

**'CFSP and the Central and Eastern European countries:
Franco-German Perspectives**

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The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and
the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI)

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1. Introduction

The common denominator of Franco-German relations, CFSP, Central and Eastern Europe and EU enlargement issues is the concept of flexibility. Flexibility can be defined as intensified cooperation of two or more EU member states which wish to do so in one or more areas within the framework of the Union. In the Franco-German vision of flexibility, the second pillar (CFSP) is the most likely application of the concept.

This paper suggests that France and Germany have found a compromise on the conflicting goals of deepening and widening in this concept of flexibility. For the Central European candidates, this approach appears dangerous despite some potentially promising aspects, as it may mean being left out in the periphery of the integration processes.

This paper concentrates on issues that relate exclusively to Franco-German relations, CFSP, flexibility and enlargement, and thus leaves out such important areas as for example EMU, military cooperation, and positions on EU-WEU links. It first discusses aspects of Franco-German relations, particularly their significance for Central Europe in general and for EU and NATO

reform and enlargement in particular. It continues by presenting the French-German and Central European assessment of CFSP as it exists today, and presents Franco-German suggestions for improvement of its visibility and effectiveness presented within the framework of the IGC. Finally, it analyses the Central European reactions to these proposals.

2. Franco-German relations

2.1. Franco-German relations and their significance for Central Europe

'Neither France nor Germany seem yet to have fully adjusted their external policy to the parameters prevailing on the world stage in the second half of the 1990s. This situation affects their bilateral relations and has consequences for the pace of the European integration process'¹, argues a French expert. However, although voices have been heard (particularly in Great Britain) anticipating an end to that special relationship, most observers agree that the ability of the two countries to forge political compromise positions despite divergences on many points continues to characterize their cooperation. That this fact is an important one, there is no doubt: Franco-German cooperation continues to be seen as 'the motor of European integration' (and enlargement), and Franco-German initiatives within the framework of the IGC play an important role.

The scope of governmental, parliamentary and peoples' links between the two countries need not be reviewed here. Suffice to say that Franco-German rapprochement has been viewed in Central and Eastern Europe as an example for the new and improved

¹Yves Boyer, 'France and Germany', in **Germany in Europe in the Nineties**, Bertel Heurlin (ed). Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1996, p. 241.

relations among countries which continue to deal with difficult historical heritage and minority issues (see for example Polish-German or Hungarian-Romanian *rapprochements*).

But there are other dimensions of Franco-German cooperation that are of great significance to Central European countries: the perpetuation of the Franco-German link remains in their deepest interest because it prevents the emergence of unilateral and unconstrained involvement of Germany to the East of its borders; France and Germany are the main forces behind the reform of the EU structure which is a necessary (although not sufficient) precondition for enlargement of the EU to new Central and East European members; finally, Germany as the main ambassador of Central Europeans in the EU requires French support on this issue.

2.2. EU enlargement issues

The Franco-German cooperation, particularly over enlargement, is not free of tensions. Anne-Marie Le Gloannec, a French Germany specialist, wrote in 1994: 'Mr. Kinkel is the first of all ministers in the European Union to open the door to all sorts of applicants without prior consultations with partners... The French ambassador to Bonn, Francois Scheer, reacted with some bitterness, wondering whether the Germans were not ultimately trying to dilute the European Union in a wider, loosely-knit assembly, following the British habit.'² This small paragraph touches upon many French fears: of aggressive and selfish German policy, of Germany withdrawing from the integration process and the Franco-German special relationship, of German domination to

² Anne-Marie Le Gloannec, 'A German Europe', **European Brief** July/August 1994, Vol. 1, No. 6, p. 15.

the East.

Suspicious about German aims to the East of its borders have been raised in France in the early 90s by journalists, observers and occasionally politicians alike. France, inspired by the vision of a larger and German-dominated Union was interested mainly in deepening of integration. An additional factor for the French may have been the fact that all Central European candidates for enlargement are clearly pro-NATO and pro-American, while criticizing the performance of the EU in foreign and security policy areas. However, their predominantly nation-state focused view of integration may have been more soothing for the French.

Germany, attempting to have it both ways - to satisfy its own interests in the East and French (and Central European) concerns - spoke and continues to speak of simultaneous deepening and widening. *Le Monde* offered in 1995 this bitter observation: 'if the ambitious goals defined by the Chancellor were to be delayed, the fault will be attributed to Germany's partners, in particular to France, portrayed in Bonn and Warsaw as insensitive to the interests of Eastern Europe.'³

The CDU-CSU paper of September 1994⁴ hints at the alternative to cooperation in enlargement issues: a Europe divided into two blocs, one centred on Germany and including Central and Eastern Europe, and a second one focusing on France and the Mediterranean region. Franco-German dialogues often arrive at bitter statements on the unwillingness of Germany to have a more active Mediterranean policy and share the burdens

³ 'L'Allemagne and la Pologne', *Le Monde*, 11 July 1995.

⁴ 'CDU/CSU Fraktion des Deutschen Bundestages. Reflections on European Policy', 1 September 1994.

that France feel it is obliged to carry alone, and the German accusation that France shows little interest and support for the obviously necessary process of strengthening of reform processes and bringing Central and Eastern European countries closer to the EU and NATO (including membership.)

In fact, the agendas of the two countries on enlargement have come closer together in the last few years, but still differ somewhat. France expressed support for enlargement to the East of both EU and NATO and Germany listed the Mediterranean as a possible area for joint initiatives.⁵ For Paris the necessity for widening appears in the long run inevitable but which countries should be included and what kind of consequences enlargement will have is not at all clear⁶ (although it is also questionable whether Germany has a clear idea on this issue either). The French concern with the possibility of a German-Central European bloc versus a French/Mediterranean bloc has clear consequences for its policies: for example France's support for Romanian membership in NATO attempts to avoid clear-cut geostrategic direction of enlargement. Germany, for its part, does not support Romania explicitly, but faced with the French policy, German officials state privately that it will also not do anything to stop Romanian membership in NATO.

2.3. NATO

German and French approaches to NATO and to the presence of the

⁵ See for example Melanie Piepenschneider, 'Paris, Bonn, And The Run-Up To 1996', **European Brief** July/August 1994, Vol. 1, No. 6; Francois Leotard, 'Rede ueber die deutsch-franzoesischen Beziehungen', **KAS-AI** 9/96.

⁶ Sylvie Lamasson, 'The Role of Germany in European Policies - A French View', in **Crises Policies in Eastern Europe**, Reimund Seidelmann (ed). Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1996, p. 284.

US in Europe, and therefore also to the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) differ, although recently they too have come closer. In the past French interest in autonomy in security policy demanded a posture of distance from NATO and the United States, the privileged allies of Western Germany. This concept, has been said, 'seeks the benefit of a European pole, that she would dominate and that would stand apart from the American pole.'⁷ France, observing the events in former Yugoslavia and elsewhere has in fact arrived at a position in which, without abandoning its support for the creation of a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI), it is prepared to do so within the framework of NATO. NATO's internal reform, in particular the Europeanization of its command structure is a precondition for the full French return to NATO.⁸ The French demand has been supported by Germany, which has plenty to gain by this turn of events and by France in NATO⁹. The French rapprochement to NATO will allow for the creation of a more effective CFSP. The EU will be more capable of giving the CFSP a security and defence dimension. The concept of CJTFs points towards this promise. Germany needs a functioning CFSP, particularly in its relations with its neighbours to the East.

Germany, once more, wants to have it both ways, and supports both a strong NATO and US presence in Europe, and a stronger ESDI and CFSP. Simultaneously, France became more supportive of NATO enlargement and began to present it as a parallel process to EU

⁷ Ibid, p. 278.

⁸ See for example 'Allocution de M. Charles Million Ministre de la Defense a la Wehrkunde, samedi 3 fevrier 1996'; Burghard Schmitt, 'France's Alliance Policy in a Changing World', **Aussenpolitik** (engl. edition), Vol. 47, No. 4, 1996.

⁹ For the German Chancellor's comment on France and NATO, see Helmut Kohl in **Le Nouvel Observateur**, 28 November 1996.

enlargement.¹⁰

3. Where CFSP is at: French, German, and EU candidates' assessments

Both France and Germany would agree to Delors' famous dictum 'the common foreign and security policy has the body of a Jaguar, but inside there is the engine of a lawn mower'. In a joint article, the French and German negotiators at the IGC, Werner Hoyer and Michael Barnier, express the feeling in both countries when they argue that the ability to act internationally must be increased so that the Union can follow a decisive CFSP.¹¹ The CFSP needs efficiency, continuity, coherence, solidarity and visibility.¹² There is agreement on the need to make CFSP more efficient, although the experience of Yugoslavia has shown that even when structures exist, political will and agreement on means may not.

As the Foreign Ministers of the two countries argued in February 1996, the main interest of the CFSP is in stabilizing neighbouring regions to the East and to the South, consolidation of transatlantic relations, and development of relations with Russia and Ukraine.¹³ So what do the Central and Eastern European

¹⁰ Mariusz Kazana, 'Stanowisko Francji wobec bezpieczeństwa państw Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej' (French position on the security of Central and Eastern European states), **Fakty, Analizy, Syntezy, Opinie** 25, 1996.

¹¹ Werner Hoyer and Michael Barnier, 'Gemeinsam zu europäischen Zielen', **Die Zeit** 12 July 1996.

¹² 'Gemeinsame Botschaft von Bundeskanzler Dr. Helmut Kohl and dem Praesidenten der Franzoesischen Republik an den amtierenden Vorsitzenden des Europaeischen Rates und Ministerpraesidenten von Irland, John Bruton. Bonn und Paris, 6 Dezember 1996', **Bulletin** Nr. 102, p. 1106.

¹³ 'La politique etrangere et de security commune. Orientations prises a l'occasion du seminaire Franco-Allemand des ministres des affaires etrangeres. Fribourg-en-Brisingau, 27 fevrier 1996'.

countries at which the CFSP is at least partly directed think about it? The candidate countries have access to some areas of CFSP. There has been only one single occasion (the Stability Pact) when the associates had access to a 'real' CFSP tool.¹⁴ The association agreements and the structured relationship of the EU with Central European countries provided for the framework of their relations with the CFSP.¹⁵ This framework is of a multilateral nature, which Central European countries either disapprove of (those that see themselves closer to the goal of full membership) or support.

Hungarian observers write that the Central European association with CFSP, 'the cooperative exercise has been sobering even for diplomats; it is sporadic and occasional. Its intensity depended on nothing else but on which of the member states was giving the presidency and how much that country was "enlargement-friendly" and in which direction.'¹⁶

The EU's Central European partners would agree with the assessment of the CFSP and the need to strengthen it, but not at the expense of transatlantic links.¹⁷ They would however also agree that the strengthening of CFSP should not deprive them of their sovereignty in the areas of foreign, security and defence

¹⁴ Pal Dunay at al, 'The integration of Central and Eastern Europe into the Common Foreign Policy of the European Fifteen', unpublished manuscript, p. 17.

¹⁵ The framework provides for regular meetings between heads of states, ministers, Political Directors and working groups; contacts between so called European Correspondents, and permanent representatives; regular information of the heads of Brussels missions; and coordination of representations of EU members and associated countries at international fora and in third countries. Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁷ Monika Wohlfeld, 'Implications for Relations Between Western and Central Europe', **Chaillot Paper 17**, October 1994.

policies.

3. French and German plans for CFSP negotiations within IGC

How do France and Germany suggest that stronger CFSP can be achieved? The period from Maastricht to this day is literally littered with joint papers on this topic. Their *Lieblingskind* is the concept of flexibility. The Foreign Ministers Klaus Kinkel and Herve de Charette suggest that intensified cooperation of member states which wish to do so in one or more areas must be introduced. They continue by pointing out that there are areas where flexibility is used already on an *ad hoc* basis, such as the monetary union, and programmes in research and technical development. In fact, the transition processes for new members follow the same logic. The Kinkel / de Charette contribution suggest the creation of a number of general principles applicable to all three pillars of the EU and special principles for each of them. For CFSP, they suggest the use of a flexibility clause in the areas of common defence policy and common defence as well as defence industry cooperation.¹⁸ These are clearly areas in which only a few countries are willing to progress.

In their letter to the EU presidency from December 1996, Kohl and Chirac suggest that principles of policies would be agreed upon in the Council (unanimously), while decisions on their application would be based on the principle of QMV. A 'common strategy' developed by the Council would define the EU's foreign, economic and security goals vis-a-vis a region or a

¹⁸ 'Verstaerkte Zusammenarbeit im Hinblick auf die weitere Vertiefung des europaischen Einigungswerkes. Gemeinsamer deutsch-franzoesischer Diskussionsbeitrag fuer die Regierungskonferenz. Paris, 17 Oktober 1996.' **Bulletin** Nr. 84, p. 918 and 919.

country (cutting across the pillar structure of the Union).¹⁹

An additional Franco-German demand is the introduction of decision-making processes which are not based on unanimity within the framework of the second pillar. The Chancellor and the French President demanded a deepening of the CFSP. Their proposal is to move from consensus principle to more majority voting (QMV) in the area of CFSP (although decisions of the Council as well as issues pertaining to security and defence are to be excluded from this mode of decision-making). They also suggest the use of 'constructive abstention' in the framework of CFSP - which would allow countries to express their disagreement with a policy without blocking action.²⁰

The joint proposals for flexibility clause would suggest that the French and German views meet on this notion. Indeed the two countries agree on the need of a European Union to be based on a strong and stable core from which the cooperation within European Union should be boosted, that is the idea of 'integration within integration' (unlike the current ad hoc flexible creations such as Schengen agreement, which is outside of the EU's structures). Some observers point out that the visions are not all that far apart. Yes Boyer points out that 'French political leaders ... are advocating a pragmatic approach to the future development of the European Union. They promote the idea of a European construction centred on three circles involving different perspectives and obligations, the inner circle of tightest solidarity and cooperation being built around

¹⁹ 'Gemeinsame Botschaft von Bundeskanzler Dr. Helmut Kohl and dem Praesidenten der Franzoesischen Republik an den amtierenden Vorsitzenden des Europaeischen Rates und Ministerpraesidenten von Irland, John Bruton. Bonn und Paris, 6 Dezember 1996', **Bulletin** Nr. 102, p. 1107.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1107.

France and Germany, a view not so different from that which was emphasized in the CDU-CSU paper of September 1994'²¹. Others see the joint concept as a compromise which is broad enough to hide substantial differences between federal and intergovernmental elements.²² But there is no doubt that they are divided on the actual nature of this core.²³

Flexibility is in fact a catchword that means something different for almost any member state. For the British, it epitomizes the possibility to hold on to national sovereignty. Germany and other countries that follow a pro-integration course argue that the group cannot be stopped by an individual country, such as Great Britain. For France it may be mostly relevant to the needs of the Franco-German relationship but also a way of putting itself at the centre of the integration process.

It is also so far not clear in which situations flexibility could be used, who would take the initiative for actions under the flexibility principle (role of the Commission, which has this possibility in the I but not the II pillar), whether individual countries will have the right to veto an action, and whether the EU budget will be used to finance actions in which not all states participate. Jacques Andreanni suggests also that the ideas range from 'olympic rings' to reinforcing cores, and from directorates to frameworks open to all.²⁴ A further question debated within the framework of the IGC is whether all members or only a

²¹ Boyer, p. 252.

²² Gisela Mueller-Brandeck-Bocquet, 'Reform der Europaeischen Union: Deutsch-franzoesische Initiatives', **Dokumente** 52, December 1996, p. 458.

²³ Lamasson, p. 286.

²⁴ Jacques Andreani, 'Noyau dur ou avant-garde europeenne?', **Commentaire** Spring 1997, Vol. 20, No. 77.

qualified majority will be able to initiate flexible action. Currently, the discussion centres on the suggestion that a 'common strategy' (decided upon by Heads of State in a unanimous fashion) will be needed first and 'common actions' will follow on the basis of QMV.

In fact, the IGC negotiations point towards a trade-off within CFSP between flexibility on the one hand, and QMV and constructive abstention on the other. If QMV and abstention can be agreed upon, flexibility is seen as less pressing, it is felt among many EU member states. However, the new Labour government has made clear that it is not willing to accept any of the principles and that it 'will be retaining the veto both in the foreign and security area and home affairs pillar.'²⁵ This could push reinforced cooperation out of the institutional framework of the Union (see the example of the Schengen agreement).

Thus, while some commentators argue that flexibility will and must be the outcome of the IGC and that most member states are aware of this, other point to a growing reluctance among negotiating states to accept a general flexibility clause at the IGC.²⁶ There is currently less support for a general flexibility clause, which would apply to all pillars. Greece has explicitly rejected flexibility which would 'introduce permanent discriminations among Member States'²⁷; Spain is reluctant to accept the clause as it fears being left behind²⁸; Ireland would accept it only on a case by case basis and underlines that a core

²⁵ **International Herald Tribune**, 10-11 May 1997.

²⁶ Frank Vibert, 'Structured Flexibility in the European Union', **European Policy Forum**, 1996.

²⁷ **Agence Europe** No. 6701, 3 April 1996, p. 4.

²⁸ **Financial Times**, 18 June 1996.

cannot be exclusive²⁹; Portugal has similar concerns³⁰. Clearly, many small states find the concept difficult. Great Britain, although supportive of the concept in the past may not like what it implies for it in practice.

4.5. Central European reactions

In fact, flexibility is the recipe which allows to overcome the apparent opposition between widening and deepening, said Kinkel at a meeting with his French counterpart in January 1997.³¹ But little so far has been said by the two partners about what kind of impact flexibility will have on new members.

The implications of flexibility (as shaky as it seems now) for enlargement are a matter of interpretation but they point towards the possibility of two-step enlargement in which the inclusion of new members into the political dimension (CFSP) could precede their economic adhesion. German politicians continue to be more positively predisposed towards enlargement, but clearly both countries realize the costs of adhesion of new members to the first pillar. Their agricultural, steel and textile industries may suffer, and the budgetary contributions may grow considerably.

Central European candidate countries find themselves between a rock and a hard place in assessing the concept of flexibility. Flexibility could mean a way of coming into the EU structures in a credible way, without scaring its current members by creating the need to drastically reform and cancel programmes such as CAP,

²⁹ **Agence Europe**, No. 6705, 11 April 1996, p. 5.

³⁰ **Agence Europe**, No. 6689, 16 March 1996, p. 3.

³¹ Knut Pries, "Flexibilitaet" soll Interessen der EU-Mitglieder vereinen. Bonn und Paris werben fuer ein neues Denkmodel', **Frankfurter Rundschau**, 21 January 1997.

which clearly would not endure the addition of new Central European beneficiaries in their current form. Any deepening of European integration without flexibility makes it more difficult for Central Europeans to join as full members. It is reported that 'Polish ... officials say they welcome this debate ... because it makes East European aspirations to become members of the EU more credible.'³² And if flexibility is the compromise formula that France and Germany have found, than rejection of the principle could also mean less support for enlargement processes among the influential members of the Union.

Quick access to CFSP, without having to conform to rules in other areas of the EU³³, would give the Central European countries both a certain informal security guarantee, which they desire so much, and a way of making their security and defence concerns known. It could also improve their international weight and standing. Nevertheless, not only do most EU member states not support the notion of partial membership, but Central European countries, faced with a similar problem in the context of NATO enlargement, understandably protest that they do not wish to be second class members. There is concern that if French and Germans are prepared to leave other West European countries behind in their drive for integration, then they might relegate Central Europeans to the sidelines of the integration process altogether³⁴.

³² Lionel Barber, 'Measuring up for a wider EU', **The Financial Times** 27 September 1994.

³³ Proposals to that effect have been put forward, see for example H. And W. Wallace, **Flying together in a larger and more diverse European Union**. The Hague: Scientific Council for Government Policy, 1995, p. 49.

³⁴ See reaction of Foreign Minister Andrzej Olechowski, in Krystyna Grzybowska, 'Wspolny cel - zjednoczona Europa' (Common goal - united Europe), **Rzeczpospolita** 16

They share the concerns of some small EU states which fear that the concept could be used to keep them permanently from the core of countries. Additionally they worry that the concept could be used to justify not helping the weaker among EU countries (to which category they would belong following enlargement) but rather to relegate them to a periphery. EU membership is seen by candidates as an opportunity to 'catch up', which they are afraid would not be provided under flexible arrangements.³⁵

Prospective members have been rather underhand about the vision of integrated Europe. The explanation is the same for all of them: they have currently rather limited access and means to influence the debate on the shape of the EU to come, and at the same time any statement could cost them support from a Western European state which finds its vision questioned. Alas, most Central European policy-makers stay silent on this issue, but a few have offered their views, and they do not lend themselves to the goal of constructing a federally structured Europe.

Proposals of 'variable EU geometry'³⁶ have thus been received with mixed feelings. The concept of flexibility, although it has some positive connotations for candidate countries is seen by them as rather dangerous. The issue boils down to something that is also important in the context of NATO: the candidate countries in both of these organizations want to join them the way they are now. The reforms that take place in both frameworks create organizations that may not be as

September 1994.

³⁵ Leszek Jesien, 'The IGC Flexibility Clause In the Context of Enlargement', **Studien des Institutes Fuer den Donauraum und Mitteleuropa** July 1996, p. 18.

³⁶ See Lionel Barber and James Blitz, 'Kohl plays down plan for multi-speed EU', **The Financial Times** 6 September 1994.

attractive. At the same time the reforms are needed to accommodate the presence of additional countries within them, and it is France and Germany in the context of the IGC that pushes for these reforms.

6. Conclusion

The final answer to the widening versus deepening debate in the EU will be of great significance to the partnership of the two countries. And thus we are back to the question whether the partnership is durable or whether the post-enlargement period will be the real test. The concept of flexibility allows for the squaring of the circle of Franco-German views of enlargement. Of course, flexibility is not *Allheilmittel*. But politicians of both countries realize the possibility of paralysis of an enlarged Union. Giscard d'Estaing said already in 1991 that 'when we will be 15 or 20, paralysis is almost certain. Europe then will need an engine, this engine is the Franco-German friendship.'³⁷ The eerie vision of a two bloc Europe (Germany and the East, France and the South) is at the core of the attempts of the two countries to find compromises on their rather incompatible visions of CFSP.

But the application of the concept of flexibility may be at the core of the future of European integration in many respects. Clearly its implications are not clearly presented and debated in Western as well as in Eastern and Central Europe. Discussions are needed both in France and Germany and the EU as such on what the concept of flexibility may mean for new members, which areas it would be applied to and which ways.

Furthermore, in dealing with EU's Central European partners,

³⁷ Giscard d'Estaing in *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 22 November 1991.

assurance should be given that the purpose is not to create directorates of powerful countries. Particularly for the transition periods for new members, assurances that cores will be variable should be given and that Central European applicants is the access to the I (EC) pillar. These steps are vital because already in NATO, despite the assurances to the contrary, Central European states' membership may deliver less than expected.

As Ischinger and Koelsch from the German Foreign Ministry argue in an article in a German newspaper, no ambitious approaches to CFSP have a chance at the IGC, and that holds true despite the change of the British government. But attempts to propose *Hilfskonstruktionen* which create the impression that foreign policy can be made in Brussels and therefore that it can be 'communitarized' do not help.³⁸ While that is certainly the case, the authors acknowledge as well, that already under the Maastricht Treaty, the EU has in CFSP at its disposal tools, which given an agreement and the will of member countries, could be used effectively. Flexibility is thus a concept whose beauty lies not, or not only, in its acceptability to (some) member states, or its use in the context of the CFSP, but in the effect it has on the Franco-German relations.

But what about the French and German relations with Central and Eastern Europe? Germany has had closer links with Central Europe than France. But will it remain this way? Central European countries hope for a larger involvement of France in the region. As a Polish author indicates, the base for such links would be not only historical ties to France but also the fact that the candidate countries almost unanimously support the French vision

³⁸ Wolfgang Ischinger and Eberhard Koelsch, 'Was Mehrheitsentscheidungen erreichen koennen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine* 2 May 1997.

of Europe.³⁹ This makes sense: it has been only a few years since the Central European states regained their sovereignty. Shifts in the Franco-German relationship thus appear possible as a consequence of enlargement to the East - surprisingly not always necessarily in favour of Germany and German concepts of integration, and not necessarily in favour of the Franco-German vision of flexible arrangements within CFSP.

³⁹ Kazana, p. 35.