

## Coherent Policy or Random Opportunism – The British Approach to Esdp

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### THE DIFFERING APPROACHES OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE TO ESDP

It is remarkable when one looks closely at this issue to note the switchback course it follows, not only as an element of government and defence policy, but also in the awareness and responses this generates in informed British public opinion. Europe is a touchy subject in every aspect and defence is no exception. The common perception is that the British do not want their forces tied up in some anomalous and ineffective European project that denies sovereignty and national control over its destiny. From time to time the critics are mollified, with the exception of those who would never be happy with any form of European cooperation, when Nato and the Eu are seen to be in harmony and any European initiative is not regarded as a threat, but rather as complementary to Nato's agenda. All is peace for a while before something causes friction, thus generating suspicions once more and so the cycle continues. This also mirrors the response of the United States to European initiatives: at one moment it is up in arms because the effectiveness and integrity of Nato is seen to be challenged, the next it is reassured and all is well again. True there are forces that appear to challenge the principle of Nato's primacy and seek an independent role for Europe, until recently primarily the French, but even they were aware of the unsustainable costs that would be incurred if Europe were to break away from the Nato infrastructure and establish a totally separate force with full headquarters and command and control facilities and that any attempt to take such a radical course would have split Europe into two camps, which with the recent enlargement of Europe would have put any French-led faction into a minority. Further, the French are no fools and they can see that there is a strong case for Nato's continued effectiveness, in which France will play its part when it chooses, even if it wishes to snipe from the sidelines from time to time. Up until the French presidential elections in 2007 there were definitely two schools of thought, producing considerable latent tension associated with the development of the whole process between those, led by the French, with the aim of a full-

ly independent European security and defence policy (Esdp) and the remainder, led by the British, who were determined to retain Esdp within Nato, as reflected in the 1999 Washington summit. However, President Sarkozy has shown a radical approach to this subject and is very keen to improve the very frosty relations with the United States, to the extent that in a major speech on defence and national security to the French National Assembly on 17 June 2008 he announced that France would rejoin the Nato military command structure, something that seemed unimaginable after the failure of the last plan for such integration in 1997. There is hard bargaining ahead and France will demand significant rewards for such a step, but for the first time since Charles de Gaulle took France out of the structure, re-integration is now firmly on the agenda. When President Bush made Paris, as opposed to London, the «centre-piece» of his week long farewell trip to Europe in mid-June this reflected the dramatic transformation in Us-French relations since the election of President Sarkozy who seems to have donned the «mantle once worn by Tony Blair»<sup>1</sup>.

President Sarkozy went on to say that «France's taking up its place in Nato again will mean that the Alliance gives Europe a larger role», but he was determined that there should be a *quid pro quo* since he went on to add, «Let's start by revitalising European defence in the coming months. To my mind there can be no progress on integrating France into Nato unless some progress is previously made on European defence»<sup>2</sup>. So, he is determined that there should be marked progress in European defence capability, stating that «I intend to make defence and security policy an example of a concrete European achievement», and reiterated the need for Europe to have the capability specified in the Helsinki headline goals, but which has remained unfulfilled. So, in many ways, he has stolen the mantle that used to be the province of the United Kingdom in setting the European defence agenda, particularly in dovetailing it into Nato strategic policy.

Looking back to the last years of the XX<sup>th</sup> century we will see that from the Nato Berlin summit of 1996 until the Eu Nice summit of December 2000 the evolution of the concept of the potential for independent European military action in peace support operations to be

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<sup>1</sup> TOM BALDWIN and CHARLES BREMNER, *Is France America's new best friend?*, «The Times», 14 June 2008.

<sup>2</sup> President NICOLAS SARKOZY, Speech by the President of the Republic on defence and national security given to both houses of the French Assembly, Paris, 17 June 2008.

undertaken without stepping on Nato's toes had proceeded relatively smoothly, albeit with the occasional problem. The biggest upset had occurred when in the run-up to the planned re-integration of France into Nato's military command structure at the 1997 Madrid Nato summit, President Chirac got carried away to the extent of demanding that the Commander in chief of Nato's Southern region (Cincsouth) should be a European, which, by the rotation principle, would therefore have been a French officer from time to time. This the Americans were not prepared to sanction, although, surprisingly, they were ready to give up the post of commander striking force South (Comstrikforsouth), the Nato Southern region carrier group commander<sup>3</sup>. The end result was an undignified public disagreement between Presidents Chirac and Clinton, both not long in office and perhaps yet to appreciate the finer points of diplomacy, that resulted in France's withdrawal from the plan to re-enter Nato's military command structure later that year. Surprisingly, although a *cause célèbre*, this had little impact on the parallel plans for the development of an Esdp, so that up until the end of 1998 there was little contention and the plans for Europe to develop a capability to take relatively low key action through the Western European Union (Weu) in harmony with Nato progressed at a sedate pace.

#### THE DRAMATIC CHANGE IN BRITISH POLICY

However, out of the blue everything changed when the British Prime minister, Tony Blair, spoke at Pörtschach in Austria in October 1998, for he included remarks, seemingly on the spur of the moment, that altered the whole nature of the European approach to defence issues. Finding a text from any government office proved quite impossible, but a significant degree of authority was added the following month when the Secretary of State for Defence, George Robertson, spoke at the meeting of Defence Ministers held in Vienna. He amplified the remarks made by the Prime minister by calling for debate on «how to give the Eu a stronger voice in the world», suggesting that «a more effective European military capability» was required to support the Eu's Common Foreign and Security Policy (Cfsp). He called for a simplification of Europe's complex institutional procedures for starting any military operation<sup>4</sup>. This had a stunning impact on the

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<sup>3</sup> Information passed to the Author on a visit to Chief of Naval Operations's staff in the Pentagon in the summer of 1997.

<sup>4</sup> *Eu aims to increase defence capability*, «Financial Times», 5 November 1998, p. 2.

rest of the Union. Hitherto all British governments of whatever persuasion had pursued the policy of taking all decisions on any form of coalition military action outside the Eu, even after signing up to Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 which enhanced the provisions of the Cfsp to contribute to the development of a common defence policy. This had been studiously ignored by the British who had insisted on using the military alliances, mainly Nato, but subsequently also Weu, for its European only dimension envisaged under the so-called Petersberg tasks, as the prime bodies for the conduct and development of allied defence policies<sup>5</sup>.

Subsequent events moved very quickly indeed and at the beginning of December 1998 the French and British Heads of government met onboard the British warship H.M.S. Birmingham to construct the eponymous St Malo Agreement. It was brief and to the point. The European union had to be in a position to play a full role on the international stage and the two nations endorsed the «progressive framing of a common defence policy in the framework of Cfsp». The various necessary structural changes were outlined but it was the third article on the single page of text that had the greatest impact. While placing a premium on Nato, it alluded to independent action by the Eu in approving military action and the need for the Eu to have recourse to suitable military means, even mentioning «national or multinational European means outside the Nato framework».

This caused quite a *frisson* in some circles in Washington, in spite of the regular cry, as long as Nato has existed, that Europeans should provide a greater contribution to their own defence. In essence many Americans wanted Europe to do more, albeit under a Us led agenda, but in this case, after initial hesitation, the Us administration supported the initiative, although later unease returned in response to some of the rhetoric of the Nice summit. This reaction mirrored the response of the British sceptics.

The British government continued to set the pace. At the conference to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nato, held at the Royal Unit-

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<sup>5</sup> The Petersberg tasks were named after the town in Germany in which in June 1992 the Weu strengthened its operational role in several ways and widened its function for the employment of forces, making them available for the whole spectrum of military tasks from Article V operations to humanitarian and rescue tasks. However, the commonly used term «Petersberg Missions» has come to be generally accepted as covering those operational tasks at the lower end of the military spectrum, namely humanitarian tasks, peacekeeping and up to and including peace enforcement and does not include higher intensity military missions coming under the provisions of Article V of the Revised Brussels Treaty.

ed Services Institute in March 1999, both Prime minister Blair and Defence Secretary George Robertson argued forcefully for a significantly increased European defence capability. The former complained, «Europe's military capabilities at this stage are modest. Too modest. Too few allies are transforming their armed forces to cope with the security problems of the 1990s and the XXI<sup>st</sup> century [...] To strengthen Nato and to make European defence a reality, we Europeans need to restructure our defence capabilities so that we can project force, deploy our troops, ships and planes beyond their home bases and sustain them there, equipped to deal with whatever conflict they may face»<sup>6</sup>. This was commendable rhetoric, but which, alas, proved to be only that when it came to ensuring that his own national forces were adequately equipped for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The following day George Robertson made the Alliance's military capability, and particularly the contribution of the European allies, the focus of his paper. He was blunt. «Without effective military capability to back up European foreign policy goals, we are wasting our time. We risk being an economic giant, but a strategic midget». He said that the aim was not so much a European security and defence 'identity', but «something much more ambitious» in the form of a European defence 'capability'<sup>7</sup>. At the same conference the French minister of Defence, Alain Richard, spoke of the French «priority» which was to «give Europe the institutional and operational resources to take decisions on crises that affect the stability of our continent»<sup>8</sup>. This lack of capability became manifestly evident as the bombing campaign to remove Serbian troops from Kosovo progressed during the course of spring and summer 1999.

All this was happening as the member nations prepared the text of the new Nato Strategic Concept that was to be announced at the Washington summit to be held in April 1999, on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Alliance. The Concept, the drafting process of which had considerable British input, gave a broader definition of the threats than hitherto and, with it, the need for Nato to restructure its forces and concepts accordingly, so it is worth looking at it in some detail. There was significant emphasis on the developing European dimension. In the light of the statement that «the Alliance's military forces may be called upon to conduct crisis response operations»

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<sup>6</sup> Speech by the Prime minister, the Rt Hon. TONY BLAIR, MP at the Royal United Services Institute, Nato 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference, 8 March 1999.

<sup>7</sup> *The Alliance and Military Capabilities for European Security*, address by the Rt Hon., GEORGE ROBERTSON, MP, *idem*, 9 March 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Address by M. ALAIN RICHARD, French minister of Defence, *ibidem*.

(paragraph 48) one is drawn to look at the total European force contribution devoted to sharing responsibilities and burdens. Great premium is placed on the development of the European Security and Defence Identity (EsdI) within the Alliance (e.g. paragraphs 13 & 26). The document states that «the Alliance fully supports the development of the European Security and Defence Identity within the Alliance by making available its assets and capabilities for Weu-led operations» (paragraph 18). It also mentions the changes in emphasis that had taken place in European structures since the latter part of 1998. «The European Union has taken important decisions and given a further impetus to its efforts to strengthen its security and defence dimension» (paragraph 17). However, having set the scene, it rather optimistically makes the statement that «the European Allies are strengthening their capacity for action, including by increasing their military capabilities. The increase of responsibilities and capacities of the European Allies with respect to security and defence enhances the security environment of the Alliance» (paragraph 18) There seemed little evidence then or subsequently on which to base this claim. The Concept also states in paragraph 42 that «As the process of developing the Esdi within the Alliance progresses, the European Allies will further enhance their contribution to the common defence and to international peace and stability including through multinational formations». This last was subsequently reflected in the composition of the Kosovo Osce observer extraction force, formed in the latter part of 1998, and the Kosovo protection force, Kfor, to implement the settlement imposed on Bosnia at the end of the air interdiction campaign, Operation Allied force, in June 1999. The former was all European and French led, the second was mainly European and initially British led and both reflected this new approach. The process of roulement eventually led in the summer of 2000 to the first operational deployment of Eurocorps, as Kfor, reflecting a significant advance in the credibility of that formation. However, there is as yet still no sign of any marked increase in capability and the statement in the Nato Concept to this effect lacks any substantial foundation, but nevertheless this is a key document, which has been almost invariably overlooked during the more heated phases of the debate that was to follow.

#### EU FORCE STRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

The subsequent June 1999 Eu summit in Cologne addressed the structural considerations and made fundamental changes in the posture of the Union, by enabling it to deal directly with security issues. «In pursuit of our Common Foreign and Security Policy objectives [...] the Council should have the ability to take decisions on the full range of conflict prevention and crisis management tasks defined in the

Treaty on European Union, the 'Petersberg tasks'. To this end, the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and the readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises» [Section 1 of the Declaration]. Steps for the assimilation of the appropriate bodies of the Weu within the structure of the Eu and the whole relationship with Nato, which had hitherto been non-existent, were assessed and significant proposals made. An endorsement of a greater European capability in the fields of intelligence, strategic transport and command and control was supported by an expressed determination «to foster the restructuring of the European defence industries» and this led to a conclusion that «a more effective role for the European Union in conflict prevention and crisis management will contribute to the vitality of a renewed Alliance» [paragraphs 2 & 3]. This rhetoric is important and should not be dismissed, but substantial steps to improve European force structures in the light of these declarations have yet to be taken.

The process accelerated in the autumn of 1999 and Javier Solana, the former Nato Secretary-General, was appointed the Eu's High Representative for Cfsp, in accordance with the Amsterdam Treaty which had come into force the previous May, and also, because it was seen that the Weu would dissolve for the most part into the Eu, Secretary-General of that body too. The support to enable him to fulfil his role is provided by the policy planning and early warning unit which monitors and analyses events in areas covered by Cfsp and provides assessments and, hopefully, early warning of situations that might impact on Eu foreign policy interests. In March 2000 three new bodies were established within the general-secretariat of the Council to assist in decision-making on military operations. These were a Political and Security Committee (Psc), which «may be chaired»<sup>9</sup> by the High Representative, and two bodies in effect lifted from the Weu, a military committee and a Military staff to provide military expertise, as directed by the military committee.

Meanwhile on the institutional side the Helsinki European Council meeting of December 1999 decided on a number of very significant steps to forward the process of developing an effective mechanism for deploying a substantial European intervention force, to be entitled the European Rapid Reaction Force (Errf). This involved crisis management mechanisms, an effective system for full consultation between the Eu and Nato, the accommodation of the interests of the non-Eu

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<sup>9</sup> Presidency report on the European security and defence policy presented and approved at the Eu Council summit, Nice, December 2000.

members of Nato (although Turkey, Norway and the then three newest members of Nato, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, felt that there was much more work to be done in this area), the establishment of new political and military bodies within the Council and, most important of all, the declaration that member states must be able by 2003 to deploy within 60 days (which is why one can hardly call it a rapid reaction force!) and sustain for at least a year military forces of up to 50,000-60,000 persons, capable of the full range of Petersberg tasks. By the following November the Eu members had drawn up a catalogue of military assets for future operations amounting to 100,000 troops, 400 combat aircraft and 100 warships, which exceeded the requirement. It is worth noting here that at a separate Anglo-French summit in November 1999, the British offered up their Permanent Joint Headquarters and the French their *Centre Operational Interarmées* to command Eu led operations. The transformation of Eurocorps into a rapid reaction corps was also endorsed at this meeting and British forces would be provided to the Corps HQ for «specific operations»<sup>10</sup>. In essence, ever since the concept of the combined joint task force had been floated it had been tacitly, and later explicitly at the 1996 Berlin Nato summit, agreed that Europeans would be available to undertake the lower level operations, Petersberg tasks, which would not involve American participation, and Nato the higher level missions. In practice how one decides the finer differences between these two levels is uncertain and much depends on the perspective of the United States.

It was anticipated that the actual mechanics of the proposals for the changes and the assimilation of the various Weu bodies, such as the planning cell, into the Eu structures to support the High Representative for Cfsp, would be established by the French during their period, the last six months of 2000, of holding the presidency of the Eu and presented for approval at the Eu Council meeting in Nice. In the event several issues were not resolved, which is not surprising, since this most important summit, involved not only the enhancement of the Esdi, but also the announcement of the plans for the next phase of Eu enlargement and all the consequent bargaining over the structural changes needed to accommodate this expansion. Indeed, the summit, with such an ambitious and contentious agenda, was not considered to be the success that it was hoped it might be. There was thus further work to do on the Esdp, which was then placed under the remit of the incoming Swedish Presidency.

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<sup>10</sup> Paragraph 5, Joint Declaration by the British and French Governments on European defence, Anglo-French summit, London, Thursday 25 November 1999.



## LIMITATIONS IN EUROPEAN MILITARY CAPABILITIES

The reality behind all this political manoeuvring had been evident for some time, and, as technology advances, the discrepancy between the capabilities of European and American forces is magnified. With a combined budget that amounts to about 60% of that of the United States, Europeans provide about a third of the forces of the Alliance<sup>11</sup>. Further, the capability of these forces leaves a significant amount to be desired and the conflict against Serbia highlighted the limitations of the European element of Nato, which is particularly evident among the air forces. One read and heard press releases about air raids conducted by Nato forces, but in reality about three-quarters of the attacking aircraft were American and an even greater percentage of the 'smart' attacks were carried out by the United States, because most European states do not possess such weapons and have to rely on 'dumb' bombs. In the circumstances of the severe limitations placed on attack profiles, this discrepancy was even more critical than it would normally have been.

This leads to a separate but related issue, which is the extent to which measures must and can be taken to ensure that Europeans keep up with American technological advances. At the same time as improving European force structures, therefore, both sides of the Atlantic must consider technological development, at its extremity reaching to the level of the so-called Revolution in military affairs (Rma). The Americans must ensure that they do not get so far ahead in a concept, that in any case may not be workable in its finally envisaged form, and the Europeans that they do not get so far behind, to the extent that they are not able to operate together. This would be greatly to the detriment of Nato and even Us policy, depending as it still does for the most part on political legitimacy conferred by allied co-operation, in spite of the current Us administration's tendency towards unilateral action. The Americans found to their cost in the operations against Iraq in 2003 that although, in general, the technological performance was extraordinary, there were, nevertheless, situations when it did fail at critical moments and they did not have the flexibility to cope and adapt to the circumstances.

It has been calculated that a realistic goal for Europe would be a contribution of between 10-15% of the total allied force posture, yielding a commitment comparable to the size of the American forces earmarked for a major Persian Gulf requirement<sup>12</sup>. Adjusting the pri-

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<sup>11</sup> J.A.C. LEWIS, *Building a European force*, «Jane's Defence Weekly», 23 June 1999, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> «Defense News», 22 February 1999, Vol. 14, No. 7, p. 3.

orities of the respective national programmes and, where relevant, reducing large force structures that are still geared mainly to border defence should rectify most of the shortcomings in European power-projection capabilities, especially, in placing a premium on the fields of long-range transport and mobile logistic support, without necessarily increasing defence spending. Nevertheless, with nearly twenty years worth of the bonus of the peace dividend since the Wall came down, now is the time to assess whether we have gone too far. Certainly shortcomings in both capability and numbers were evident in the conflict over Kosovo and no matter how unpalatable the question in a climate in which social spending is seen to have priority, this is a factor that will have to be addressed. In spite of these manifest shortcomings and the awareness of the need not to fall further behind the Americans, no action was taken for quite a while. Spain made a gesture in 1999 and then the UK made a marginal increase as a consequence of the Treasury Review later the same year, but it was not enough and in the early years of this century, the US made huge increases, greater than the UK's total defence budget. Eventually the UK set the lead among its peers and made a reasonable increase to the defence budget in 2003. France, the Netherlands and Italy also made small increases, but on the debit side Germany announced in early 2004 an overhaul of the German armed forces that would involve a reduction of 26 billion euros in the defence budget.

However, the main issue is how to re-align current defence expenditure to produce more effective forces that are capable of operating in multinational groups. There is a need to address the posture of national policies, and the United Kingdom set the tone with its Strategic Defence Review of 1998, so that forces are better tailored to the changed strategic circumstances in which we find ourselves. François Heisbourg, one time Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, considered that «current European defence-spending priorities make it impossible to reach the headline target mandated by the European Council at Helsinki, that is to say, fulfilling the whole range of Petersberg tasks, *including the most demanding*»<sup>13</sup> (his italics). He thought that the principal problem was one of misallocated resources and he felt that only the UK came close to US levels and ratios of defence expenditure. The House of Lords EU select committee endorsed this by stating that the EU would never create its own inde-

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<sup>13</sup> FRANÇOIS HEISBOURG, *Europe's Strategic Ambitions: The Limits of Ambiguity*, «Survival», Vol. 42, No. 2, Summer 2000, p. 10.

pendent defence capability unless governments start spending more money on their armed forces<sup>14</sup>.

So, what were the principal issues at this stage? There had been a major shift in the British approach to what has become the Esdp, largely brought about by the Prime minister's perception of the inadequacy of the Eu to take any action, combined with the failure of the Us to deal robustly with the initial crisis in Kosovo. This led to a concerted attempt by both France and Britain to cast aside the suspicions generated over many years and combine, as Europe's two most capable defence forces with a broader vision on global issues developed as a consequence of their colonial experiences, to give a strong lead to Europe. There was genuine euphoria within the Union after the St Malo agreement, but this was followed, almost inevitably, some six months later by a sense of disillusionment. However the November 1999 summit generated a further sense of purpose and as one observer said «it is necessary for both sides to begin, at the highest level, to treat each other as genuine and objectively equal partners, rather than potential rivals. The Franco-British summit...suggested that this may finally be beginning to happen»<sup>15</sup>. For the British the problem was to balance this new found dialogue with its long established understanding with the Us, without raising French suspicions that beneath all this new-found enthusiasm beat the old Atlanticist heart that has always caused them concern. Up to this time it has to be said that beneath the French reserve on the surface and the continuing distance from Nato operational structures, they did, after the turmoil over the issue of command of Nato's Southern Region, develop a good working relationship with the Americans. Yet one had the impression that the French, having fully signed up to the concept and accepted it, around the table at least, were having second thoughts. Washington began to show concern again and the outgoing Defence Secretary, William Cohen, warned that, if Europe erected a competing military structure, Nato could become «a relic of the past»<sup>16</sup>. John Bolton then an adviser to George W. Bush's first campaign and who subsequently joined the Administration with a reputation as a neo-conser-

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<sup>14</sup> Footnote comment, «The Times», 3 July 2000.

<sup>15</sup> JOLYON HOWORTH, *Britain, France and the European Defence Initiative*, «Survival», Vol. 42, No. 2, Summer 2000, p. 35.

<sup>16</sup> MICHAEL EVANS, *EU force puts Nato at risk of becoming relic*, «The Times», Wednesday 6 December 2000.

vative, spoke of the escalating disagreements over the planned Eu force rather dramatically as a «dagger pointed at NATO'S heart»<sup>17</sup>.

#### THE PROBLEMS OF HARMONISING EU MILITARY OPERATIONS WITH NATO

Although the aim was to complete the work by the Eu Nice summit, there were too many conflicting imperatives for everything to be sown up. However, the crunch factor was that after all this talk, after all the treaties, the Esdp still needed substance to be effective. The Uk should, with France, have been the prime leader in this enterprise. The outbreak of adverse political and media comment on the subject of the Errf in mid-November 2001 did not take account of the firm tones of the Washington Declaration on the subject, but it could also be said that the British government did not handle the matter well. In some ways it is surprising that the furore arose when it did and not when the Helsinki Force Goals were announced almost a year earlier. If there were to be progress the Uk-Us special relationship, however that is defined, was always going to be an issue and a matter of significance.

After the acrimonious debates at Nice, the atmosphere calmed down with a change of Presidency at the turn of the year and nations moved in the direction of fulfilling the Helsinki headline goals. Yet the debate continued. On the political side, and examining what this meant for Nato and Us-European relations, Jacques Chirac said that he wanted the force to operate independently of Nato, but in coordination with it and it is coordination that has worried the Americans, focusing on the issue as to whether or not the Eu force and Nato would share the Nato planning staff. If so, the Us veto would be implicit and I am sure that the President of the Republic recognised this. In Washington's view the European force's actions should not be independent of Nato, i.e. against American wishes, but Paris had stated that the force should be able to act autonomously. General Joseph Ralston, then Saceur, speaking in May 2001, had no doubts about the arrangements. «The right way to do this, in my view, is to take the four nations that are members of the Eu but are not in Nato – Finland, Sweden, Austria and Ireland – and have their planners come to Shape headquarters, where we can collectively come up with the options. This can be done under the auspices of Deputy Saceur, who will always come from an Eu country. Then after they develop Options A, B and C, those three options can go simultaneously to the European Union and to [Nato's] North Atlantic Council. Thus the two political

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<sup>17</sup> *Friends of Bush*, First Leader, «The Times», Thursday 11 January, 2001.

bodies will have the same set of facts, allowing them to communicate better, resources will not be wasted by creating another planning headquarters; and it will be clear as to which battalions, squadrons and ships are assigned to Nato plans and which will be available to the Eu [...] The overwhelming majority of European nations appear to favor using the Shape staff as their planning headquarters with Eu military augmentation»<sup>18</sup>.

The Laeken European summit in mid-December 2001 declared the Esdp operational, but this was little more than cosmetic dressing. While Europe moved unsteadily towards the Helsinki targets, the new Us administration looked scathingly at its efforts considering that «Europe is irrelevant to the world today. Because it will not spend what is necessary to matter as a military power, its views on issues that involve the use of such power are of no consequence to America»<sup>19</sup>. Meanwhile in Britain the debate continued between politicians and informed experienced former officials. Bernard Jenkin, then Shadow Secretary of State for Defence, in a letter printed in «The Times» on 3 July 2002, expressed concern that, in spite of the Prime minister's assertion to the contrary, the relationship between what he called the Euro Army and Nato had never been settled and he reported that General Ralston had warned Congress of the threat that Esdp posed to Nato. On 15 July a letter from Sir John Weston, a former Ambassador to Nato, expressed similar concern and dismissed the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon's, letter printed three days earlier, feeling that Esdp was clearly outside the Nato framework. He feared two collective defence policies and organisations for Europe, neither of which would work effectively. Four days later the debate was vigorously joined by Sir Brian Crowe, a former Director General for External Relations in the Eu Council, who countered these assertions with a cogent letter asserting that Esdp would not destabilise Nato. This all reflected the divisions that existed within the country, even as it moved towards setting the lead in meeting the Helsinki criteria.

However, the debates tended to move from the international arena into national and academic circles and no-one raised a single note of protest when it became evident that the term «by 2003», the date for the implementation of the Helsinki force goals did not mean, as convention usually has it, by 1 January 2003, but by 31 December 2003 and even that was not assured and indeed was gently allowed to

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<sup>18</sup> *The Evolving Alliance*, an interview with General JOSEPH RALSTON, Saceur and CinC Useucom, «Armed Forces Journal International», June 2001.

<sup>19</sup> IRWIN STELZER, *Bush turns away from the weaklings of Europe*, «The Times», 19 February 2002, p. 22.

slip by when the time came without any comment. Even now the Errf is still not ready as originally conceived. However, the fact that this slipped into the background is probably because during this period the agenda was dominated by the attempt to resolve the "Berlin plus" arrangement. This refers to the agreement which has been at the centre of the whole debate by which Nato assets could be made available, initially to Weu forces, by the terms of the Nato summit in Berlin in 1996, but, since St Malo, applied to Eu forces acting on Petersberg Missions. This was written into the 1999 Nato Strategic Concept by which Nato endorsed Eu led operations under Esdp, as already explained above. However, progress was impeded by differences between first Turkey and then Greece with Nato as Turkey sought to gain leverage over its wish to be allocated a defined track to eventual inclusion within the Eu and subsequently Greece's concern that too much had been conceded to Turkey. This impasse lasted for well over two years. Eventually a deal was brokered during the Brussels European Council meeting in November 2002 and this led the way to the formal Eu-Nato Declaration on Esdp on 16 December. Thus Berlin plus was accepted by all parties, but they still had to go through the process of agreeing to institutional arrangements, particularly associated with the sensitive subject of the secure exchange of information, a concern for Nato in the light of the presence of neutral members within the Eu planning system, and also of deciding how Nato would make its assets available. The separate Eu-Nato Agreement on security of information was signed in March 2003 which then enabled the whole Berlin plus arrangement to be formalised by the Framework Agreement of 17 March 2003, consisting of an exchange of letters between the Javier Solana, the Eu High Representative, and Lord Robertson, the Nato Secretary-General, and not a moment too soon, since the Eu's Operation Concordia replaced Nato's Operation Allied Harmony in the former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia on 31 March 2003. Although small, a body of only 350 personnel, this was nevertheless an important and significant step, not only for the establishment of an Eu military presence for a relatively short period, since it was wound down and replaced by a smaller police unit nine months later, but the fact that it became the precursor for the planned replacement of Sfor Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Eu at the end of 2004 with a force level of some 7,000 under British command. There were inevitably some problems that needed resolution, the most significant being the old chestnut of Us concern at the level of security clearance of non-Nato Eu personnel working in the Eu cell at Shape, plus a feeling by some countries, notably France, that the Eu Command Element in Afsouth, the enabler with the Operational Commander, Dsaceur the Force Commander, was not fully under Eu con-

trol and that Afsouth took to himself some of the responsibilities of Dsaceur. Nevertheless this was a very useful precursor to the much bigger and more complex commitment of replacing Sfor.

#### TRANSATLANTIC FRICTION

However, while all these practical advances were being made, in the latter half of 2002 and the first months of 2003 the old vested and counterproductive interests were at work, fuelled by the angry exchanges across the Atlantic in the build up to conflict against Iraq and aggravated by the divisions not only in the United Nations Security Council, but also within Europe itself. While these arguments raged, two of the arch protagonists against the Anglo-American initiatives against Iraq, France and Germany, combined with mighty Belgium and Luxembourg at a meeting in April 2003 to propose that an autonomous Eu military headquarters should be established at Teruren in Belgium. This bizarre gathering became known rather disparagingly as the Chocolate summit, embarrassing the British and infuriating the American governments. Neither were the Italians and the Spanish enamoured of the idea. After the initial outraged reaction, the scene quietened down somewhat, although the Belgians, the most enthusiastic of the four, still expected the plan to come to fruition in 2004. Britain took the initiative in trying to rectify the situation, thereby perhaps seeking after the Prime minister's often stated desire to see the UK as a bridge between the US and Europe across the Atlantic. In August the UK circulated a paper to the 25 Eu and candidate countries entitled "Food for Thought" putting forward the frequently stated proposal, expressed, for example, by Sir Brian Crowe in his July 2002 letter to «The Times», that there should be an Eu planning cell located within Shape. By September Prime minister Blair met President Chirac and Chancellor Schröder which resulted in a degree of concession on all sides. The last two agreed that Nato's prime status would not be contested in exchange for Blair's agreement in principle to an Eu planning cell independent of Nato, perhaps attempting by too great a concession to regain some of the ground he had lost in some quarters of Europe with his enthusiasm for taking action against Iraq. For many in Britain this seemed a step too far, almost as if the Ministry of Defence (MoD) view had been by-passed, and the Prime minister was later obliged to clarify the fact that in no way did he support the proposals of the Chocolate summit. Nevertheless, the Americans were concerned to the extent that Donald Rumsfeld expressed his misgivings to his opposite number Geoff Hoon at a meeting in early October and by the latter part of the month the American Ambassador to Nato, Nicolas Burns, warned in angry tones that the Eu's plan for an independent headquarters was a significant

threat to Nato's future. The result was heightened aggravation of the resentment felt in some circles of European Nato members at America's high-handed attitude, but added unease from the American perspective that Europe was set on undermining Nato. In late November at a Franco-British summit Blair and Chirac proposed a «new initiative for the Eu to focus on the development of rapid reaction capabilities to enhance its ability to respond to Un requests in short-term crisis management situations»<sup>20</sup>. This was to produce a faster reacting force than the Errf, not too far from the concept, albeit on a smaller scale, of the new Nato response force agreed at the Prague summit in late 2002, which helped Blair in his attempt at a highly delicate balancing act with France, but still did not do much to reassure the Americans. It was a high-risk strategy, but when conducted in the background to the build up towards the Rome summit in December at which the proposed European constitution would be discussed, probably seen as an essential element in the trade-offs in the overall architecture of that concept.

There is one other ingredient that has to be added to this pot of intertwined threads, which make a bowl of *spaghetti* look simple in comparison, and this is the European security strategy. Following the deep divisions within Europe arising out of the response to 11 September and, even more so, the events leading up to the second war against Iraq, the decision was taken to draw up a Security Concept to give Europe some cohesive direction in a fractured environment. A draft was produced at the Thessaloniki European Council in June 2003 and the full strategy was adopted at the Rome Council six months later. It sets out the problems and challenges for European Union states in developing the necessary defence capabilities to meet their shared security objectives and then addresses Europe's strategic role, defence spending, procurement and industrial policy and, perhaps most important, military capabilities. For the first time the issue of pooling of capabilities is raised. While critics could claim that it is only a list of platitudes, this document, which had significant British input to the drafting process, for the first time addresses a cohesive way ahead and «to the surprise of many [...] is not only eminently readable, but also very forceful»<sup>21</sup>. Although the Rome summit of December 2003 was a disaster in that for the first time a summit broke up early without any agreement on the prime issue, in this case the pro-

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<sup>20</sup> [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com), 24 November 2003

<sup>21</sup> *The European Security Strategy, towards a muscular foreign policy?* «IISS Strategic Comments», November, 2003, Volume 9, Issue 9.



posed European Constitution, the leaders passed the Esdp issues, including the security strategy.

## SIGNIFICANT FORCE DEPLOYMENTS IN AN UNCERTAIN POLITICAL CLIMATE

The early months of 2004 saw a quietening down of the megaphone diplomacy as nations reflect on the appalling fissures of the previous year and looked to a quieter, more reasonable form of dialogue with an aim of mending fences. Thus the incoming Secretary-General of Nato, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, could say: «Another blueprint I will push to see translated into reality is the Nato-Eu relationship. And I believe that we have the right blueprint [...] since December – after, I admit, a rather testy debate – the Eu’s planning capacity has been set up in a way that is transparent and complementary to the Alliance»<sup>22</sup>. Meanwhile the French and British had been taking their November talks further to refine their thoughts before joining with Germany, much to the chagrin of uninvited Italy, at a summit in February to produce an initiative proposing the formation of battle groups, consisting of battalion sized groups (1500 men), deployable within 15 days for 30 days, extendable to 120 days by rotation. In effect this marked the suspension of further progress in developing fully the Helsinki headline goals, already in a state of limbo and reflecting reality, they having been «quietly set aside by most Eu members while they grapple with the more imminent problems of enlargement and the need to revitalise their economic performance»<sup>23</sup>.

Having said this, on the peace support operations side, a landmark had been achieved in that the initial step taken in mounting Operation Concordia was taken an important stage further by the deployment of the Eu force on Operation Althea to replace Nato’s Sfor on 2 December 2004 under Un Security Council resolution 1551. This 7,000 strong force, significantly for the initial deployment, under the command of a British officer, Major General John Leakey, deployed under the full panoply of Esdp, utilising the Berlin plus agreement for the use of Nato common assets and capabilities and under the overall direction of Dsaceur (General Sir John Reith) as the Eu operation commander. The Eu approach to this deployment included a strong emphasis on coordinating civilian and military actors in response to lessons from the Eu-Nato relationship in the field and also on at-

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<sup>22</sup> JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER, Secretary General of Nato, Address to the International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, 12 February 2004.

<sup>23</sup> STEPHEN BLACKWELL, *The ‘Directoire’ Looms Large: Military Effectiveness and EU Unity*, «RUSI Newsbrief», March 2004, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 29-31.

tempting to give substance to the concept of coherence, emphasised by the European security strategy<sup>24</sup>. This transfer of authority followed hard on the heels of the official announcement on 22 November of the establishment of the battle group concept agreed by all 25 member states of the Eu. These groups will be involved not only in traditional and humanitarian operations where necessary, but, more important, are designed to go «on the offensive to stabilise international emergencies before they escalate into wars»<sup>25</sup>. «Initially viewed with extreme suspicion in Washington, the concept has now been accepted, with Us policymakers aware of the benefit it will have in helping to reduce over-stretched American military commitments»<sup>26</sup>.

As for the political dimension, the rejection of the Constitution by France and the Netherlands and its consequent sidelining threw the whole process into chaos and confusion. The Cfsp and the framing of a common defence policy which might lead to a common defence, words familiar from the Treaty of European Union, were enshrined in the text, but there were changes and enhancements to what went before, in the light of the proposed establishment of the post of Union Minister for Foreign Affairs, such as allowing qualified majority voting when adopting a European decision defining Eu action or position proposed by this Minister. As part of Cfsp the Constitution introduced a new series of provisions designed to build on existing Eu competences in the development of a common security and defence policy (Csdp), semantically replacing Esdp. It did state that a common defence must be compatible with Nato's security and defence policy and much more, such as provision for «permanent structured co-operation» for those moving towards a common defence. All these provisions disappeared with the rejection, only to be resuscitated in the Lisbon Treaty of December 2007, itself now subject to uncertainty after the Irish referendum rejected it. However, going back to the time the British took on the Eu Presidency in the second half of 2005, there was considerable room for manoeuvre and greater opportunity than ever before for the British way to set the agenda in Europe. It was not to be, since the hurdles of trying to sort out the Eu budget and its controversial elements, such as the com-

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<sup>24</sup> GERRARD QUILLE, *ESDP takes over from NATO: Operation ALTHEA, coherent, effective and democratically accountable?* «ISIS European Security Review», Number 24, October 2004.

<sup>25</sup> ANTHONY BROWNE, *British troops head fledging EU Army*, «The Times», 23 November 2004, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> STEPHEN CASTLE, *Britain to take leading role in European military force*, «The Independent», 22 November 2004.

mon agricultural policy and the British rebate, with the French and British governments poles apart, became the prime pre-occupation of the presidential period and most of the plans identified for progress over the last six months of 2005 had to be shelved, as the Presidency struggled with crisis resolution. There will, no doubt, be further opportunities for Britain to seize the high ground in the defence debate, but a lot depends on new Prime minister Gordon Brown's energy and his willingness to seize the chances amidst the heavy traffic of economic argument and so far he has shown far less predilection to stimulate debate in this area than his predecessor, not least because he has been under so much pressure in so many spheres. It seems that any coherence of policy in this matter, either by Britain or the Eu, looks somewhat remote.

If one had summarised the situation when Blair stepped down from office in mid-2007 it seemed a very messy and unnecessarily complicated state of affairs. In 1999 the way ahead had seemed clear: the argument and controversy appeared to have been resolved and anyone returning to the scene now, having been on Mars in the interim, might be amazed that so little progress has been made and that arguments heard in the years prior to 1999 are being repeated some ten years later. There is more sensitivity now since the Eu has replaced the Weu as the vehicle for 'European only' military action and the extent of the Eu's remit over national policies still arouses strong emotions. The principal players bear much responsibility. At times Tony Blair appeared to be conducting a very personal off-the-cuff and opportunistic policy, such as his initial mould-breaking speech in Austria in 1998 and his dealings with the French and Germans in 2003, that by-passed both the MoD and the Foreign office's coherent policy. The French on the other hand seemed more intent to act as spoilers and certainly had their dander up as a consequence of the attention they drew in their opposition in the Un Security Council to Anglo-American action in Iraq in 2003. However, this was probably a very pyrrhic victory because in feeding their *amour propre* they undermined those very institutions in which they have what many might say is an influence totally disproportionate to their actual status in the world. Throughout all this and the foibles of the European leaders, the British have, by and large, maintained a line of leading Eu nations in the direction of improving their capability with the aim of being able to put an effective European force into the field, while all the time endorsing the primacy of Nato and their principal driver of national defence policy, that of being interoperable with the United States at the highest operational level. In projecting these aims the government even invoked the aid of the Queen. When visiting France in April 2004 to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Entente*

*Cordiale* she addressed a reception given by both houses of the French Parliament in the Palais de Luxembourg, emphasising the importance of trans-Atlantic cooperation in saying that, although both countries had made Europe and the European Union the principal vehicle for their economic and political aspirations, for both «this does not, nor should not, in any way weaken our strong ties of friendship to the United States. These are complementary relationships». She went on to encapsulate perfectly the government's line on European defence capability: «More than ever we are working to make Europe's voice in the world count, and to ensure that Europe's diplomacy can be backed up by military credibility where necessary and where Nato are not engaged»<sup>27</sup>.

So Prime minister Blair, applying a very personal touch which was at times 'out of sync' with official Whitehall thinking, that rudder of coherent policy trying to steer a steady course, had conducted a balancing act in pursuing his aim of ensuring that Britain retained both political and military credibility with the Americans, whilst also seeking to keep in tune with the French and Germans, drawing them in his direction, in his attempt to keep the Uk at the heart of European decision making, despite the handicap that Britain's position outside the Eurozone inevitably presents.

#### BLAIR HANDS OVER TO BROWN

One always felt that once Blair handed over the reins of power, it would be very interesting to see if his successor, Gordon Brown, would give the subject the same degree of attention, and now, given that the latter has been in power for over a year, all the evidence is that he is less concerned about this than his predecessor, an impression enhanced by the indecisiveness and an unwillingness to commit himself to a given line that he has shown in dealing with any big issue. The first indication occurred in November 2007 when the Foreign Secretary, David Mileband, gave a speech on European affairs that included favourable comments on ESDP issues that did not cross the line of previous government policy of compatibility with Nato. Nevertheless, Brown subsequently briefed strongly against the content of this speech and undermined Mileband's position. A month later he was noticeable by being the only leader not to be present to sign the Lisbon Treaty, leaving this to Mileband, and only turning up next day for the lunch. Nor did this mean that Brown was taking a more

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<sup>27</sup> *Queen makes a European point in reaching across the Atlantic*, «The Times», 7 April 2004, p. 13.

favourable approach to the American link. On the contrary, when he paid his first visit as Prime minister to Washington in April, 2008 it was seen as being in an atmosphere of an impending crisis in the Anglo-American relationship, the Americans feeling that Brown was indifferent to the long term fate of this alliance. The Us military felt that, by refusing to spend sufficient money on the British armed forces – America’s closest military partner – he is running down their capability, a fault for which he is under criticism in the Uk itself by the most senior military leaders, stretching the accepted limits of their constitutional position, and also, from the American perspective, that he is a «half-hearted and unreliable partner», lacking the stomach for their so-called war on terrorism<sup>28</sup>. However, his London meeting with President Bush on the latter’s farewell European tour in mid-June 2008 projected a closing of ranks and on the surface an image of a harmonious approach to the contentious issues that had been aired since Brown’s accession to the premiership, albeit this was assessed as a cosmetic cover up of differences between the two leaders<sup>29</sup>. It remains to be seen how much substance lay behind this show of unity, not least with a new president to be elected at the end of 2008.

Another reason for his potential diffidence is that there is an uneasy relationship between the Prime minister and his Service chiefs of staff, very much because of this pushing beyond the accepted constitutional limits to public statements by the latter, that has now become public knowledge<sup>30</sup>. There is a general sense of feeling that the government has committed the military to two conflicts at a level far higher than that postulated in the 1998 Strategic Defence Review, the central element of which rationalises the force level for all tasks, without commensurate increases in equipment levels, both in terms of numbers and quality, and support structures. Having been controller of the national purse strings in his role of Chancellor of the exchequer for ten years before he took over the premiership, he had been parsimonious with funds for defence and certainly did not allocate them to the extent that was seen as necessary to conduct operations in Iraq and Afghanistan at the level necessary to the maintenance of the capability at which the British forces had been trained to operate. To

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<sup>28</sup> NILE GARDINER, *We’d rather have a Winston*, «The Sunday Times», 13 April 2008, p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> SAM COATES and TOM BALDWIN, *President Bush: farewell tour of Europe ends with frantic attempts to quell talk of division and distance*, «The Times», 16 June 2008.

<sup>30</sup> MICHAEL SMITH, *Brown pulls rank to stop rebel general heading armed forces*, «The Sunday Times», 15 June 2008, p. 7.

this can be added Brown's lack of ease with the elaborate European summit procedures. He appears to be uncomfortable in this environment, much preferring bilateral meetings, and does not project his personality, as Blair did when he was in power. He does not like the system, nor the bargaining which is so much a part of the European Union dealings, almost having a disdain for the whole procedure. His late appearance at the Lisbon summit is just such an example, but it also reflects his reluctance to be seen as too European by the British public, which in general has a tendency towards reservation about anything to do with Europe. For all these reasons he therefore seems most unlikely to set the agenda in matters concerning Esdp and push for the development of an effective European response force of whatever sort and emphasise the importance of maintaining the link with Nato, dreaming up imaginative ways of achieving this, as did his predecessor. We can therefore anticipate a colourless and conservative approach to these issues.

The crucial factor is that after all this talk, after all the treaties, the Esdp, redefined as Csdp in the now-shelved Eu Constitution and floating in the uncertainty of the status of the Lisbon Treaty after it was rejected by Ireland in June 2008, now needs substance if it is to be effective. As long ago as 2000 an American academic provided the perfect summing up, which still remains very germane today: «The way out [of the basic misalignment between the American and European positions] is quite straightforward. The Us should enthusiastically and unequivocally support Europe's defence efforts. It will then be up to Europe to produce the promised defence capability. If and when such capability is available, Washington should accord Europe a voice commensurate with its new station. Capabilities buy and justify influence... The central issue at hand is capability»<sup>31</sup>.

In the longer term, if there is to be progress, the Uk-Us special relationship, however that is defined and markedly enhanced as it has been for several years after the outrages of 11 September 2001, will be an issue and a matter of significance. It is an enduring relationship, albeit one recognised more on this side of the Atlantic than the other, in spite of the occasional suggestion that other European nations, such as Germany at the end of the last century and now France under a Sarkozy Presidency, supersede the British, because it always goes back to an Anglo-American issue, depending to a degree on the personal chemistry between the President and Prime minister con-

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<sup>31</sup> CHARLES A. KUPCHAN, *In Defence of European Defence: An American Perspective*, «Survival», Vol. 42, No. 2, Summer 2000, p. 28.

cerned. Although it definitely exists in certain military and intelligence spheres and the Us has hitherto felt much more able to trust the Uk with various sorts of highly sensitive information, the time has arrived for the Us to be more forthcoming with its other allies and perhaps to be less sensitive to Europe's attempts to develop a defence identity. It is also incumbent on Europe not to destabilise Nato, for without it and its essential structures and procedures, no Eu defence architecture could function. Perhaps there is a role here for the Uk, acting as an honest broker, to bring understanding on both sides and harmonise the process, but at the risk of falling between two stools, which was always Mr Blair's fear, it will be harder after the *débâcle* of the Constitution and the uncertain status of the Lisbon Treaty. That all depends, however, on the fundamental issue of Europe's taking substantive action to improve capability and of that, as yet, there is little sign, rather the likelihood of even less action as minds are distracted in other directions.

#### THE VIABILITY OF EU FORCES IN INTENSE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

The limited degree of optimism one might have drawn from the successful deployment of Operation Althea proved a chimera. Having seen the difficulties the Eu had in producing a battlegroup-sized force to monitor the elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2006, in the perception of the very limited risks it might have faced, one can only infer that, when the chips are down, and there is any element of danger, the Europeans lack the political will to take action. Worse was the pusillanimous response to Jaap de Hoop Schaffer's agonised plea for reinforcements to Nato's Ifor in Afghanistan in late 2006. This was implicitly addressed to the very European countries that would form the bedrock of any Eu force operating under the Berlin plus agreement. It was no use the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, claiming, for example, that German troops were already deployed on dangerous operations in North-Western Afghanistan. This was an area of low threat. Everything merely served to indicate that when the situation becomes dangerous the great majority of European nations, with very honourable exceptions, such as the Dutch or the Danes, are not prepared to put their troops in harm's way, in spite of the huge difference that could be created by relatively small enhancements to these dangerous areas, such as Helmand Province in Afghanistan. As far as the concept of battlegroups is concerned, it is, in theory, a highly effective and responsive tool to have available for international crises. It has been said that the true test as to whether or not they are effective military capabilities rather than just new bright ideas will be determined by the ability of these force packages to fight, to take and to accept loss of lives. At the present time all the indications are that

these requirements cannot be assured and the Eu's defence resolve is no more than a paper tiger. It could be said that for all his efforts, Blair failed to convince and lead Europe to a robust approach in these matters: perhaps it was an impossible task and certainly not one that Brown is going to attempt. In his June speech Sarkozy has now taken up Blair's cry of the late nineties in demanding that Europe enhances its defence capability: «Europeans must have the capability to deploy 60,000 troops simultaneously in distant theatres of operations. We cannot build up these capabilities without making adequate defence efforts in the long term. These efforts can no longer be disparate, in competition with each other or imbalanced»<sup>32</sup>. If Britain under Blair was always prepared to take action in matters of humanitarian need, his 1999 cry for Europe to furnish itself with better resources has looked less sustainable, not least since he himself did not ensure that his own forces had the support and equipment they needed, albeit they are significantly better equipped than other European forces. If he did keep the Eu defence capability in harmony with Nato's structure, it still seems to lack potential as a viable force for any significant purpose. It remains to be seen if Sarkozy will follow this potential policy through and take up the cause or be sidetracked by another major issue, a trait for which he has sometimes been criticised. In the meantime Gordon Brown shows no sign at a time of significant global economic turmoil that he will take up the cause and show the leadership in this field that seems, until late, to have been the province of the British government.

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<sup>32</sup> SARKOZY, 17 June 2008, *cit.*.