

## CFSP WATCH 2003

### NATIONAL REPORT GREAT BRITAIN

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#### 1. Basic views of CFSP/ESDP in your country.

- The UK sees itself as a leading player in European and global foreign, security and defence issues. The relative decline of British power since 1945 has compelled the UK to co-operate in multilateral forums and use the EU in particular to pursue its global interests and responsibilities. For this reason Britain often views CFSP/ESDP instrumentally as a means of promoting her interests, and therefore UK involvement in CFSP has been seen more as a case of adaptation rather than a break in foreign policy priorities.
- This has created a contradiction. In continuing to possess and seeking to retain an independent capability in foreign and defence affairs the UK finds itself unwilling to accept any limitations in CFSP/ESDP. Such 'Europeanisation' of UK foreign policy and decision making as has occurred has not changed the fundamentals of UK foreign policy.
- A sensitive concern has been to avoid jeopardising the 'special relationship' with the US. There remains a strong assumption that the US, not the EU, is Britain's preferred partner (Washington being just 'across the pond'). This is especially so in such areas as defence and intelligence. But in deciding whether or not to support the US or the EU the UK has shown a willingness to 'pick and choose' according to which policy is being discussed. Understandably the UK has been described as 'Janus faced' and 'impaled on the horns of the diplomatic dilemma' of choosing between the US and the EU.
- Another enduring commitment has been to NATO which has been seen as the only 'reliable' and effective security provider for Europe. The UK expresses regular concerns that moves towards EU defence capabilities may lead to the undermining of NATO.
- In comparison to European integration in general, the UK has not shown an attitude of aloofness towards EPC/CFSP/ESDP and has been involved from the beginning. Furthermore, the UK has been closely involved in European security and defence since 1945. Problems arise when co-operation becomes formal and structured within the EU and begins to take on 'supranational' overtones.
- There is a deep suspicion of supranational/federal policy making. As a consequence there is no appetite for ideas that seek to move foreign or defence policy from the intergovernmental to the supranational. The debate often centres on the domestically contested concept of sovereignty.
- The presentation, wording and symbolism of involvement in the EU are crucial. The British press has constantly forced successive governments to be on the defensive against claims that sovereignty is being surrendered to 'Europe'. Recent media debates about the European constitution highlighted the fact that the EU would have such national characteristics as a 'Foreign Minister' or a 'President'. This is also fed by the much wider debate on membership of the Euro. In general there has been a long-standing inability to communicate the depth of engagement in the EU, and foreign policy is no exception.
- Compared to some other EU Member State populations the British public has been seen to be more supportive of their country taking a lead role in foreign

affairs. This reflects a number of factors such as history, empire, pride in the armed forces, strong links and concerns for areas beyond Europe. At the same time there is ambivalence and sometimes a fickle attitude towards the UK playing a lead role. These concerns surround fears of imperialism, 'not our problem/war', and a desire for the government to concentrate on domestic affairs (Blair has been criticised for being a very peripatetic PM). This ambivalence is also evident in attitudes towards CFSP. The public can move from being keen on a leading role for CFSP to being deeply sceptical of both the constraints this imposes and the motives behind it (fears of a United States of Europe or French led EU).

- The UK has a long history of involvement in military operations and there is a great deal of pride in the armed forces. The British are prepared to use military force if deemed necessary. Furthermore, in order to demonstrate UK pretensions and commitments, the UK continues to provide 'penny packets of forces' through which token support is given for operations in which the UK has declined to take the leading role. However, obligations have continued to outstrip capabilities. British aspirations to play a global role and leadership of the EU in foreign and defence matters have rested uneasily with limited resources and the need to keep liabilities to a minimum.
- There is a long standing fear of a French led CFSP/ESDP. This has strong connections to why the UK was seen to join European integration in the first place, and why France twice vetoed UK membership. In fact the UK is similar to France in its approach to CFSP in that they both use it instrumentally. France is also acknowledged to be the key bi-lateral partner for work in CFSP.

### **What are the priorities for your government in CFSP?**

- Despite the closeness of the UK to the US, the UK has routinely supported EU positions opposing the US (Cuba, Libya, Iran, Israel-Palestine, international environmental negotiations, trade etc). The UK used the EU as a blanket to shelter behind and advance policies against even her 'closest ally'. In a similar way the UK continues to seek the support of the EU on issues such as Zimbabwe or Cyprus. Here the UK appreciates the dampening down of any fears of British imperialism.
- An increasingly key policy concern of the UK government is the proliferation and development of weapons of mass destruction. The UK has been particularly keen on the joint declaration with the US on WMD. The move (along with the new EU security strategy) being welcomed by Tony Blair who said it was, "very much in line with British thinking and emphasises the importance of the transatlantic alliance".
- HMGs have actively sought an alternative to the 'Community method' in European integration, and especially so in CFSP with the Council remaining the key institution where policy is based upon consensus. HMG has therefore been supportive of informal and practical co-operation, especially if this avoids domestic or parliamentary difficulties. However, this has led to difficulties when the UK has faced the transformation of informal co-operation to formal, through for example, treaty changes.
- British governments have continually faced significant over-stretch in defence and the limits of British pretensions to be a major military power. The war in Iraq has once again highlighted this issue and the UK would welcome some support from NATO or the EU.
- The UK has sought to increase the effectiveness of Member States defence capabilities and narrow the capabilities-expectations gap. There is also an

increasing awareness of the UK's own limitations (especially technology) in co-operation with the US.

- A willingness to utilise a mixture of soft and hard power. Peter Hain MP, the UK representative to the Convention has said that: 'The difference between our view of Common Foreign and Security Policy and that of many other countries is that we see it as a continuum between, if you like, the soft end, aid and trade, to some extent, and the hard end, soldiers; and if your foreign policy fails your soldiers have to pick up the pieces and your aid policy has to bear the burden thereafter.'
- An enduring commitment has been the preservation of NATO with ESDP complementing not replacing it. Furthermore, ESDP must work through CFSP and not as a separate policy area into which some Member States can opt-in. This again highlights the domestic sensitivities for as Daniel Keohane of the CER has pointed out: 'If the British government did sign up to an EU defence pact, the opposition and the right-wing press would say that the Labour government is not committed to NATO, is going soft on the war on global terrorism, and is sacrificing close ties with the US for links with unreliable and militarily weak continentals. Any perception that the UK is choosing Europe over the US would rally anti-Europe forces, making it more difficult for Tony Blair to hold a Euro referendum before the next election.'
- France remains the key bi-lateral relationship for EPC/CFSP/ESDP (St Malo, Le Touquet). The relationship is undeniably fraught by differences over NATO and US, but HMG recognises that when differences exist the EU's foreign policy is ineffective.
- For UK governments, a strong measurement of the success of ESDP/CFSP has been the extent to which the EU successfully engages with the US. HMGs have worried about whether the US (or others such as Russia) take the EU seriously in defence and foreign policy. For this reason Blair has been keen for the EU to engage with the US to show that allies are useful and that multilateralism serves US interests.
- Increasingly the UK is views Iran as a test-case for EU foreign policy and especially for EU attempts to exert influence. The UK wants to avoid another transatlantic wrangle.
- Tony Blair's government has been keen to develop and especially present new priorities for British foreign policy. In particular Blair has seemed determined to ensure the UK plays a leading role in the EU with St Malo appearing to signal a major change in British approaches to ESDP. However, he has increasingly been seen to head a foreign policy that fits many traditional conceptions. His instinct appears to deal directly with Washington without first working out a position with EU partners. There is still an unwillingness to make a choice between the US and the EU. The EU is still seen as a platform for reaching British ends and for the PM to play a role of international statesman. There has again been conflict with the French and an exasperation/obsession with ending the Franco-German axis. For some Blair has changed the spin/presentation of British foreign policy but in turn has not altered the actual substance. It is also worth noting that he is considered to be one of the most pro-European of British PMs. He even speaks French!

### **What are the key issues for your country?**

- Britain has been ambivalent about being European or Atlanticist, and has sought to avoid making a choice. The need for a strong EU to balance the US is not seen as a major concern, although some worry that the US is as a 'rogue state'. The US

is seen positively as a partner, ally, linked by strong cultural, historical, economic, and demographic links.

- The Commonwealth remains an important aspect of UK foreign policy. Strong emotional, symbolic, population and economic links remain and continue to be developed.
- The general public supports the idea of UK leadership in CFSP, but on British terms and with an option to go it alone. The problems and opportunities of globalization leave the UK aware that it must work with the EU, but at the same time not reject the pursuit of multi-lateral solutions beyond the EU. The EU appears as the main, but not the only forum in which foreign and security policy is to be dealt with.
- Sovereignty remains a contested notion. No British government can be seen to give up British sovereignty 'to Europe'. Strong suspicion of supranational and federal ideas.
- Human rights are an enduring concern. The arrest of General Pinochet was widely supported. The Labour Government did commit itself to 'an ethical foreign policy' which it has not been seen to live up to...
- Concern about terrorism, failed and rogue states. Belief that they cannot be addressed through aid and economic packages alone. At the same time a recognition that a stick does not always work and that these problems are a complex mix of development, governance, crime, security and military issues.
- Development and aid remain strong concerns, but should be tied to foreign policy.
- The Euro – this plays into every aspect of the debate on British membership of the EU.

## **2. National perceptions and positions with regard to CFSP/ESDP issues**

### **Perceived success and/or failure of CFSP/ESDP**

- On Iraq, HMG has been keen to emphasise the UK was not alone. It was in a minority, but had the support of several other Members and a large number of enlargement states.
- EU and UK foreign policy has been seen to be subject to two contradictory realities. The EU has experienced the biggest row over a major foreign policy issue in decades. And yet a more credible EU foreign policy is seen to be slowly taking shape with UK support.
- As Peter Hain has pointed out 'There have been differences in both the European Union and in NATO, but that has not prevented rapid progress in the last two months to complete the NATO/EU Permanent Arrangements, and the decision that a European Union military mission should take over from NATO in Macedonia, that has gone ahead. And the ESDP mission take-over in Macedonia is a very significant and welcome evolution in Europe's capability for external action, and also in NATO-EU relations; so it [Iraq] has not affected it at all.'
- The UK and France found themselves agreeing on the language of the new EU Security Strategy document, despite it being negotiated at a time of tension. Furthermore the robust language has been welcomed in the US. For the UK the EU is starting to show the US that they could become more effective partners with a recognition that soft power is to be supplemented by a readiness to use force. The document concluded: "If we want international organisations, regimes and treaties to be effective in confronting threats to international peace and security, we should be ready to act when the rules are broken."

- However, with both Sept 11<sup>th</sup> and Iraq Blair showed a preference for bilateral diplomacy with the US before a position had been reached with EU partners. There is still a strong instinct to work with the US to get things done.
- Reaching agreement between the 'big states' is viewed as the most effective means of making progress. For example, in the lead up to Afghanistan the dinner held at Downing St was seen to deliberately sideline small states. This isn't intended to snub the contributions of small states. It is meant more for practical and pragmatic reasons.

### **The position of your country towards NATO (in relation to ESDP)**

- NATO has for a long time been considered the only serious defence provider in Western Europe. But, St Malo signaled something of a watershed in this standpoint. For the UK, European defence had now acquired some added value, but with ESDP aiming to reinforce crisis management capabilities in such a manner as to complement NATO, not replace it. Blair has argued that, 'unless it is clear from the outset it [ESDP] is complementary to NATO, working with it, adding to our defence capabilities, not substituting Europe for NATO, then it will never work or fulfil its potential.'
- UK takes the view that EU and NATO defence structures need to be complementary and mutually reinforcing to reflect the overlap in membership, NATO's role as the collective defence organisation for its Member States, its significant assets and capabilities, and the fact that all the countries concerned only have one set of armed forces. Close links between the EU and NATO are therefore seen as indispensable in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. Agreement on Berlin Plus (allowing EU access to NATO assets and capabilities, in which eleven Member States have already invested) is seen as a crucial part of that process.
- In effect, the British Government has supported St Malo as long as the process was pragmatic, based on capabilities and linked to NATO.

### **The role of the EU in crisis management**

- There is general agreement that the EU and the UK learnt painful lessons in the Balkans from ambitious but meaningless declarations, reliance upon an ambivalent US, ineffective capabilities or use of 'soft power', a lack of leadership thanks to squabbles and internal EU jockeying. The EU is now seen to be making up for lost ground.
- The UK accepts and pursues a leading role in crisis management. Feels that it has armed forces with significant experience/capabilities to deploy. Again the desire for an independent capacity to act comes into play. If necessary the UK will go it alone in crisis management independent of both EU and UN, e.g. Sierra Leone.
- Britain has continually stressed the opportunities NATO offers the EU, sighting the Macedonia operation as a good example because it was only possible with NATO assets.
- The UK is not uneasy with the idea of EU operations in areas beyond the immediate neighbourhood of the EU, such as the current operations in the Congo. There is similar support for NATO operations in Afghanistan or Iraq...
- Having led a large number of operations the UK appreciates the lack of European capabilities. A large number of Member States offered to support the UK led force in Afghanistan, but the UK was only able to accept support from a few, mainly

because most offers were of troops and not of much desired specialised equipment or units.

- UK media coverage often highlights and sometimes exaggerates the level of British involvement in managing crisis situations. In turn this gives little attention to the work and commitments of other Member States, even when these were larger than the UK's. There is a general scepticism that anybody else is prepared to lead and as a result Britain shoulders most of the burden.
- Wishes to move the EU beyond dealing with the long run problems of crisis management and instead tackling the immediate problems. There is a strong desire to go beyond merely 'monitoring the situation'. In achieving this aid and development policy play a crucial role working in tandem with foreign and security policy.

### **The perceived impact of EU enlargement on CFSP/ESDP**

- It is helpful to recall that the UK's own experiences of joining the EU were fraught with difficulties, especially in relations with France. Chirac's attack on enlargement states brought back memories of the French vetoes of UK applications. The Franco-British tension over 'leadership' of the EU was again evident.
- Blair's support for the Letter of Ten has made him a close ally and supporter of enlargement states. HMG has been keen to point out that 14 of an enlarged EU of 25 would have supported the UK position on Iraq.
- The UK has been a consistent supporter of enlargement and sees significant long run benefits from it. Firstly it argues that 'deepening' integration will become more difficult in a 'widening' EU (i.e. enlargement will dilute European integration). Secondly, it will bring an increase in members who are pro-NATO and pro-US. Thirdly, enlargement states have been seen to spend more effectively on defence than many current EU members.
- However, there is a real concern that enlargement will increase the number of small states and make agreement more difficult. This is one factor that within the Convention debates initially pushed the UK into considering extending QMV in CFSP.
- A concern exists that the internal challenges of enlargement may distract the EU from dealing with external problems.
- New Europe – Old Europe was an idea that played into popular perceptions, especially with regard to the Franco-German axis which the UK has been keen to see the end of. The idea of Old Europe also connected to the 'old' concern of a French led Europe. However, these comments by Rumsfeld should also be seen against his comments that the US could go to war even without waiting for the UK!

### **3. European Convention: Reform of EU External relations, CFSP/ESDP**

A large number of contributions were submitted by the UK delegation but nothing in the format of a document setting out a specific idea for CFSP/ESDP (aside from the UK submissions to Defence and External Working groups). The UK delegation did submit the large number of reports prepared by the House of Lords European Affairs Committee. These analysed each of the draft convention articles as they were published. This included a report examining the Articles on External Action, 23<sup>rd</sup> Report, HL Report 107, 13 May 2003.

**External Representation: What is the position of the UK on the appointment of a European foreign minister and a President of the European Council? Is the UK in favour of double hatting?**

- HMG currently supports the ideas for both a Foreign Minister and a President of the European Council.
- The UK was initially suspicious of the idea for an EU Foreign Minister that would merge the High Representative and Commissioner for External Relations. However, the British (largely convinced by the French) now support the general idea (although strong doubts remain that it was not been fully thought through by the Convention). This support depends upon the position being under Council control.
- Initial fears centred on a concern that double hatting would mean the Foreign Minister was to be a full member of the Commission and thus take on full collegial responsibility. The UK could not accept the possibility that this would provide a new foreign policy role for the European Commission. In November 2002 Tony Blair said that, 'My point is simply this. Double hatting cannot be a way, through the back door, of communitising the CFSP. The High Representative's accountability to the Member States, and their responsibility for foreign policy, must remain clear cut.'
- The UK does recognise the need for a more effective external representation and for this reason acknowledges that a position bringing together the HR and Commissioner for external relations will bring a more co-ordinated approach to development spending, association agreements, staffing and resources etc. The idea for greater co-operation in external representation is also viewed positively, but again the UK is unwilling to accept the implications of this through for example formalised EU co-ordination in key capitals such as Washington. The idea of an EU diplomatic service is also very sensitive because of its symbolic value.
- The UK has been one of the strongest advocates of the idea of a permanent European Council President/Chair to replace the inadequate system of rotating Presidencies. To this end the UK is prepared to give up the right to a permanent British Commissioner. For as Peter Hain pointed out, 'To be perfectly honest, what is much more important than whether Britain gets a commissioner (in the inner cabinet) at any one time is to have a stronger intergovernmental thrust in the council'.
- HMG cannot accept the idea that the EU Foreign Minister should be able to speak in the UNSC through the permanent seats of the UK or France. It has made it clear that 'HMG cannot accept any language which implies that it would not retain the right to speak in a national capacity in the UNSC'. In effect, the UK will represent at the UNSC the opinions and position of the EU and Member States, but it will not be bound by common positions.
- HMG has been keen to stress that the proposal for a President of the European Council is a 'Chairman', not a President in the US/French sense. Again, the symbolism and presentation have been important in order to avoid domestic sensitivities. For the same reason HMG has actively sought an alternative to the title 'European Foreign Minister.'

**Decision making: Does the UK opt for an extension of QMV in the field of CFSP? What is the position on forms of flexibility such as enhanced co-operation or constructive abstention?**

- On QMV HMG has taken an increasingly hard line. It did state that it would consider extension of QMV on a case by case basis stressing that any future decision to move to QMV would have to be made by unanimous agreement in the Council. But HMG has increasingly 'red lined' extension to CFSP (along with tax and defence, but not in JHA).
- For presentation reasons (see above) HMGs have generally played down the increasing amount of QMV in CFSP. This has created the usual contradiction of being keen to make CFSP more effective (avoiding vetoes) while being unwilling to face the consequences.
- UK has been reflecting upon ways to strengthen and enhance constructive abstention, and the possibilities of developing enhanced co-operation. But it has expressed opposition to structured co-operation in defence and is very unwilling to see a separate collective defence commitment that could encourage action outside of NATO. This tension most evident in UK position on the 'proposal of four' (see below).

**Crisis management: What is the official position on updating the Petersberg Tasks and making reference to tasks that involve military resources?**

- UK sees scope for modernising and extending the current Petersberg tasks in order that they reflect the diverse roles the EU will need to play in crisis management, wider conflict prevention and fighting the problem of terrorism. For example, adding: stabilisation, (e.g. work in Macedonia); conflict prevention, intervening early in a cycle of violence; defence outreach/diplomacy, providing forces to dispel hostility, build and maintain trust and assist the development of accountable armed forces through training and assistance, or weapons destruction and arms control programmes. For the UK these new activities will ensure the Petersberg tasks retain their current flexibility of covering activities from humanitarian and rescue tasks to combat forces in crisis management. These are areas where HMG believes the EU has the capabilities to deliver a credible response.
- Once again British concerns over defence spending come into play. For example, the UK contribution to the Convention Defence working group stated clearly that the EU member states must spend more on defence, or at least spend their existing defence budgets more effectively, so that the EU has the capabilities it needs to carry out the Petersberg tasks.
- Steven Everts and Daniel Keohane of the Centre for European Reform ('The European Convention and EU Foreign Policy: Learning from failure', Survival, Autumn 2003) have pointed out that the debate on updating the Petersberg Tasks must now take into account the 2003 'Security Strategy', which takes further the idea that the EU should develop effective policies (and hence the organisation and capabilities) to combat threats like terrorism and the spread of WMD, which are not covered by the current Petersberg tasks. The UK is likely to be at the forefront of this debate.

**Defence: Which of the proposals raised by the European Convention is most strongly endorsed by the UK e.g. armament's issues, solidarity clause, flexibility? What is the official position of the UK on the proposals of four?**

- The UK supports: the concept of a 'solidarity clause' among Member States to confirm the intention to offer mutual support in dealing with the consequences of crises, particularly terrorist attacks; the modernisation of the Petersberg tasks to reflect fully the ESDP objectives; and the creation of a European Defence



Capabilities and Acquisition Agency to improve the development of Member State capabilities for ESDP.

- HMG is keen to see that the European Capabilities, Development and Acquisition Agency contributes to the identification of military objectives (especially providing the tools for ESDP) and evaluates progress towards them, that it promotes harmonisation of operational needs and cost-effective means. The key point for HMG is that the agency would allow many Member States to look more analytically at spending on capabilities.
- At the same time three issues surround the UK's position. First a strong incentive to support UK defence companies. Second an awareness of US concerns over the sharing of technology and a UK wish to avoid jeopardising access to this. Third, UK defence companies remain torn between co-operation with partners in Europe and the US.
- This raises the question of to what extent the UK will give up independent capabilities in both defence development and actual military units. HMG is concerned with the extent to which this will limit the UK's ambitions to maintain an independent capability.
- HMG also stresses that the Armaments Agency would be responsible to and run by the Member States, and that it is important for the Member States to recognise that possessing the correct capabilities is only useful if they have a willingness to use them.
- On a solidarity clause HMG recognises that the fight against terrorism is not just primarily a question of improved police, judicial and intelligence co-operation, but that there are ways the defence capabilities of EU member states can support this process.
- However, HMG stresses that the limits of this commitment must also be clear - the EU shouldn't set out a territorial defence guarantee, or import one by way of reinforced co-operation among some member states. HMG argues the EU should not duplicate what NATO offers those states who wish to be part of a collective defence alliance.
- Considers NATO to be the organisation best equipped to deliver an integrated military force to support a defence guarantee. HMG argues that allowing for an opt-in arrangement where certain member states can offer military assistance in the event of an external attack is both divisive and militarily unworkable. It duplicates the work of NATO and adds nothing to the real security of European states.
- The Proposal of Four for a European Defence Union (EDSU) was not viewed as a serious attempt at defence co-operation, mainly because the UK as the other leading military power was not involved. However, HMG is aware that the possibility of an optional 'mutual defence clause' might open up the real possibility for EDSU to develop.

#### **4. Mapping of activities in CFSP-related research.**

The UK has a large number of institutions, academics and experts covering European integration, international relations and defence/strategic studies. Many university departments covering politics, international relations, international law, defence/strategic studies have some expertise on CFSP. The strongest centres are LSE (European Foreign Policy Unit), Loughborough and Cambridge, although other places have strong individuals and some PhD students. Specifically on CFSP and ESDP the leading non-academic institutions are the Royal Institute for International Affairs, the Foreign Policy Centre, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the Royal

United Services Institute and the Centre for European Reform. On European issues, which also include discussion of CFSP, see the ESRC 'One Europe or Several?', UACES (University Association for Contemporary European Studies) and the British Foreign Policy Research Centre. There are also a great many think tanks and organisations conducting work on CFSP and the EU, such as the Federal Trust or Demos. Finally, the main campaign and political organisations relating to the EU focus on the issue of the Euro, although CFSP is discussed. Such organisations include Britain in Europe (pro EU), UK Independence Party, Global Britain (just two of the 60+ anti-Euro/EU groups).