities to it. This White Paper will therefore be used as an example of the practice on the French side.

The methodology for this research has included contacts with numerous and various Think Tanks both in Washington D.C. and in Paris, interviews with senior political science and foreign policy analysts in some of these organizations, and a general survey of the national security strategy inputs from Think Tanks during the 1992 - mid 1994 period.

2 - THE FORMULATION PRODUCT.

As products of national security strategy formulation processes, the White House report will be referred to as "NSS 94", and the "Livre Blanc sur la Défense" as the White Paper.

NSS 94 is required by law: the demand for this document originates in the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. Its objective and content are codified in 50 USC 404a¹. This report is required to assess, on an annual basis, the general frame for the national security strategy. Presumably, it may also be useful in the purpose

of sustaining the annual presidential budget request to the Congress. Actually, the last issues of the report have been affected by several changes in the administration, and have not met the requirement for an annual issue. As high level political documents, such reports are not intended to assess precisely the detailed goals and means of the U.S. policy, but are limited to a broader view of the global national security strategy. It is up to more focused processes, as the Bottom-Up-Review in the military field, to enter into this level of detailed information.

The French White Paper has the same broad objective of assessing the national security strategy. Because of the different balance of power between the executive and legislative branches of government in France, this White Paper was written as an initiative of the Prime Minister, without any formal preset frame. Its official purpose is, as stated in its introduction: "To acquire a better understanding of our time and of the part played in it by the defence of our country. To place defence policy in the long-term perspective that is indispensable to it. To explain defence to the French people and rally their support."² It is interesting to note that the previous White Paper on defense had been issued 22 years previously. This long interval between the two may be explained by the relative stability of the global vision of the world during the Cold War period. It also probably reflect a traditional French consensus on the national strategic posture throughout the internal political changes of the period: the eventual adjustments to the strategy were worked out at the

occasions of the periodic up-dates of the successive Military Mid-term Planning Acts. However, the dramatic changes that occurred after the collapse of the Soviet Union obviously required an in-depth re-examination of the national security strategy.

The White Paper is not primarily aimed at informing the Parliament, but more toward a broader education of public opinion. Like NSS 94, it has embedded a much larger concept of national security, departing from the merely military approach that prevailed a few years ago. Unlike NSS 94 and more like the Bottom-Up-Review, it takes in fairly detailed consideration the military forces format. Beyond these "technical" distinctions, we can also note differences that deal more with differences in the approach of the security concept itself. For instance, NSS 94 pays special attention to the doctrine for the engagement of U.S. forces abroad, reflecting a major enduring concern among the American people. It is also significant to note that NSS 94 involves a discussion of environmental issues, that cannot be found in the French White Paper. At the same time, however, the White Paper discusses thoroughly socio-cultural issues, such as the relationship between the nation and its military institution, that are absent from NSS 94. It would be interesting, but also beyond the purpose of this essay, to investigate further the differences in the content of the two documents³: Let us simply suggest here that these differences are at more dependent on contingent domestic political considerations at the time of their writing, than on more fundamental features of the so-called national characters.

3 - THE FORMULATION PROCESSES.

3.1 - The U.S. process.

NSS 94, like its predecessors, was issued as the product of an inter-agency process, in which the National Security Council (NSC) plays the central role. A few senior officers in this organization were in charge of producing the drafts, and of acting as the linchpin of the process. The drafting began in July 1993, based on the strategic framework that was used in parallel for the DoD's Bottom-Up-Review. President Clinton, who had been in office for six months, made it clear that the document should also integrate some aspects from his own campaign platform. The first draft, ready by August 1993, was not circulated at once among the different agencies, but was used as a base for six major speeches on foreign policy that were delivered by the President and his cabinet members in September. From the comment they received from these speeches, the NSC team was then able to derive a second draft, that was submitted to the other agencies by the end of October. Then it happened that, by the end of the year, the DoD was to submit its budget request to the White House. It appeared quickly that the two processes, the one of budgeting and the one of national security strategy formulation, that had till then operated separately, had to be joined. So, a third draft was prepared, that reflected the changes that were affecting at that time the strategic thinking of some decision making layers at the White House and at the Pentagon.

Since it appeared at first difficult to get a unanimous agreement on this third version, a reduced team redrafted a fourth version in March 94, that was eventually approved and issued in July 94. Its publication, according to its writers themselves, seems to have passed largely unnoticed, except perhaps by a very specialized public.

The overall length of the process had been of one full year, during which numerous interactions with other governmental processes had introduced painful iterations. This was probably not the optimum for a process that is presumed to be repeated every year. Nevertheless, we must recognize that NSS 94 was the first formulation by a Democrat administration of its national security strategy after the collapse of the Soviet union, in a context of already declining military budget at home, and several embarrassing situations (Somalia, Bosnia, etc.) developing abroad. Such may explain the difficulty encountered.

3.2 - The French process.

Unlike the -at least theoretically- annual U.S. President report, the French White Paper was a rather exceptional event. Therefore, its elaboration followed a special ad hoc process. In this case, the Prime Minister assigned the task on 26 May 1993 to a special inter-agency commission chaired by the vice-chairman of the "Conseil d'Etat"⁴, that gathered twenty high-ranking officials from the different concerned Ministries, and four independent

experts, among whom were the chairman of the French Institute for International Relations (IFRI) and the Honour Chairman of the Renault automobile firm⁵. This commission worked out its final document through the usual process of breaking down in several sub-commissions, addressing issues such as:

- the global outlook and the strategic trends,
- Europe and Defense,
- the financial resources,
- the industrial base,
- the human resource.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) itself organized its contribution through diverse working groups that had to feed the sub-commissions with information and propositions that reflected the MoD's prospective.

These groups were able to incorporate numerous inputs from non-governmental sources, such as the major actors of the Defense industries. All this work eventually went to a conclusion within a nine months period, with a hundred and thirty pages document that received a double preface from both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense. The document was approved on 16 February by President Francois Mitterand after a discussion within the "Conseil de Défense⁶," and was presented to the Defense committees of the two Parliament chambers on 23 February. On the same day, the document was publicized through the national press and the medias. As a "White Paper," this document did not have to be submitted for the Parliament's approval. Moreover, it was intended to provide a

broad strategic framework for the future governmental work, and more specifically for the examination and enactment by the Parliament of the Military Mid-term Planning Act (1995-2000 period) that was to be submitted at the 1994 fall session of the Parliament.

4 - THINK TANKS IN AMERICAN PROCESS.

4.1 - The American Think Tanks.

It is not the purpose of this work to investigate in depth the nature of the American Think Tanks. Nevertheless, it is striking to recognize that any definition has difficulties embracing the variety of groups, companies, organizations, etc., that are usually considered as "Think Tanks." James A. Smith has defined them as: "...[the] planning and advisory institutions..., the private, nonprofit research groups that operate on the margins of this nation's formal political processes."⁷ Although this definition captures the essential features of a most Think Tanks, we may yet find some significant organizations that do not fit it, but are nevertheless, without any doubt, real Think Tanks. For example, the Institute for National Security Studies, which is actually part of DoD, the Armed Force Journal International, which belongs more to the media world, or Rand corporation, which has many features of a "normal" advising and servicing company.

I would suggest here that, more than by their actual legal

form, fiscal status, private or public ownership, or origin of funding, Think Tanks are characterized by their common purpose to influence political processes from its margins. The time horizon of their influence and their individual strategy to achieve this influence may vary from one to another, but all Think Tanks pursue that kind of purpose, and operate on the margin of the formal process, or, more precisely, at the junction of this process with some specific "out side" world. They play an indispensable role in formulating both the questions and the answers in the dialogue between two worlds: the world of the informed public opinion and its experts, and the world of the governmental bureaucracies. In this dialogue, where, more and more "... the most serious questions cannot even be posed, let alone answered, in the language of common sense,"⁸ they act as intermediaries and interpreters. They both contribute to feed the bureaucracy with the ideas that bureaucrats have no time to dig out by themselves - "Ideas Brokers"⁹-; and to largely circulate these ideas to build a public consensus on them. As well pictured by James A. Smith, they "... are the principal arteries through which knowledge flows and is absorbed, like oxygen, into the bloodstream of political life."¹⁰

4.3 - What were the issues raised? and how?

4.3.1 - The role of the U.S. in the world.

The more fundamental issue that has to be addressed in the

formulation of a national security strategy is the vision that this country has for its future role in the world. This has been, and still is, a very controversial issue in the U.S. The classical opposition in what may be schematically described in terms of the isolationist view versus the globalist view of this role has been raised again in the aftermath of the Cold War, with new prospects on the economic, social or cultural aspects of the debate. More precisely, the debate has shifted from whether or not the U.S. should withdraw to its continent and concentrate on domestic problems, but to what precise "national interests" are at stake abroad and to how much this nation is willing to pay for the preservation of these interests. Think Tanks have widely discussed this issue. The conservative Heritage Foundation has traditionally advocated less exclusive American engagement, as assessed for example by Doug Seay: "America need not, and will not long wish to, continue to assume the principal burden for keeping order around the world. But it does have an interest in the maintenance of that order. Only by encouraging its allies, past and future, to assume their proper share of the burden can it safely relinquish the lion's share of the burden."¹¹

At the same time, the Democrat oriented Brookings Institute proposed a more assertive stance toward global engagement, for example by promoting William Perry's concept for a cooperative security: "A cooperative security regime is designed to minimize any underlying military causes for such conflicts, to deter rogue nations from initiating such conflicts, and if deterrence fails, to

provide a multinational military force to defeat any aggressor nation."¹² From the libertarian side of the political continuum, the CATO Institution warns against any American involvement in what is seen as outside problems, thus bringing to the U.S. undue risks and excessive governmental burden: "In the emerging era of international relations, even great nations -even the 'sole surviving superpower,' if one insist on that- will do better to adjust to the conditions of the international system than to perpetuate attempts, however attractive and apparently constructive, to control the course of events in the world."¹³

By and large, a significant majority agrees on the necessity of promoting "regional solutions as an alternative to U.S. intervention"¹⁴, by transferring more responsibilities to regional powers and relying more on regional security structures. Institute for National Security Studies senior fellow Patrick M. Cronin argues that "the best course is to pursue U.S. interests internationally through a concert of power with our key allies [...],"¹⁵ in a Wilsonian reminiscence.

All these ideas, the contradiction of which is at the core of the most existential problem questioning the United States, are echoed in NSS 94 when the document acknowledges that "(...) it is clear that we cannot police the world; but it is equally clear that we must exercise global leadership."¹⁶

4.3.2 - The national interests.

Even if "global leadership" is a generally well accepted -at least appealing although quite vague- ideal for the American people, it is less clear to deduce from NSS 94 what are precisely the national interests that should be considered worth exercising this "global leadership," especially at the eventual cost of American lives. Think Tanks have brought some tentative answers to that question.

It may have been in the negative form: "Instead of assuming grave risks when vital American interests are not at stake, the United States should distance itself from regional disputes that could go nuclear"¹⁷ the CATO Institute warns policy-makers. Some Wilsonian interests, that had become favourites of American foreign policy in the last administrations, do not appeal to the Heritage Foundation: "America does not have endless resources to squander on some open-ended crusade for democracy and human rights."¹⁸

It may also have been in a more assertive formulation: to classify the national interests in thinkable categories, such as vital, important, and marginal, as proposed by Heritage¹⁹. This kind of approach, that is also stressed by military academic institutions such as the National Defense University, may be too rational for accommodating political flexibility. This may be why NSS 94 prefers to focus on broader objectives, such as "Enhancing Our Security", "Promoting Prosperity at Home", and "Promoting Democracy", without paying too much attention to the real nature of the objective links between these generic goals and the actual

"National Security" concerns. One could argue that these broad objectives may capture, according the necessity, any sort of foreign or domestic, economic or military issue that would appear important for the government to be raised as a "national security" issue. As a matter of fact, NSS 94 embraces a very wide range of preoccupations in the generic category of national interest: for example, a strong emphasis in the document is put on environmental issues, echoing M. Renner of the WorldWatch Institute: "Environmental threats with the potential to erode the habitability of the planet are forcing humanity to consider national security in far broader terms than that guaranteed solely by force of arms."²⁰

4.3.3 - The resources.

At the same time, this broad picture allows NSS 94 to remain very elusive on what should be the appropriate answer to a threat directed against these interests. This may be after all an element of good strategy -according to Sun Tsu's aphorism: "All warfare is based on deception."²¹ And it also preserves the possibility for any necessary adjustment of the policy in the difficult art of resources allocation. However, if the document prudently avoids any precise assessment of the effective forces format that would meet the requirements of the strategy, it wisely points at the generic source of any national power: the economy. Answering the claim by Norman D. Levin of RAND for "(a) greater link between U.S. foreign policy goals and domestic, especially economic, objectives,"²² NSS 94 stresses such economic objectives as enhancing American

competitiveness, promoting the partnership with business and labor, and enhancing access to foreign markets, in a way that leaves little doubt about the will of the government to actively invest itself in the promotion of the American Defense industry.

4.4 - How do American Think Tanks work?

One could deduce from this general survey of the correlation between the issues discussed by Think Tanks in their publications and the content of NSS 94, that these organizations create and inject ideas in the policy process mainly through pamphlets or books. This conclusion would largely overestimate the actual effects of these publications. Moreover, these publications are side-effects, if not residues, of the real value-added activities of Think Tanks as "ideas brokers", "brains brokers", and "personal networks operators." Let us describe briefly these three categories.

4.4.1 - "The Ideas Brokers."

This title of the very well informed book by James A. Smith captures much of what is the purest expression of their activity. Whether Think Tankers create original ideas (what is arguable), or more likely bring up new combinations or new applications of preexisting ideas, their output is basically conceptual. These archetypes of the "symbolic analysts"²³ deliver their conceptual

product to numerous customers. First of all to these senior officers, civil servants or staffers who are the concrete actors of the policy process through numerous governmental departments, bureaus, committees or agencies. Then to the top ranking political personal of the government: Secretaries or Under-Secretaries, chairpersons of diverse committees and other special advisors. And finally to public opinion, or at least to the informed part of it that constitutes the Defense community.

The channels that are used for this activity are many, and have to be adapted to each objective. The top level political personalities, as public persons, are more likely to be reached at the occasion of conferences or symposiums where they are invited to deliver keynote addresses or after-dinner speeches, and to listen to selected panelists. Organizing such events is therefore a large -and often lucrative- part of Think Tanks' activity. The intermediate level of senior actors is often treated more in depth: focus workshops and seminars that gather restricted caucuses allow Think Tankers to interact with them, to trade-off ideas and propose views. This "private" interaction is often supplemented by more public and official events, such as testifying before Congress committees. The opportunity for such direct interaction naturally depends on the degree of proximity or of political sympathy between the Think Tank and the current administration. This may explain why, for example, DoD's analysts from INSS or people from the Brookings Institute may have been more active than others in that kind of direct interaction during the preparation of NSS 94 by the

current Democrat administration.

This is not to say that opposition Think Tanks have remained inactive: the Heritage Foundation, for example, has been very active in proposing its own views of the national security strategy²⁴ to such a well-targeted public as Rep. Newt Gingrich, now the powerful Speaker of the House of Representatives. This approach has included proposition of fully crafted pieces of legislation, such as a bill titled the "National Security Act of 1995"²⁵. All these private meetings, seminars or conferences give birth to an other important activity: publication. Articles, books, compilations of conferences presentations, etc., are a significant part of Think Tanks activity, and of their revenue (up to 50%). But they are not so much the channel through which Think Tanks really operate, than merely the signs from which the outside observer may track their direct interactive activity.

4.4.2 - The "Brains Brokers."

Think Tanks do not operate only with ideas. They operate also with brains, usually supported by individuals. Transfers from senior political analyst positions or from diverse kinds of fellowship association in Think Tanks to senior political position within the Administration or the Congress, and vice versa, are a privileged way of interaction for Think Tank with the policy-making process. The examples of this are very well known: the "revolving door," as the practice has come to be called, has been intensely used. Dr. Edward Warner came from Rand to head the Bottom-Up-Review

process at the Pentagon as Assistant Secretary for Strategy & Requirements. Walter Slocombe came from Brookings, presently Under-Secretary for Policy. Secretary William Perry himself elaborated his concept of cooperative security, in association with John D. Steinburger and Ash Carter (Assistant Secretary for International & Security Policy), as a distinguished fellow at Brookings.

The American Enterprise Institute hosts such distinguished fellows as former Defense Secretary Dick Cheney or United Nation Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, while CSIS has welcomed such individuals as Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, both National Security Advisers and the former a Secretary of State, and James Schlesinger, who held two Cabinet departments. And it is likely that the new Republican 104th Congress will give the Heritage Foundation the opportunity to see some of its analysts play a direct role on the Hill, where they will be able to implement the policies that they had been designing for years through their "Mandate for Leadership"²⁶.

It would not be accurate to pretend that these individuals and their ideas are mere products of Think Tanks. They obviously have their own autonomy. But Think Tanks are the places where such individuals find the opportunity to formulate, elaborate, confront, enrich, validate and finally diffuse their ideas through their collaboration with the regular scholars that constitute the permanent core of the organizations. Think Tanks provide them with the opportunity to reach selected audience through their network. In counterpart, ex-top level officials bring to the Think Tanks

that host them some unpricable aura that ensures the success of the events they support. Like a symbiosis, this often enduring relationship between these very particular individuals and Think Tanks reciprocally benefits both parties.

4.4.3 - Think Tanks as personal network operators.

As we described the Think Tanks as ideas and brains brokers, we pictured one last, but fundamental, feature of these groups. Whether they organize private meetings, restricted seminars or public symposiums, or whether they trade-off senior individuals with the administration, Think Tanks build and operate networks. They are part of these actors that contribute to link different worlds: the governmental world, the business world, the academic world and the military world. Think Tankers promulgate within these worlds whose preoccupations and even languages differ so much from each other. But ideas do not circulate by themselves, they need people to do so. Think Tanks provide the venues -physical or virtual²⁷- where people periodically gather and interact. I would suggest that it is for and from these interactions that Think Tanks build the networks that constitute the very base of the policy-making system. This activity passes largely unnoticed and is next to impossible to trace.

4.4.4 - What was the overall contribution to NSS 94?

Curiously enough, all the actors of the process that have been interviewed agreed to say that NSS 94 received very few direct

contribution from Think Tanks. However, we have seen that the issues themselves that were to be addressed in the document have been comprehensively discussed and published by several Think Tanks. It seems therefore that all this activity has taken place either aside or much ahead of the formulation of the document itself. The chaotic process that we have already described in section 3.1 may be responsible in part for that shortcoming: it seems that the administration was too busy struggling with its own internal frictions to pay much attention to the outside world. Should we look at this as the result of any excessive selfconfidence on the part of the administration? Or on the contrary could it be the result of an impossibility to get out of the weeds, that could have led the policy-makers to consider this writing as a futile and formal exercise that had to be achieved at the least intellectual cost in order to concentrate on more short term but really burning issues, such the changing relationships with Russia or China, or the Bosnia crisis?

Whatever the real cause was, I would argue that this disconnection between the administration and the Think Tanks network may lead to, or be the sign of, an impoverishment of the relationship between the current government and the ideas-creative layers of the society. In this perspective, it would not be surprising if the "Republican revolution" and the forthcoming 1996 presidential campaign were to revitalize this relationship and to stress the need for a renewed and enhanced political debate, boosting therefore the implication of Think Tanks in the policy-

making process. In any case, every Think Tank analyst could endorse this claim by Rand's Ronald D. Asmus: "If the United States is to find a new post-Cold War consensus, then airing and debating these views and differences is a healthy and inevitable part of building this new consensus."²⁸

5 - THINK TANKS IN THE FRENCH PROCESS.

5.1 - Who are the French Tanks?

This section will focus on French Think Tanks, and will try to assess some basic distinctions between these organizations and their American counterparts. We may approach this issue following various paths. The more efficient is to come back to James A. Smith's definition²⁹: "the private, nonprofit research groups that operate on the margins of the nation's formal political processes." On each point of this definition, we can find a wide range of different patterns for these Think Tanks in France, as well as in the U.S.

Let us consider first the status of the group. We shall find groups ranging from the totally private AERO company, and "Loi de 1901" nonprofit associations such as CREST³⁰ or foundations such as the recent "Fondation pour les Etudes de Défense", to government "in house" groups such as the DGA's Center for Defense Analysis, or the Délégation aux Affaires Stratégiques (DAS).

As in the U.S., a number of Think Tanks are University linked; but, those are generally very limited teams, sometimes single individuals. Except perhaps for Pr. Schmitt's studies in the Defense Economy field at Paris-Porte Dauphine University, these teams do not usually make a significant contribution.

The Institute for National Security Studies, hosted here by the National Defense University, has a near equivalent in the "Groupes d'Etude et de Recherche" hosted by the "Center of Higher Armament Studies" in Paris.

Some Think Tanks can be considered as more closely linked to the political world: Various Foundations, "Centre d'Etudes", Forums or "Carrefours de Réflexion" act as ideas providers, diffusers or catalyzers for groups or individuals pursuing some political objectives. In some cases, they appear even more like temporary refuges where out-of-office senior political personal find an active rest before a hypothetical return to power.

What are the sources of funding for these groups? Here again, the situations are variable. Many of them depend on government contracts for the major part of their activities. Here, there is a clear difference with American Think Tanks, a lot of those rely mainly on endowments and private funding, or are partly self-funded through profitable publications and conferences. French tradition does not encourage such private interest in national security thinking.

5.2 - The objectives of French Think Tanks.

Do French Think Tanks mainly pursue only educational and research objectives, or do they also try to influence the policy-making process? Here also, we can find a large analogy with American Think Tanks: from pure thinkers -if there are any in this World- as the Woodrow Wilson Scholars nearly equivalents in "Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique" researchers in foreign and defense policy, to openly partisan left wing IRIS (Institute for International Relations and Strategy) or the right wing CEPS (Center for Prospective and Strategic Studies), all levels of political thinking can be found. We must keep in mind that the French Parliament is, traditionally if not constitutionally, much less involved, or at least at a lesser detailed level, in foreign policy and national security policy than its American counterpart. There is a strong tradition under the institutions of the French Fifth Republic to recognize the very preeminent prerogative of the president in this field. As a result, the French system allows the Executive bureaucracy to shape these policies without so much interference from either the political parties, or the parliament. The need for circulating ideas is therefore less important and, consequently, the input from Think Tanks much less visible in the policy process.

Fewer Think Tanks, less important in size and financial capacity, less influential in the policy-making process - these describe French Think Tanks when compared to the U.S. ones, which

have been quite properly pictured as a "quintessentially American"³¹ institution.

5.3 - Did French Think Tanks contribute to the White Paper?

There is no need here to look in great detail to how French Think Tanks usually operate: by and large, they use the same means as their American counterparts. Seminars or conferences, testifying before governmental or Parliamentary commissions, publications - French Think Tanks do all those, although on a lesser scale, because of their lesser visibility in the political landscape, and the relative lack of interest shown them by the administration.

Think Tanks published several books or articles during the preparation of the White Paper. For instance, in a special issue of the "défense nationale" journal, chairman of "Comité d'Etudes de Défense Nationale" Paul-Marie de la Gorce suggested a broad national security strategy framework. He emphasized the need of defining first the national interests: "(The threats) can only be defined relatively to those interests that have to be defended, and one should begin by defining these latter."³² His articulation of the geo-strategic context relied on four premises:

- the remaining of only one military superpower,
- the remaining of several nuclear powers,
- the new instability of the Euro-Asian continent, from the Adriatic sea to Chinese borders,
- the growing instability of those "strategic zones where

political, and eventually military, instability comes from economical and social crises, with their ethnical and religious spillovers."³³

From these premises, P.M. de La Gorce derived several propositions, specially advocating for nuclear deterrence and conventional force projection capacities.

In the same issue, former chairman of the "Fondation pour les Etudes de Défense Nationale" Pierre Dabezies developed its "Réflexions sur le Livre Blanc."³⁴ He stressed as his main argument the need to substitute an "approach by the political project" to a mere static assessment of national interests. In that perspective, he enlightened how cross choices between different -and maybe contradictory- projects muddle the French strategic landscape: the pursuit of the global "new world order," the tightening of the links with NATO, the building of the European Union and of a hypothetical "Foreign and Security Common Policy," being among the most burning issues.

These discussions were clearly in the scope of the White Paper. Nevertheless, these were more broad political, editorial-like assessments, than scholarly crafted studies that are usually expected from Think Tanks. Even more, there was no indication that these pieces reflected anything more than personal and selective views, rather than being part of more broad research within any organized framework.

One must except, in this literature, the book published by CREST director Alain Baer under the title: "Thinking the nature of

future defense systems."³⁵ This book originated in the work of a one of the research groups that operate in connection with the Center for Higher Armaments Studies³⁶. It presented a comprehensive approach of new defense concepts, both in terms of organization and materiels, especially stressing the importance of real-time intelligence. It proposed to create a permanent "National Security Council," on the American model, and a new concept for the organization of the forces, which would be articulated between interior and exterior forces, according to whether their vocation would be to defend the metropolitan territory, or to be projected abroad. Alain Baer also provided a fairly extensive study of the current "military revolution" and of its implications in terms of technology and weapon systems.

This study was clearly original among other more political and circumstantial publications, and was probably the only one that could be considered as a Think Tank product.

5.3 - What has been the real input from Think Tanks to the White Paper?

Specifically in the case of the White Paper, it appears from the interviews completed that the ad hoc commission had a very little input from Think Tanks:

- one independent expert in the commission itself was the head of a Think Tank (the French Institute for International Relations);
- no request for any advice was even made by the commission to

Think Tanks themselves, although the commission heard many experts "intuitu personae;"

- the commission received several spontaneous contributions from diverse organizations, such as professional syndicates or corporative groupments, but none of them standing Think Tanks.

As in the case of the writing of NSS 94, some external factors may have contributed to keeping Think Tanks apart from the policy process. For example, it has been largely noticed that this White Paper was a product of the so-called "cohabitation", which is this strange situation of government where a left wing President shares the power with a right wing Prime Minister. This kind of political compromise seems to have become a French "favorite" for nearly ten years. If it has led to some serious confrontation on domestic issues, it has never seriously affected the unity of action of the government on foreign policy and defense issues. But, combined with the perspective of the next 1995 presidential election, it may have influenced the autonomy of thought of the commission and its ability to launch into a more creative strategic thinking. The writers of the White Paper could therefore have faced the assignment, not so much to bring up new ideas, which could have justified the resort to Think Tanks, but more to achieve a balanced and smooth product that could get the broadest political assent possible.

6 - COMPARISON OF THE TWO PATTERNS.

Looking in parallel at the two patterns, the American and the French one, allows one to draw some comparisons.

In both cases, we find that organizations that more or less belong to the Think Tank category usually operate at the margin of the national security strategy-making process. These organizations are much more common in the U.S. and enjoy a higher visibility, because their number, their size, and their traditional implication in the political life, all features where they outclass by far their French counterparts.

Specifically dealing with NSS 94 and the French White Paper, Think Tanks seem to have had little direct input. In the U.S., where they have nevertheless been very active in debating the majors issues related to the national security strategy, they probably suffered from a lack of interest by the administration for their input. But this current loose relationship between Think Tanks and the administration is not usual in the U.S. It is, however, the rule in France, where these institutions are traditionally kept outside the political process by an administration more confident in its own capacity to elaborate the policy. Among other reasons, this major difference between the two countries may be related to the history of their form of government. This observation by James A. Smith seems true today: "..., in countries with older civil service tradition and fewer political appointments, experts could be found in the

bureaucracy much earlier than they could in the American system, where nonpartisan experts typically had to be housed on the outside"³⁷. From that perspective, the long American tradition of distrust for a centralized government and the chronic instability of the upper layers of the administration, because of the great number of short-lived political appointees, have probably contributed to enhance and sustain the importance of Think Tanks in political life. These organizations assume a central function in improving the continuity of thought of the nation, and in helping elaborate political wisdom. Yet, if we agree with J.A. Smith's statement that "[t]here is something troubling about the relationship among experts, leaders, and citizens that tends to make American politics more polarized, short-sighted, and fragmented - and often less intelligent - than it should be,"³⁸ we may assume that even Think Tanks fall short of the task.

On the French side, Think Tanks are granted only a little influence in policy-making. We have already stressed the major feature of the French administration as a very intellectually autonomous one: several centuries of government service, a high ideal of public service, a long history of centralized power from Colbert up today, make this administration think of itself as the one of "the Best and the Brightest." It has therefore less inclination than the American one to look outside for ideas or conceptual achievements that it presumably can provide on its own.

We have recognized the American Think Tanks as key actors in building the personal networks that vitalize the policy-making

process. In France also, personal networks are fundamental in the policy process: the difference is that these networks, in a sense, preexist through the links that gathered many senior military or civil servants from their education in the two or three major institutions that form the French élite: alumni of the Ecole Nationale d'Administration or of the Ecole polytechnique, for example, operate very far-reaching and powerful networks that cross the highest layers of the political, administrative and business worlds. There is therefore less room in that function for organizations like Think Tanks. I would suggest here that this pattern of policy-making will be soon find its own limits: As the European integration process goes on, these education based national networks will no longer operate at a sufficient level. Since the "Euro-Elite" will obviously be more diversified than the national French one, there certainly will be a need for new links and venues³⁹ where the "Eurocrats", as they are sometimes a bit pejoratively called, will be able to interact and forge together their political thought.

7 - CONCLUSION.

As David M. Ricci makes the point: "*Think Tanks fit somewhere into public life, but no one knows exactly where that is.*"⁴⁰

This essay has tried to investigate how they "fit" into the national security strategy formulation process. The observation of how they operate in this very specific field in the U.S., compared

with the equivalent French way, suggests that these patterns do not only depend on internal features of these organizations, but also reflect major traits of the policy-making process. The importance of their input in the United States process, their visibility in political life, and their very existence are fundamentally linked to the characteristics of the American political system. This is confirmed by contrast with the French example. This observation agrees with the thesis expressed (from a political science perspective) by D. M. Ricci⁴¹ and from a more historical one by J.A. Smith⁴². Smith finds Think Tanks as "quintessentially American": they are a specific solution to the no less specific problem of the American policy-making system. More precisely, they help to build and operate the personal networks that facilitate the complex interactions between and among the industrial, business, academic, and political worlds; and then between these "civilian" entities and the administration and the Congress, as the two major protagonists.

Finally, I would suggest that this hypothesis could be confirmed, by further work, by the observation of the policy-making system of the European Union: in the same way that Think Tanks emerged in the U.S. after World War II, and spectacularly raised in the 70/80s, accompanying the increase in the federal government⁴³, we should expect similar organizations to emerge and develop at the periphery of the European Commission in Brussels, following the implementation of the Maastricht treaty.

APPENDIX A

Extract of 50 USC 404a.

"Each national security strategy report shall set forth the national security strategy of the United States and shall include a comprehensive description and discussion of the following:

(1) The worldwide interests, goals and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security of the United States.

(2) The foreign policy, worldwide commitments, and national defense capabilities of the United States necessary to deter aggression and to implement the national security strategy of the United States.

(3) The proposed short-term and long-term uses of the political, economic, military, and other elements of the national power of the United States to protect or promote the interests and achieve the goals and objectives referred to in paragraph (1).

(4) The adequacy of the capabilities of the United States to carry out the national security strategy of the United States, including an evaluation of the balance among the capabilities of all elements of the national power of the United States to support the implementation of the national security strategy."

.....

APPENDIX B

Structural Comparison of the two basic documents

A National Security Strategy of
and Enlargement

@@@@@

Preface (W.J. Clinton)

I. Introduction

II. Advancing our interests

II.1 Enhancing our Security

Maintaining a Strong
Defense Capability
Major Regional Contingencies
Overseas Presence
Counterterrorism ...
 Combatting Terrorism
 Fighting Drug Trafficking
Other Missions

Livre Blanc sur la Engagement
Défense 1994

@@@@@

Préface (E. Balladur)

Préface (F. Leotard)

Introduction

First Part: The Strategic
Context

1. International Prospect

2. Defense Policy Objectives

2.1 Defending France's
interests

2.2 Constructing Europe

2.3 Implementing a Global
Conception of Defense

3. International Reference
Framework

3.1 Toward a New European
Security

3.2 Reinforcing U.N. Role

3.3 Bilateral Cooperation

4. Our Defense Strategy

5. The Capabilities of
the Armed Forces

Deciding When and How to Employ
U.S. Forces

Combatting the Spread and Use of WMD

Nonproliferation and
Counterproliferation

Strategic Nuclear Forces

Arms Control

Peace Operations

Strong Intelligence Capabilities

The Environment

2.2 Promoting Prosperity at Home

Enhancing American Competitiveness

Partnership with Business and Labor

Enhancing Access to Foreign Markets
The N.A.F.T.A.
Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
Uruguay Round of GATT
U.S.-Japan Framework Agreement
Expanding the Realm of Free Trade

Strengthening Macroeconomic Coordination

Providing for Energy Security

Promoting Sustainable Development Abroad
Promoting Democracy

3.4 Arms Control,
Disarmament and
Non-Proliferation
Treaties

id

9.5 Organization of
Information

6. Human Resources

9.4 Economic Defense

7. Arms Policy and
Industrial Strategy

7.3 New State/
Arms Industry
relationship

7.4 An Export Policy

8. Defense Effort

III. Integrated Regional approaches

Europe and Eurasia
East Asian and the Pacific
The Western Hemisphere

The Middle East, Southwest
and South Asia
Africa

IV. Conclusions.

9. Defense and society

Conclusion.

APPENDIX C

Composition of the White Paper Commission.

Chairman:

- Marceau Long, vice-chairman of "Conseil d'Etat".

Office of the Prime Minister:

- General Schmitt, special advisor.
- Préfet Marland, advisor for Domestic Affairs.
- Rear-Admiral Lecointre, head of military staff.
- General Lerche, head of Secrétariat Général de la Défense nationale.

Defense Ministry:

- M. Donnedieu de Vabres, special assistant.
- Admiral Lanxade, chief of the joint staff.
- General Conze, head of DGA (Defense Acquisition Agency).
- M. Roussely, general secretary for administration.
- General Rannou, head of military staff.
- M. Mallet, director for strategic affairs.

State Department:

- M. Racine, special assistant.
- M. Guehenno, head of CAP (Center for Analysis and Prospective Studies).
- M. Barry-Deladongchamps, director for strategic affairs.

Ministry of Treasury:

- Ms. Bouillot, Budget director.

Ministry of Interior:

- Préfet Riolacci.

Ministry of Research:

- M. Paolini, special assistant.

Ministry of Industry:

- M. Lombard, director for industrial strategy.

Ministry of international cooperation:

- M. Pouillieute, head of staff.

Atomic Energy Agency:

- M. Baléras, director for military applications.

Independent experts:

- M. de Montbrial.
- M. Levy.
- M. Prada, Cour des Comptes (General Accounting Office).
- Ambassador Robin.

APPENDIX D.

Interviews completed.

1) in the U.S.

Col. Richard Barry - Institute for National Security Studies

Bruce Blair - The Brookings Institution

Lawrence DiRita - The Heritage Foundation

Capt. Keith Hans - National Security Council Staff

Patrick Glynn - American Enterprise Institute

Robert Grant - Director US CREST

Eric Peterson - Vice-President Center for Strategic and
International Studies

2) in France.

Colonel (Armt. Corp) Patrick Auroy - Livre Blanc Commission
Secretariat.

General (Armt. Corp) Alain Cremieux - Former Commandant of CHEAR
(Center for Higher Armament Studies).

Jean-Francois Delpech - Director of CREST (Center for Strategic
Research).

General Eric de la Maisonneuve - Director of FED (Foundation for
Defense Studies).

Thierry de Montbrial - Director of IFRI (French Institute for
International Relations).

END NOTES

1. See extracts in appendix A.
2. Livre Blanc sur la Défense. p. 4.
3. Appendix B presents a schematic comparison of the structures of the two documents, that allows a rapid evaluation of the contents of these documents.
4. In the French governmental institutions, the "Conseil d'Etat" is an equivalent of the U.S. Supreme Court, in its role of judging the disputes arising between the individuals and the State. It also enjoys substantial legislative and regulatory powers.
5. See Appendix C for the detailed composition of this commission.
6. This structure has a function and a composition rather similar to those of the U.S. National Security Council. Unlike this latter, it does not have any supporting bureaucracy.
7. J. A. Smith, *The Ideas Brokers* (New York, 1993), p. xiii.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
9. From the title of the very well informed book by James A. Smith.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
11. D. Seay, "U.S. and Bosnia: too late, wrong war." *Backgrounder*, no. 907 (20 July 1992), p. 10.
12. W. J. Perry, "Military action," in Nolan (ed), *Global Engagement*, p.236.
13. E. C. Ravenal, *Designing defense for a new world order*, p.82.
14. B. Conry, "The futility of U.S. intervention in regional conflicts," *Policy Analysis*, no. 209 (19 May 1994), p. 17.
15. Patrick M. Cronin, "America's role in the new world order," *From Globalism to Regionalism*, p. 232.
16. *NSS 94*, p. 5.
17. T. G. Carpenter, "Staying out of potential nuclear crossfires," *Policy Analysis*, no.199 (24 Nov. 1993), p. 1.

18. K. R. Holmes, "Defining national security and American interests", *A Safe and Prosperous AMERICA*, p.7.
19. Ibid.
20. M. Renner, "National Security: The Economic and Environmental Dimensions," *Worldwatch Paper*, no. 89 (May 1989) p. 7.
21. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ed. Griffith (New York 1963), p. 66.
22. N. D. Levin, *Prisms & Policy* (Santa Monica, 1994), pp. XV-XVI.
23. Terminology taken from *The Work of Nations*, by R. B. Reich.
24. *A Safe and Prosperous AMERICA - A U.S. Foreign and Defense Policy Blueprint*, ed. Holmes.
25. see "The National Security Act of 1995", pending legislation for the 104th Congress (unpublished).
26. see S. M. Butler, M. Sanera, and W. B. Weinrod, *Mandate for Leadership II - Continuing the Conservative Revolution* (Washington, D.C., 1984).
27. Like the 24-hour online computer service operated by Heritage, under a very explicit name: "Town Hall - The Conservative Meeting Place."
28. R. D. Asmus, *The new strategic debate* (Santa Monica, 1994), p. ix.
29. *The Ideas Brokers*, p. xiii.
30. It may be worth noting that CREST has the rather exceptional feature to own an U.S. based subsidiary in Arlington, VA. whose vocation is specifically to work on transatlantic issues.
31. *The Ideas Brokers*, p. xiii.
32. Paul-Marie de La Gorce. "Contexte international et defense." *Defense Nationale*. Dec.1993. p. 10.
33. Paul-Marie de La Gorce. "Contexte international et defense." *Defense Nationale*. Dec.1993. p. 15.
34. Pierre Dabezies. "Réflexions sur le Livre Blanc." *Défense Nationale*. Dec. 1993.
35. Alain Baer ed. "Réflexions sur la nature des futurs systèmes de Défense". *Les Cahiers du CREST*, No. 12. Paris. Nov. 1993.

36. This institution is, although on a lesser scale, an equivalent of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

37. *The Idea Brokers*, p.228-229.

38. *The Ideas Brokers*, p. xxi.

39. The Research Institute of the Western European Union headed by John Roper in Paris may somehow represent a prototype, although certainly specific in its belonging to the WEU, of these future Euro-Think Tanks.

40. D. M. Ricci, *The transformation of American Politics* (New Haven, 1993), p. 182.

41. D. M. Ricci, *The transformation of American Politics* (New Haven, 1993).

42. J. A. Smith, *The Ideas Brokers* (New York, 1993).

43. The increase in the number of White House staff is a good indicator of this raise of the "Big Government": only 48 in 1944 under President Roosevelt, then 275 in 1960 under President Eisenhower, and up to 540 in 1975 under President Ford.

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