

Continuity in the face of upheaval – British Strategic Culture and the impact of the Blair government.

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Abstract

This chapter will consider how the elements of continuity and change in British foreign policy that emerged under the current Labour government will be managed in the short to medium term and ask what their fuller implications for the UK and European security may be in the longer run. The paper will examine how the change that transpired after 1997 which saw a new pro-European stance on security can be reconciled with the prevailing continuities in British strategic culture, namely Britain's special relationship with the US, its global role and as demonstrated in the case of Iraq, the UK's negation of Franco-German security initiatives. The paper will also emphasise the central importance of the UK's commitment to the EU's security policy ambitions, given that the UK armed forces are the most capable in Europe and as confirmed in Iraq, an ESDP without a UK contribution would have no credibility. Despite Blair's policy overtures towards developing greater European military capabilities, the continued reliance on the USA has meant that British strategic culture has displayed remarkable continuity rather than fundamental transformation.

Introduction¹

The United Kingdom's attitude towards the use of armed force has been conditioned by a series of cultural and historical factors. Strategic culture has not remained static in the British case, but has gone through a process of incremental change to meet new challenges and new circumstances. British strategic culture, especially since 1945, has also emerged from a series of often conflicting pressures which British policy makers have had to balance – namely, the pull of Europeanist and Atlanticist visions of security and defence policy, coupled with the incremental reconceptualisation of the role of the armed forces in British foreign policy. Thus British strategic culture has sought to follow a course between the extremes of Atlanticism and Europeanism, which has had a substantial bearing on the use of the UK armed forces in the post-Cold War world. Of particular interest to this paper is the role played by Tony Blair and the Labour government since 1997 in outlining a new foreign policy direction for the UK, which has had a significant impact on the constitution of the UK's foreign policy and the role of the armed forces.

The British-American security relationship has had a profound influence on how the use of force is viewed under the Blair government, which has caused an imbalance in Tony Blair's attempts to develop European capabilities in order to strengthen transatlantic burden sharing. The doctrine of pre-emption as outlined in President George W Bush's National Security Strategy has had a significant impact on the role of the UK's armed forces by calling into question the United Nations Charter's clauses on the use of force in the international community.² The principle of pre-emption and Blair's support of the pre-emptive war against Iraq in 2003 has significantly shifted the conditions under which the British armed forces may be used,

despite the widespread concern of several of the UK's key partners, namely France and Germany. The ramifications of American influence on the Iraq issue is that the UK has more overtly *followed* American military planning in the run up to the Iraq war, during the conflict and in the post-conflict phase, rather than playing an influential operational role *in tandem* with the USA.³

After considering the central tenets of the UK's strategic culture, this article will highlight the exogenous pressures which the UK has come under since the end of the Cold War to assess to what extent the UK's position has shifted to meet new international challenges. The UK remains a key actor in NATO and EU security policy. The UK's aim has been to attempt to shape the development of both the EU and NATO to deal with the security concerns of the 21st century to fit with UK strategic culture and national interests. However, America's retreat from multilateral institutions and the Franco-German opposition to war on Iraq has left the UK in a vulnerable position in which its ability to influence both the development of the Common European Security and Defence Policy and American policy have gone through short-term difficulties.

Central historical tenets of UK strategic culture

Longhurst defines strategic culture as,

... a distinctive body of beliefs, attitudes and practices regarding the use of force, which are held by a collective (usually a nation) and arise gradually over time, through a unique and protracted historical process. Strategic culture is persistent over time, tending to outlast the era of its original inception, although it is not a permanent or static feature. It is shaped and

*influenced by formative periods and can alter, either fundamentally or piecemeal, at critical junctures in that collective's experiences.*⁴

For the UK, strategic culture defines the boundaries and conditions within which the British Armed Forces may be used as part of an overall foreign policy strategy. The British Defence Doctrine states that,

*...the UK's military strategic doctrine has to be sufficiently flexible to cope with shifts in perceptions of national interest reflected in policy. Those perceptions will not only change over time, they will be different to different groups within the state.*⁵

Whilst the British Defence Doctrine recognises the fluidity of British strategic culture, the UK has displayed remarkable continuity in its foreign policy and change only occurs incrementally. There are a number of central tenets of British strategic culture. Throughout the course of the twentieth century the UK has gone from being a major colonial power, been subjected to the horrors of fighting two world wars and had to deal with the constraints and threats associated with the Cold War era. The dramatic loss of relative power which UK suffered as a result of the costs of fighting two world wars within a 30 year period, necessitated a foreign policy in which the UK sought to 'punch above its own weight'.⁶

The multilateral structures which emerged after World War Two, the United Nations, Western European Union and in particular NATO, were key to British foreign and security policy during the Cold War, reinforcing in the minds of the British people and the political elites, the importance of the transatlantic link. The UK's commitment to the Atlantic Alliance and its ties with the United States formed

the cornerstone of British strategic culture during the Cold War, as well as in its global role as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The UK consistently sought to develop interoperability with American forces to ensure high levels of military capability and developed close links between the American and British intelligence communities.⁷ To a marked degree, this was undertaken to maintain the levels of interoperability between American and British troops which was developed during World War Two. Another cornerstone of the UK's commitment to the NATO alliance was the British nuclear deterrent which constitutes a key facet of British strategic culture. Membership of the nuclear club, within the framework of American extended deterrence was essential to British defence during the Cold War, despite occasional political tensions.⁸

Strategic culture during the Cold War was indelibly linked with NATO and America, during which time there were only the beginnings of loose European foreign policy co-ordination outside of the NATO framework in the form of European Political Co-operation.⁹ Defence and security policy during the Cold War was centrally concerned with maintaining the status quo, with the British armed forces concentrating on the defence of the realm and the NATO area from the Soviet threat. The UK sought to pursue its foreign policy agenda multilaterally, through NATO and the United Nations, and through the European Community from 1973. Ultimately, it was through multilateralism that the UK was able to maintain its influence throughout the Cold War period, backed up by its highly trained and respected military, playing a key role in NATO affairs.

It is important to note that by following a course of multilateralism the UK has become inextricably linked to the European security community.¹⁰ This has intensified as the need to find European answers to questions facing Europe's security establishment has grown since the end of the Soviet threat. The security community that has emerged in Europe has been described by Buzan and Waever as being constituted of,

*...a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another.*¹¹

The singular strategic cultures which have emerged within the EU Member States are therefore to a certain extent mutually constitutive and reinforcing, as they are working within the same structures and are buffeted by the same foreign policy challenges. The end of the Cold War fundamentally changed the political map of Europe and changed the role of the UK armed forces. As Longhurst states above, strategic culture is relatively resistant to change, except in cases of substantial transformation in the context in which policy concerning the use of force is made. As this article will outline, the end of the Cold War did not reduce the importance of the armed forces. Rather they have had to adapt to working within multinational crisis management operations and to the development to new NATO and EU military structures.

The post-Cold War era – redefining British Strategic Culture

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of an incremental strategic shift for British strategic culture. William Wallace noted in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War that, "In a transformed world order, British foreign policy requires a new rationale."¹² No longer faced with a threat from the Soviet Union, the UK and its partners were faced with new security policy challenges with the break-up of the

Soviet empire. It is through the UK's multilateral ties that Britain has been able to redefine the role of the British armed forces in the post-Cold War era, moving from static defence centred in Europe, to flexible forces deployable around the globe. Central to this shift have been debates concerning the institutional architecture of European security policy. These developments as we shall see have been key in redefining British strategic culture. As this article will show, British strategic culture in terms of foreign and security policy has gone through a process of incremental reframing since the advent of the first Labour government in 1997, but the principles underlying the use of the armed forces have displayed relative continuity.

Shifts in UK strategic culture have coincided with the major debates affecting security institutions in Europe during the 1990s.¹³ The UK has been a major player in these discussions revolving around the future of NATO in the post-Cold War era, and in the debates concerning the development of European military capabilities in the aftermath of the Kosovo war in 1998-1999.¹⁴ The UK's traditional role as a mediator between American and European concerns over security and defence policy has come to the fore in recasting the transatlantic security commitments of the Cold War period to fit the new world order.¹⁵

The need to move from static defence to rapidly deployable forces has been readily grasped by the UK, which has streamlined its armed forces from 315,000 to 210,000 personnel, and sought to divert spending into equipment suitable for rapid and flexible deployment around the globe. This has partly been as result of diminishing defence budgets in the aftermath of the Cold War, but also as a reaction to new strategic imperatives. As part of this process the United Kingdom was

instrumental in pushing for the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) arrangement within NATO as a central pillar of developing a more active European role within the alliance in the form of the European Security and Defence Initiative (ESDI).¹⁶ The CJTF arrangement was also an attempt to offset questioning in some quarters of NATO's predominance as the key security institution in post-Cold War Europe. Attempts to address this question have been central to NATO's move away from a predominantly collective defence orientation under Article V of the Washington Treaty, to more flexible crisis management operations.

Key to this reconceptualisation of defence and the role of the British armed forces was the UK's experiences in the former Yugoslavia throughout the 1990s, as well as involvement in Iraq, Sierra Leone, East Timor and Afghanistan. The move towards creating multinational, rapidly deployable forces has been a dynamic in evidence in both NATO and the EU, with the development of the NATO Reaction Force (NRF) and the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF) respectively. Consequently, British policy has been to move towards reinforcing interoperability, predominantly with the USA, in order to function effectively as part of multinational crisis management operations – and to reinforce what is referred to in defence jargon, 'network enabled capability'.¹⁷ In a recent speech to the Royal United Services Institute, the Defence Minister Geoff Hoon suggested that interoperability with the American armed forces was the priority.¹⁸ The close relationship between the British and American defence establishments is a central pillar of the UK's strategic culture, which is sure to continue and act as a brake on wide ranging Europeanisation within the Ministry of Defence and the British Armed Forces.¹⁹

The Strategic Defence Review 1998 sought to outline the post-Cold War conditions affecting British defence policy, a review which had already begun under the Major government.²⁰ Fundamental to the review's findings was that the UK no longer faced a direct threat, and therefore defence planning and capabilities needed to adapt to new circumstances and challenges. The implication of the SDR 1998 was that the UK was not exposed to any clearly defined threat since the passing of the Cold War. The UK's armed forces therefore had moved from a defensive orientation to one founded on their international role in peacekeeping on a global level. There was a clear strategic shift away from Cold War policy to meet the challenges of a disorderly world with the emphasis on rapidly deployable forces to work within multilateral, predominantly NATO, settings. The claim that the UK faced no clear threats was abandoned with the Strategic Defence Review New Chapter of 2002 and the Defence White Paper of 2003 which were prompted by the 11th September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington and the subsequent war in Afghanistan and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.²¹

The UK's colonial past, coupled with its institutional embedding in the international community, has created a sense of responsibility and global outlook in the minds of the British public and political elites regarding the UK's international responsibilities for peacekeeping and crisis management. There are no obvious 'no go areas' for the UK armed forces in the way that the German armed forces are constrained. A recent example of this was the UK's involvement in the EU's Operation Artemis in Bunia in the Democratic Republic of Congo (although the headquarters were based in Entebbe, Uganda) where the EU troops were deployed to assist the UN's humanitarian operation in the region (MONUC). The UK was

supportive of the mission and encouraged France to Europeanise the operation rather than conduct it on a looser multilateral basis.²² Despite this, German officials were extremely reluctant to consider the deployment of Bundeswehr troops for fear that this would create a precedent concerning the deployment of the Bundeswehr in Africa, and raising negative connotations of a new Afrikacorps.²³

The British armed forces have been characterised by their pragmatism and flexibility since the end of the Cold War. The British armed forces also work within a very wide operational remit, which can include a range of operational activities from war fighting to anti-drug smuggling operations – a range of issues which the British Defence Doctrine outlines falls within a ‘continuum of conflict’ in which the armed forces might be called to operate.²⁴ British defence doctrine uses the idea of a spectrum of tension, with peace at one extreme and war at the other.²⁵ This versatility has been vital in how the armed forces are deployed to meet contemporary security challenges.

Blair’s influence on the UK’s strategic culture

Since 1997 Prime Minister Tony Blair has embarked on a series of substantial foreign and security policy projects which have had the potential to significantly impact on the UK’s strategic culture. The four central developments which have impacted upon security and defence policy have been the decision to commit more fully to building European military capabilities in crisis management within the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) framework, Blair’s commitment to a more interventionist style of foreign policy, his continued commitment to the transatlantic security relationship, and finally, the desire to frame these developments, where possible, within an integrated foreign policy reflecting social democratic values. Central to this section

is the development of the Blair doctrine of international community which has committed the UK to greater levels of intervention on a global scale. Whilst Blair has attempted to balance his commitments to the European Union and the United States, the Iraq war in 2003 has made clear that in military terms, the UK remains firmly wedded to the transatlantic relationship.

Central tenets of Blairite foreign and security policy

Blair sought to redefine British foreign policy on taking office in 1997 which has had a significant impact on the role of the armed forces. The implication of Blair's new approach to foreign and security policy has been a renewed commitment to military intervention as a means to back diplomacy. In order to pursue such a strategy, Blair has sought to maintain transatlantic security structures by attempting to create mutually reinforcing military structures in the European Union and NATO. Blair's doctrine of international community represents an important shift in British foreign policy as it disregards the sanctity of national sovereignty based on the Westphalian states system in cases where nation-states have systematically sought to abuse the rights of individuals or groups within their territory.²⁶ This is fundamentally a shift in the conditions under which the UK will consider the use of force. During Blair's time in office, the armed forces have been deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Kosovo, deployments which have taken some impetus from Blair's internationalist doctrine. This shift in strategic culture has not always met with support within the British population as a whole.²⁷ This new form of interventionism also raises doubts within the international legal community, regarding the legality of such a strategy.²⁸

Robert Cooper's call for a new liberal imperialism, suggesting that the post-modern West should be more willing to intervene in the modern, less-developed

world, fits with Blair's interventionist ideals.²⁹ The existence of a embedded system of governance in the North and West founded on common institutions and shared values, with their holistic views on the security concept and relatively porous national borders, is markedly different, according to Cooper, to the less developed world where anarchy is more pronounced in the international system and traditional interstate competition remains.³⁰ A nexus between the desire to connect domestic and international issues to address the challenges of the international community through a strategy of *integrated foreign policy*, an *interventionist approach* based on Blair's conception of international community, a belief in developing more adequate *burden-sharing within the transatlantic security community*, and the continued aim to *promote the UK's international interest* has characterised Blair's approach to foreign policy during his time in office. Blair has consistently sought to explain his foreign and security policy through this nexus, even if at times it appears highly contradictory.

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The Labour government has also sought to place a social democratic accent on foreign and security policy during its time in office.³¹ This has involved pushing Labour's idea of *integrated foreign policy*. Essentially, Blair's approach to integrated foreign policy implies that,

*'...for all the threats of terrorism and international security, the only true path to lasting peace is to be united also in recognising that without those values of social justice, solidarity, opportunity and security for all, the world will never prosper or be fully at peace'*³²

The implication of such a policy is that a wide range of domestic and foreign policy instruments can be mobilised to deal with the challenges facing the global community. Fundamentally, the social democratic Progressive Governance forum promotes a three-pronged foreign policy strategy of empowering citizens, providing opportunities to people around the globe to improve their social conditions, and stressing the responsibility of social democratic states to work towards these goals as a central pillar of their respective foreign policy platforms.³³ One clear example of this is in the EU's response to the threat from international terrorism. Despite Blair's support of the American-led war in Iraq in 2003, the UK has sought, albeit it with varying degrees of consistency and engagement, to work with its EU partners through the framework of Justice and Home Affairs as a means to tackle terrorism, involving issues such as immigration which traditionally have fallen under the sole competence of national administrations, and trying to address the problems of social exclusion and poverty in countries where terrorism has taken root.

The Labour Party has sought to balance its obligation to the hard security measures with a commitment to the spread of human rights and prosperity.³⁴ Robin Cook's declaration of an Ethical Foreign Policy was driven not only by personal convictions and those of his party, but also in order to create a degree of political distance from the last Conservative party government which had been dogged by scandals, often relating to arms dealing.³⁵ As a consequence an Ethical Defence Export Policy was developed to attempt to codify the arms export policy in the UK.³⁶ A moral or and ethical component of foreign policy under the Labour government since 1997 has been to the fore in its desire to forge, if only at a rhetorical level, an integrated foreign policy approach.

Moving towards Europe

Where the Blair government has attempted to challenge traditional British strategic culture and the policies of the previous Thatcher and Major Conservative governments has been in its determination to use European instruments to achieve some of its foreign policy goals and to develop a more interventionist foreign policy in terms of crisis management and conflict prevention around the globe.³⁷ Lessons learned in Bosnia relating to the difficulty surrounding the deployment of troops in multinational units also encouraged Blair to seek improved co-operation with his European partners. This has been within the context of a reassessment of the Labour Party relationship with the European Union since the Policy Review Process undertaken after its third straight election defeat in 1987.³⁸

One of Prime Minister Blair's central foreign policy foci since arriving in office in 1997 has been the decision to commit to developing European military capabilities as part of ESDP. The Franco-British St Malo agreement of December 1998 marked a definitive change, or a *volte face* in Hill's view, in British strategic culture, as it opened up the possibility of developing autonomous European military capabilities.³⁹ Tony Blair saw the emergence of a greater European commitment to burden-sharing with the United States in security policy as a way to influence Europe by shaping the development of the ESDP and balance American security relations by proving more suitable and useful strategic partners. This marks a shift in strategic culture within the UK because during the Cold War and in its immediate aftermath, questioning the absolute centrality of NATO and America's role in European security affairs was considered anathema in Whitehall.⁴⁰

Blair's commitment to the creation of European Union military capabilities emerged from the idea that,

*Europe needs genuine military operational capability - not least forces able to react quickly and work together effectively - and genuine political will. Without these, we will always be talking about an empty shell. But we also need to check the institutions are right. To decide how the EU, WEU and NATO can best mesh together.*⁴¹

Charles Grant, director of the Centre for European Reform in London, and British diplomat Robert Cooper were important figures in convincing Blair to press for a greater role for the UK in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as a way playing a greater leadership role within the EU.⁴² The acceptance of this proposal has impacted significantly on the options open to the UK in foreign and security policy, including the option of conducting low-level military operations with the UK's European partners without American involvement. The desire to lead in foreign and security policy within the EU was part of a wider British strategy of 'step-change' in which the UK has sought to improve its position in the EU by developing strategic partnerships with other EU member states.⁴³ Blair also recognised that the EU's foreign and security policy was unwieldy and ineffective with cumbersome decision-making procedures, a belief that was reinforced in Blair's mind as a result of the failure of the EU to deal with the Kosovo problem without US involvement.⁴⁴ It was after the Pörschach European Council meeting in October 1998 that the British approached the French concerning the creation of more credible EU foreign and security policy capabilities at St Malo.

The context in which strategic culture is expressed within the UK, the balancing of Atlanticist and Europeanist interests, has continued to provide British diplomats and politicians with a stern test. The Defence White Paper 1999 recommitted the UK to NATO in light of Blair's moves towards Europe, and with one eye on the symbolism of the fiftieth anniversary of the Atlantic Alliance:

*NATO is crucial for Britain because a vigorous and relevant Atlantic Alliance, including an effective European pillar, is essential to our security interests. The essential reasons for its formation under the Attlee Government of 50 years ago endure today. Only by acting with our Allies in Europe and North America can we safeguard our future and ensure that no major new military threats emerge. NATO has shown that it can act effectively in Bosnia and Kosovo.*⁴⁵

The political aspects of UK strategic culture have shifted with Blair's commitment to European military capabilities and his doctrine of the international community. However, military strategic culture has remained fairly consistent – whilst deployment in Afghanistan and Iraq represent major deployments in the war against terrorism, the mechanics of conducting these missions have not changed substantially. The greatest shift in terms of the military is undoubtedly the necessity to work alongside armed forces from other states within multinational operations. The prevalence of coalition-led operations, based around an American core, will continue to predominate in today's security environment.⁴⁶

The UK has had a shaping role within the process of establishing the European Security and Defence Policy. Central to the UK's singular stance is the British

conviction that capabilities should drive co-operation, rather than efforts to deepen integration within the European Union project.⁴⁷ This is reinforced by the traditions of British strategic culture, in which co-operation with European partners has been founded primarily on a rationale relating to strategic and military imperatives, rather than as part of an overall political process. The UK also retains an exaggerated intergovernmentalist attitude towards the role of the armed forces within CFSP, which makes it very sensitive to suggestions of developing decision-making structures based on Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) or constructive abstention rather than through unanimity.⁴⁸ In many ways, this has resulted in the preference for co-operation with the American armed forces, rather than within the Brussels political jungle. However, the UK has pledged 12,500 troops, 18 ships and 72 combat planes to the European Rapid Reaction Force out of a total of 50,000 - 60,000 troops, making it alongside France and Germany, one of the three main backers of the force. The UK has been consistently sceptical of developments to duplicate existing NATO structures within the EU, such as the Belgian, French, German and Luxembourg proposal for an EU planning centre in Tervuren made on the 29th April 2003 in the midst of the diplomatic fall-out over the invasion of Iraq.

Public opinion within the UK has often appeared hesitant regarding the creation of the ERRF within the ESDP framework.⁴⁹ As a result Blair has had to convince both political elites and the general public of the rationale for such a venture. The discourse which Blair uses is almost exclusively centred around the idea that European capabilities will strengthen the transatlantic link. Blair also seeks to reassure European sceptics that the UK's strategy will ensure that the transatlantic link is not compromised. Speaking at the University of Birmingham, Blair stated that the,

*... UK has a powerful role to play as a bridge between USA and Europe - we are economically strong and politically influential in both. Britain's friendship with the United States is an asset for our European partners. We want to be fully engaged in a united Europe, working with an internationalist USA.*⁵⁰

Blair underscores that within UK strategic culture, the UK does not seek to choose between Europeanist and Atlanticist conceptions of security policy – they can be mutually reinforcing projects rather than competitive ventures.⁵¹ The difficulty is, that the UK is constantly being asked to choose between these two positions by its American and EU partners. In the end, CFSP/ESDP represents the ‘ultimate compromise’ for the UK in forging stronger transatlantic relations through the development of meaningful European military capabilities.⁵² However, the UK’s closest military partner, the USA, doubts the UK’s ability to maintain this compromise in the medium to long-term.

The UK continues to understand that CFSP is a nested issue within wider discussions on the future of European integration. Blair’s belief that the UK could gain across the board within the EU by committing itself to lead in matters relating to foreign and security policy has proved sensible. The negotiations revolving around the creation of a European Constitution have shown that the UK has extracted concessions in other aspects of European integration in return for supporting Franco-German measures to boost the EU’s military planning capabilities. Blair has also attempted to show that he is willing repair relations with EU partners and demonstrate that the UK is not overly influenced by America in foreign and security policy.⁵³ It is therefore clear that Britain continues to resist substantial Europeanisation of its foreign and security policy.

Iraq, the future of ESDP and British Strategic Culture

The war on Iraq unearthed latent divisions within the transatlantic security community concerning the use of force. Britain's ability to balance its Europeanist and Atlanticist impulses was put under extreme pressure by the decision to invade Iraq. Whilst the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) was the official reason for America and the UK to depose Saddam Hussein, Blair sought to justify the UK's actions in the aftermath of the war in terms consistent with his doctrine of international community – freeing the Iraqi people from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein's regime. The attacks on the world trade centre on 11th September 2001 also called into question the contention as contained within the Strategic Defence Review of 1998 that the UK was not open to any substantial threat. This section will examine the implications of the war on Iraq in 2003 in order to determine its effect on UK strategic culture and for the UK's future role within ESDP.

Whilst the impact of the war on Iraq on relations between the UK and its major European partners France and Germany created tensions, its consequences should not be overstated. The divisions over the war in Iraq did not imply a rethink on the UK's part about the usefulness of ESDP, it did, however, prove a sobering reminder of the current residual limitations of European foreign and security policy co-operation. The fall-out between the UK-USA and France-Germany-Russia was inevitably cast within the enduring Atlanticist versus Europeanist debates which had received new impetus from Kagan's provocative text.⁵⁴ Despite the tension on both sides of the Atlantic, measures were taken to repair relationships on a functional level,

particularly through Germany's efforts to extend the remit of NATO's ISAF operations in Afghanistan.

However, the prosecution of the war against Iraq and the embedding of the principle of pre-emption within the Bush administration's strategic options have implications for the development of UK strategic culture.⁵⁵ By continuing on this trajectory, the UK risks undoing the work which it has done in the realms of ESDP, unless Blair is able to convince his European allies to accept his views, and prove that he is fully committed to fulfilling on his goal of greater transatlantic burden-sharing. The UK's consistent support for the Eurofighter-Typhoon project has demonstrated its commitment to developing European capabilities. The UK must continue to urge its EU partners to develop greater military capabilities and redouble their efforts to find a workable solution to the disagreements currently on show between the USA and France and Germany. What is clear is that without the UK, ESDP is very limited in what it can achieve militarily and more importantly, politically, in world affairs. The existing stumbling blocks in EU security policy relate mainly to hard security issues revolving around the use of force.

The involvement of the UK armed forces in counter-terrorist measures has not fundamentally changed their approach to the use of force. The campaign against terrorism has involved the type of operations for which the British army is well trained and has a history of fighting. However, Blair's commitment to support the strategy of the United States with the implications which this has in terms of international law, has raised questions concerning the role of the UK armed forces. It is within this context that opinion within the UK has sought to distance itself from

American policy. President Bush's decision to implement the National Missile Defence scheme also has substantial implications on UK strategic policy, especially if it chooses to participate in the programme.⁵⁶

The Impact of UK strategic culture on European defence and the emergence of a European Strategic Culture

Examining strategic cultures of EU member states often uncovers more cause for divergence than convergence. Lindley-French has pointed to the 'strategic schizophrenia' of the EU on issues relating to defence, with the existence of minimalist and maximalist conceptions of security – the former equating security to purely defensive capabilities whilst the latter is geared up to aggressively pursue pre-emptive security.⁵⁷ Therefore, talk of a European Strategic Culture⁵⁸ is premature in light of recent divisions over Iraq which are exacerbated by a noticeable failure of states within the enlarged transatlantic security community of the post-Cold War world to achieve a semblance of strategic and military doctrinal orthodoxy in the face of the growing complexity of contemporary security policy.⁵⁹

The debates on CFSP within the latest long-running Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) in 2003 - 2004 have not been straightforward. The suggestion by the Italian Council Presidency in the second half of 2003 for the extension of QMV in matters relating to defence and the proposal to include a mutual defence clause within the treaty was met with a frosty reception in Whitehall.⁶⁰ Likewise, the suggestion for a separate ESDP planning cell to be set up in Tervuren was considered a British 'red line' issue. The compromise which the UK was able to forge with France was that the reduced planning capability which could operate separate from NATO could be situated within the European Union Military Staff in Brussels.

Debates about ESDP have largely focused on institutional arrangements, rather than the business of constructing shared norms and developing a European military culture. The UK has consistently sought to ally itself with America in terms of hard security, and the Kosovo war and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 have only reinforced in the minds of the MoD that the military relationship with the United States should be privileged above all others. Nevertheless, the UK remains the lynchpin of any credible European military outfit and has been committed to building capabilities on the basis that they do not upset transatlantic arrangements, namely, that the United States has confidence that any EU capabilities will not become a rival venture.⁶¹

One of the difficulties in establishing a credible ESDP lies in the vast range of military capabilities which the EU member states possess – from the UK and France down to tiny Luxembourg. Yet despite this, it is imperative that the EU is effective in crisis management, inclusive in ensuring that all member states are represented and is viewed as a legitimate and credible international actor. Yet the ‘capabilities-expectations gap’ which Christopher Hill identified has still to be satisfactorily resolved.⁶² If the Franco-German tandem is to carry on regardless of British scepticism on European defence, the creation of an ESDP avant-garde will compromise any hope of achieving a common European foreign and security policy, and EU foreign policy might resemble the so-called ‘coalitions of the willing’ of which some EU Member States criticise the United States of employing today.

Despite this, a significant step forward in working towards greater cohesion on the strategic level among EU Member States has been the publishing of the European Security Strategy in December 2003.⁶³ The aim of the document is to outline the challenges and opportunities facing the EU in foreign affairs, and to agree upon a common set of principles on which the EU of twenty-five Member States can agree on. Whilst the European Security Strategy does not represent a fundamental stage in the development of a European Strategic Culture, it does provide the basis on which discussion among the twenty-five can proceed. It is incumbent on the UK as the EU's leading military power to take the lead in developing greater effectiveness in EU capabilities, especially in light of the EU taking over from the NATO Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia from the second half of 2004. British-French-German plans to develop, small, rapidly deployable 'Battle Groups', is yet another example of the UK's plans to improve EU military capabilities.⁶⁴

The enlargement of the European Union has always increased the scope of EU foreign and security policy, as new members introduce new foreign and security policy interests and traditions. The diplomatic fall-out over Iraq uncovered that the UK stands to gain important allies in the 2004 enlargement of the EU to twenty-five states. Above all, Poland displayed its avowedly Atlanticist views through its support of America and Britain's line on the Iraq issue.⁶⁵ Whilst the UK has received strong support for its policy line from Poland, the UK does not share Poland's scepticism over the development of ESDP and its impact on transatlantic relations and has tried to temper Poland's attitude to the development of EU military capabilities. The UK and the USA have encouraged Polish involvement in the development of ESDP. At the Feira European Council summit in June 2000, the UK was active in supporting

Polish proposals for the inclusion of the EU applicant states in discussions on ESDP.⁶⁶ The UK then is well placed to play an influential role within CFSP in an enlarged EU.

NATO and EU enlargement have always been parallel processes in which Western Europe has sought to expand the zone of peace and stability further to the east.⁶⁷ NATO enlargement in the eyes of the candidate states has also been a means to lock-in American involvement on the continent. The UK has been committed to both processes of enlargement and the UK armed forces have been highly active in training candidate states in the ways of the Atlantic Alliance in advance of their accession. In this way, the UK has sought to provide an example of how armed forces may be integrated as a democratically accountable civic institution within a nation-state. The socialisation into the methods and norms of NATO has been a key task within such projects as the NATO's Partnership for Peace strategy.

Enlargement of the EU and NATO has been central to the future security and stability of Europe in the post-Cold War era. However, the hope of overcoming the Cold War divisions of Europe and reaping the rewards of a peace dividend has not lessened the demands placed on the British armed forces. In particular, events since 11th September 2001 have seen the UK place greater emphasis on the use of force in international affairs within the context of the American-led 'war on terror', as outlined in Figure 1. Blair's engagement in international politics has placed considerable demands on the UK's military resources, and in the cases of Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, involved engaging in war fighting. This has resulted in the prevalence of hard security measures in British foreign policy under the Blair government, which has necessitated the maintenance of strong military ties with the USA and complicated the

development of EU capabilities with the UK's European partners. With this in mind it is clear that Tony Blair has not always been able to link the four aspects of his foreign policy nexus, as outlined above. The continued reliance on the USA in military matters and the failure to implement radical change in the UK's foreign policy has meant that continuity has defined the UK's strategic culture under Tony Blair, rather than witnessing a Blair foreign policy revolution.

Conclusions

The UK is a major diplomatic and military player in today's world. There are a number of reasons for this. Mangold neatly sums up the range of resources that the UK draws on within its foreign and security policy culture.

Military power is complemented by what has become a well rehearsed list of more tangible assets – the global primacy of the English language, the reputation of the BBC world service, an unusually long democratic tradition, commitment to the rule of law, and London's role as an international financial centre. In an era of globalisation, Britain has the advantage of a wide range of international contacts, spanning the developed and the developing world. Its membership of some 120 international organisations includes the most important international clubs, NATO, the EU, G-8, the OECD, the Commonwealth and the UN Security Council, of which it has permanent membership. This is an almost unique combination of 'hard' and 'soft' power, only matched by the USA, whose instincts, however, are less positively internationalist.⁶⁸

Maintaining close multilateral ties with its key partners has been central to British strategic culture since World War Two. NATO and the European Union have been central institutions for the pursuit of British interests.

The current government's aim of framing an *integrated foreign policy* consisting of four pillars - an *interventionist foreign policy*, a belief in developing more adequate *burden-sharing within the transatlantic security community*, and the continued aim to *promote the UK's international interest* - has presented the UK with a number of challenges. Blair has had to convince the British public that the UK must play a leading role in world affairs, even if this involves the deployment of the armed forces around the globe. By fashioning a framework of action within the Labour party's belief in an integrated foreign policy, the government has sought to outline the deployment of British troops within an overall strategy of the doctrine of international community. This is the key belief that drives Tony Blair, but public perceptions have been of a prime minister following American leads rather than defining a clear rationale for British foreign policy actions.

The principles underlining the use of the armed forces have not dramatically changed since Labour took power in 1997. However, the circumstances in which they are used, based on the post-11th September 2001 environment and in the campaign against international terrorism, has impacted upon UK strategic culture as a whole. The UK's unflinching support of the USA in the war on Iraq has complicated the shifts made in British strategic thinking in the form of the initial moves since St Malo to work towards building European military capabilities. America's 'divide and conquer' tactics have meant that a European strategic culture remains a distant hope

for most Europeans, particularly in light of the enlargement of the EU in 2004 to include member states with strong affinities to NATO and the security relationship with the USA.

The UK remains a highly engaged international actor, whose colonial past, combined with its multilateral links, give it a global reach and relative influence that few states can match. Shifts in the European security environment since the end of the Cold War, and the insecurity that characterises the post-11th September 2001 world have challenged the UK's ability to adapt effectively to new foreign policy problems. In particular, the balance that the UK has sought to strike concerning Atlanticist and Europeanist visions of security policy has come under increasing strain. Due to the current upheavals in international order, the UK has not sought radical upheaval of its foreign and security policy. Despite Blair's efforts to shape the development of European military capabilities to reinforce transatlantic burden sharing, events have consistently forced Blair's foreign policy to be largely reactive in scope. Thus, Blair has not initiated substantial change in UK strategic culture, preferring to try and maintain the UK's current position within the transatlantic community.

Biographical Note

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Figures

Integrated Foreign Policy	Interventionist Approach
Transatlantic Burden-Sharing	Promoting the British National Interest

Figure 1: The Blair Foreign Policy Nexus

¹ Many thanks to Dr Steven Haines and Dr Joanne Wright, Royal Holloway, University of London, for their helpful comments on the initial drafts of this contribution.

² Article 2, paragraph 4 of the UN Charter states: “All states shall refrain from the threat or use of force in their international relations”, with Article 51 of the Charter outlining the conditions of individual or collective self-defence as the only legal use of force. Pre-emptive self-defence is not explicitly ruled out, nor is it ruled in. See Weiss T G, Forsythe D P & Coate R A (2004) *The United Nations and Changing World Politics*, 4th Edition, Oxford, Westview Press, pp.3-28.

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