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**DOES THE “SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP” HAVE A
ROLE TO PLAY IN FUTURE EU-US RELATIONS?**

by

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DOES THE “SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP” HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN FUTURE EU-US RELATIONS?

Introduction

As the European Union (EU) gathers momentum, an equitable and credible partner to the US will shortly exist with the potential to share the burden of today’s global challenges. However, despite the ‘Solana Paper’s’ statement that this trans-Atlantic relationship is one of the core elements of the international system, with the numerous trade and foreign policy conflicts that exist between the two powers, the relationship has effectively floundered.¹ There is a growing sense in the US that the EU is becoming increasingly antagonistic towards the US and all it stands for. Peter van Ham of the *International Herald Tribune* has written that the US response to this resistance is that the EU is being treated by Americans with indifference at best; at worst is considered irrelevant; and will be increasingly marginalized in a world where the US intends to remain the unchallenged hegemon.²

But can the US afford to ignore the EU at a time when, by any standards, the EU has made such remarkable and rapid progress towards a unified continent against a backdrop of centuries of conflict? The creation of the world’s largest free trade area and the continued health of the euro would suggest that it cannot. Even if the US wanted to forge a closer relationship with the EU, is that possible under the climate of mistrust that has persisted since formation of the coalition to fight the war in Iraq in 2003? With polarized political views between unilateralism and lateralism at the core of the animosity, an intermediary is required to calm the Atlantic waters and foster an atmosphere of collective opportunity. In the past, this role has

often fallen to the UK, and with the linguistic, cultural and historical ties between the UK and US, there is still no country better positioned to perform this function. However, while the UK remains the staunchest ally of the US and more willing than any other nation to confront the global terrorist menace head on, there are signs that even this ‘special relationship’ is under threat, further exemplifying the extent to which US unilateralism has tightened its grip.

In the quest to explore this seemingly unpromising situation, this paper will first examine the trans-Atlantic relationship from the EU perspective, and then through an American lens with a view to establishing why the US should change its current outlook. No attempt will be made to explore relational issues before the Balkans Crises of the 1990s. Thereafter, the 2006 Munich Conference on Security Policy will be briefly evaluated in order to clarify the current state of affairs between the two powers.

This analysis will provide the background for the main section of the paper that will outline the UK’s role in the EU-US relationship, primarily with the US, but also as a member of the EU, dating back to the 1970s. This section will explore whether successful political relationships by British leaders have translated into actual influence and at what cost. Then an assessment will be made of how the UK can continue to influence the other two powers, to what effect, or indeed whether it is in its continued interest to do so. Of course, success will also depend on how receptive these powers are to advice (there are many in the US who believe that the less the US has to do with Europe, the better, and that a policy of ‘cherry-picking’ an ally will offer the path of least resistance).³ With analysis of recent history showing that trans-Atlantic loyalties often go no deeper than the length of a government or a US administration, permanency in this area can be a fickle notion.

The European Union Perspective of the EU-US Relationship

Under the most recent round of expansions in May 2004, membership of the EU ballooned from 15 to 25 countries, with more destined to follow over the next few years.⁴ With the increasing labor force and reductions in trade barriers between the member nations, it is likely that the EU will remain a major player on the global economic and political stage. The Union has come a long way since its inept response towards Bosnia and Serbia during the 1990s, not just in terms of military cohesion, but across all other instruments of power (IOPs). The introduction of the euro has also contributed significantly to this development, with countries around the world starting to look towards it as the international currency rather than thinking only in US dollars.

But while some (mainly in the US) consider the Union to be too diverse to be effective, it is, in fact, this very diversity that generates the Union's greatest source of strength, its stability. Where the US appears content to further its National Security Strategy through unilateral action, over a thousand years of conflict, most notably in the twentieth century, has resulted in an EU that strives to achieve its aims through consensus, dialogue, and a natural bias towards the 'softer' instruments of power.⁵ Although the diversity of European Union has, in the past, caused procrastination and unacceptable delays in dealing with a crisis, such as the decision to commit ground troops to the conflict in Kosovo in 1999, this bias is popular in a world that is suspicious of US foreign policy and the overwhelming strength of its military. As such, there is a willingness to cooperate with the Union, thereby enhancing its informational and diplomatic power.

This is not to say that uniting diversity has come without its problems. In 2003, for instance, there was a power struggle within the Union that threatened to derail the whole EU defense process. On this occasion, Belgium, France, Germany, and Luxembourg tried to establish an EU military planning capability at Tervuren, Belgium, in an attempt to further the aims of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Formation of this ‘clique’ would have effectively pushed the UK closer to the US and established Germany and France as the dominant military powers on the continent. Prime Minister Blair, realizing the threat of such a move to British interests, reversed his initial opposition to creating such a capability at an EU planning meeting between Britain, France and Germany in Berlin in September 2003, probably judging that it was better to influence or challenge the concept from the inside rather than out. The whole series of events infuriated the US, which failed to see the need for a planning headquarters that duplicated an existing role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)⁶ – more of this later.

Without question the most damaging event for EU trans-Atlantic relations was due to France and Germany’s refusal to back US action in Iraq in 2003, which had as much to do with anti-US Gaullist sentiment from the French as with the EU’s desire, led principally by Germany, to endorse action only if sanctioned by a UN mandate. The French and Germans have been trying to repair the damage ever since, but have had to deal with an apathetic US government that, in the aftermath of the conflict, failed to see the benefits of working closely with the EU. The US public sentiment has been even less supportive of the EU; indeed, according to Peter van Ham, Americans consider that the EU has betrayed them, particularly after “saving Europe from itself in two world wars, and sheltering it under America’s nuclear umbrella during the Cold War.”⁷

The EU's effort to repair the damage of the past decade started in December 2003 with the publication of the 'Solana Paper' – "A Secure Europe in a Better World – The European Security Strategy" (ESS), which illustrated the similarities between security strategies on both sides of the Atlantic and stressed the importance of the trans-Atlantic relationship in an attempt to demonstrate to the US that partnership with the EU would be mutually beneficial.⁸ On the one hand, Javier Solana,⁹ tried to entice the US with examples of the economic potential of the EU, such as reminding it that the EU was responsible for a quarter of the world's Gross National Product. On the other hand, he was keen to demonstrate that both the EU and US security strategies sought to strengthen international order through "a world of well-governed democratic states."¹⁰

What the paper did not do, however, was to compromise the EU's multilateral approach or its desire to explore all the IOPs before resorting to force. This clashed with the 2002 US National Security Strategy (NSS),¹¹ which appeared more 'military'-centric to Europeans, and from their perspective, reflected the relative impatience of the US in attaining state goals. The common thread running through the Solana Paper was a respect for the institutional primacy of organizations such as the UN, NATO and the World Trade Organization (WTO) and an international order based on multilateralism. US strategy on the Global War on Terror (GWOT) implied that such institutions are less relevant, particularly to a hegemonic superpower that believes it already occupies the moral high ground.

Finally, when considering the impact that the European Security Strategy will have on trans-Atlantic relations, it must be remembered that in the short term, the EU is bound to remain distracted by internal issues as its scheduled expansion continues. Also, the challenges that an EU-integrated Turkey will pose to the EU will be significant, with nervousness surrounding

Turkey's large and predominantly Muslim population abounding. Similarly, with the rejection of the EU Constitution by France and the Netherlands in May and June 2005 respectively, there will doubtless continue to be considerable soul-searching as the Union tentatively plans its next steps. Until the EU's most distant borders have had a chance to solidify, we will continue to see a union that spends a greater amount of its time looking inward rather than racing to form coalitions with the US in its fight against world tyranny.

Why the US Perspective of the EU-US Relationship Must Change

According to Ronald Asmus of the German Marshall Fund, there are four main reasons why the US should lend its full support to the further integration of the EU: to promote peace and stability in Europe; to enable the US and EU to tackle together the global challenges of the twenty-first century; because a natural coalition of the two powers will be of a magnitude sufficient to set a truly global agenda and coalesce world opinion around a common view; and because the EU is a magnet with influence beyond its borders helping to stabilize the fragile democracies on the continent's periphery.¹² So if these seemingly enticing advantages are not sufficient to persuade the US that the EU is worth investing in (i.e. influencing), one can surmise that either the US believes that such claims are founded on an unrealistic portrayal of EU capability, that the EU is simply not high enough on the US agenda to warrant special attention, or that the advantages of a stronger EU are counterproductive to US interests; these issues are explored below.

As intimated earlier, the EU response to the Balkans crises during the 1990s left the US in no doubt as to the military incompetence of the Union regarding its capacity to react in a timely fashion and the capacity of its member nations to participate in alliance or coalition operations with the US. The EU response to these crises has had a long-lasting effect on the US

in both political and military circles, with many considering that alliance and coalition operations are counterproductive, with a disproportionate amount of effort being spent on maintaining coalition unity rather than actually fighting the conflict. There are, however, four reasons why such perceptions must be overcome.

First, the EU is making slow but steady progress towards a Rapid Reaction Force that should number some 100,000 by the end of the decade.¹³ While it is currently thought that this force will have the primary mission of conducting small-scale operations in the European area, as stipulated in the so-called ‘Petersberg Tasks’,¹⁴ it should eventually have the capacity to relieve the burden on US forces, particularly in support of operations other than large-scale conflict. In pursuance of this aim, the US needs to fully support EU forces’ evolution in order to maximize interoperability between forces throughout NATO, as well as in ad hoc coalitions of the willing; the lack of interoperability of forces during the crisis in Kosovo had a significant impact on the overall effectiveness of the Alliance effort.¹⁵

Second, as has been amply demonstrated in Iraq since mid-2003, it is likely that future conflicts will not involve massed troops fighting in open ground, but an asymmetric warfare that is difficult to counter with traditional symmetric methods. This type of warfare, as experienced by the British in the Malayan Emergency from 1948-1960, is a long and protracted affair requiring patience and an abundance of forces.¹⁶ With the current US global commitments inducing significant overstretch and an American appetite for the ‘quick win’, arguably the US should welcome any prospect of additional forces, particularly from nations with experience in Counter Insurgency (COIN) operations.

Third, as stated by British Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, in 2004, at the launch of a paper “A European Way of War” by the Centre for European Reform, “[the

European Union] has a range of different security responses available, from economic mechanisms such as sanctions or humanitarian aid; from policing missions to reconstruction and development programs; from civil crisis management to judicial instruments to restore the rule of law. To these we have added the last resort of a military response.”¹⁷ While it is unlikely that the EU will be able to conduct autonomous large-scale operations without US assistance, Hoon implies that the EU can have a lot more to offer than the organizational and bureaucratic headache that was witnessed in the Kosovo campaign.

Finally, by its very nature, unilateral action by the US will be *perceived* as hegemonic, overbearing and oppressive, often generating feelings of resentment, regardless of the morality of the cause. Consequently, creation of an alliance or coalition, particularly if endorsed by a UN mandate, should help to legitimize operations and reduce this effect. However, it should also be noted that coalition operations are not the panacea in gaining global acceptance of US foreign policy, for it will be difficult for the US to shake off the image of an overbearing superpower whenever it is the leading partner in a coalition.

Another problem demonstrated in the Balkans crises that will be more challenging to overcome, however, will be the multilateral political dimension of any future coalition involving EU forces, an aspect that can have considerable effect on the tempo of a campaign. During the Kosovo war, for instance, the process for target approval was exceedingly lengthy and complex, with any of the NATO allies having the right of veto.¹⁸ Again, the disadvantages of this must be measured against the probability of attaining one’s end state in unilateral operations and any secondary effects downstream. Creation of a European Rapid Reaction Force that exercises the full chain of command, including the political dimension, should go some way to mitigating this risk in the future. From the US perspective, the complexities of coalition operations at the

political level must be anticipated from the outset of campaign planning, if pressures like those encountered during the Kosovo war are to be avoided.

When comparing the European Security Strategy to the US NSS, it appears that the European issue most pertinent to the US in the immediate future is the terrorist threat within the EU and its neighboring countries, particularly as terrorist attacks in the US can easily be coordinated from Europe.¹⁹ Again the security strategies are closely aligned on this issue, with the Solana Paper placing terrorism first on the list of key threats and the US NSS stressing the need to ‘strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism’, a message pervasive throughout the strategy.²⁰ However, closer cooperation beyond that currently shared between the UK and US intelligence services will be required if such lofty sentiments are to become a reality. Despite the rhetoric, the US appears currently too preoccupied with combating terrorism in the Middle East to be distracted by matters of a lower priority in Europe.

Another matter that has recently influenced US sentiment towards the EU is the blossoming political relationship between the US and Russia. Initially concerned with the effects of NATO enlargement on the USSR after the fall of the Berlin Wall, since 9/11 the US has found common ground with its Cold War adversary, with both countries sharing indifferent views on the relevance of the EU;²¹ the strength of this relationship has dramatically reduced US concern regarding former Warsaw-Pact countries trying to join the Alliance. From the US perspective, now of greater importance is the interoperability of these ‘new’ EU countries as they migrate towards NATO, and the impact that this will have on future Alliance operations.

Another area where the EU is of considerable interest to the US is trade. There are three important topics surrounding this issue; EU trade with the US, EU trade with the rest of the world, and influence within the World Trade Organization (WTO). Clearly, it is in the best

interests of the US to maintain what is the largest bilateral trade relationship in the world, with both partners accounting for around one fifth of each other's bilateral trade.²² Nonetheless, there is also serious competition in areas such as aviation (Boeing and Airbus), steel tariffs and genetically modified products, with both parties depending on arbitration from the WTO on numerous issues.²³ Close cooperation between the EU and US, the two largest players in global trade, will significantly affect WTO rulings and policy, and consequently a close trading partnership should be of mutual benefit. Although the EU's global trade relations continue to strengthen, such as between the EU and Mercosur,²⁴ such relations should not be viewed solely as a threat to US trade, since there will doubtless be investment opportunities for the US as a result of global trade modernization.

The 42nd Munich Conference on Security Policy

Trans-Atlantic relations since 2003 paint a fairly gloomy picture of harmony between the major Western powers.²⁵ There are, however, signs that at least the EU is starting to make an effort towards reconciliation. The 42nd Munich Conference on Security Policy was held in February 2006, and with a conference motto of "Restoring the Trans-Atlantic Partnership", the principal powers were able to reaffirm their positions regarding global, as well as regional security.²⁶

Of particular interest was that, with the exception of the Russian and French defense ministers, the principal speakers put their faith in the primacy of NATO and the importance of its continued strength through redevelopment, in preference to taking the opportunity to focus on the EU defense force. This common approach was doubtless an attempt to continue European efforts to repair the damage to the EU/US relationship caused by the war in Iraq and creation of the EU planning capability in 2003, as mentioned earlier. But as intimated by Jaap de Hoop

Scheffer, the Secretary General of NATO, little can be achieved without significant restructuring of the financial mechanisms of the organization, most notably due to the fact that funding for NATO operations is currently undertaken by the country whose forces are 'in-rotation' at the time.²⁷

The US and UK defense ministers, Donald Rumsfeld and John Reid, were more specific about the funding issues, emphasising the need to resource NATO forces adequately and fairly, with Rumsfeld taking a hard line on the requirement for European countries to commit more of their Gross Domestic Products to defense. Stating that the current levels of investment will not be sufficient to meet the challenges in the decades ahead, he was keen to illustrate the point by demonstrating the disproportional amounts that nineteen of the NATO countries contribute to their defense (notably less than two percent), in comparison to the 3.7 percent currently being spent by the US.

This statement was in stark contrast to that of Germany's new chancellor, Angela Merkel, who, while predicting that Germany would be "the leading EU group within ten years," prepared the audience for disappointment concerning Germany's defense spending.²⁸ She must have high hopes for the common European armaments industry to which she referred, if she believes that the technology gap between the EU and US can be narrowed, as she intimated, without substantial investment. However, if the Americans present were unimpressed with her claims, they may have been conciliated by the Chancellor's harder line on Iran, when she deemed that fear surrounding Iran's nuclear intentions beyond peaceful purposes was well justified.²⁹ She followed this with an attack on the Iranian President, stating that comments concerning the Holocaust and Israel's existence would attract zero tolerance from Germany.³⁰

So did the conference achieve its aim of restoring the trans-Atlantic partnership? From the American perspective, there were certainly no surprises, with the European countries eulogizing a closer partnership with the US and the importance of the Alliance, yet not really willing to commit the funding required to make it happen. However, with the exception of the French, the Europeans did appreciate the need to modernise NATO according to today's threat, with speakers calling for forces of a more expeditionary nature.

Doubtless, the US was also looking for signs of repentance from the French, but on this occasion none were forthcoming. In fact, Michele Alliot-Marie, the French Minister of Defense, stated that a totally *new* partnership was required between the EU and US, one that needed to be "better balanced and respectful of diversities,"³¹ implying that US unilateralism was not an appropriate foundation for today's relationship to be effective. Quite what form this new relationship was to take was not made clear. While there was no hint of the familiar Gaullist 'counterweight' argument to US strength on this occasion, it was evident that the American-French relationship, at least in public, still has some way to go.³²

The EU representatives would have been no less uninspired by Rumsfeld's speech. While he did concede that "no nation can succeed in the War on Terror without close cooperation from other nations," not once did he mention the European defense force, or for that matter, even the EU.³³ Instead he chose to focus on the terrorist threat emanating from seemingly every corner of the globe and how, in order to deal with this threat, the opportunity to transform NATO must not be missed. On balance, this speech did little to bring the EU and US closer together, or convince the audience that the US really believes in Europe's military potential.

The UK-US ‘Special Relationship’; Does Friendship Equate to Influence?

The previous sections of this paper have illustrated why the current relationship between the US and the EU has faltered, and why from the EU perspective, the US appears to be becoming increasingly unilateral in its approach to foreign affairs and national security, despite the rhetoric in the NSS. The ‘special relationship’ between the UK and the US has not suffered to the same extent, and for this reason, combined with its position within the EU, the UK remains uniquely positioned to elevate EU issues on the US agenda. But in order to assess whether the UK can be successful in this mission, first it is necessary to examine whether the UK’s relationship with the US does, in fact, equate to influence over it, and assess why an EU-US relationship is of benefit to the UK in the first place.

Historically, there are very good reasons why the UK and US have enjoyed a prolonged and successful relationship, such as a common language and culture, America’s heritage, and most importantly, an excellent rapport between the countries’ leaders, in recent times notably Prime Minister Thatcher with President Reagan,³⁴ and, although possibly to a lesser extent, Prime Minister Blair with both Presidents Clinton and G.W. Bush. But have these relationships actually influenced the US to the UK’s benefit?

Margaret Thatcher, as leader of the smaller nation, stood to gain the most from her relationship with Ronald Reagan. She secured US support during the Falklands war, as well as in Northern Ireland, and had an influence which many thought was above her station within the European Community, where she often found herself fighting in isolation and to great effect.³⁵ In a world that realized that the two leaders were prepared to support each other over the broadest range of issues, she commanded an increased level of respect at home and abroad that certainly contributed to her election to three consecutive terms of office. This enabled her to

follow through her free trade policies, union reforms and privatization programs, resulting in one of the periods of greatest political and social change in the history of Great Britain since Clement Attlee's reforms of the late 1940s.

Tony Blair, on the other hand, has had to work far harder to garner US support, particularly as his leadership has roughly equally spanned two US presidents from very different backgrounds and allegiances. His friendship with President Clinton was very close and originated before Blair was first elected. The ties between the two men have remained strong, with the former president playing a significant role in Blair's third election campaign by appearing in live broadcasts to sing the praises of the longest serving Labour prime minister in history.

Contrary to initial expectations, Blair has also enjoyed an excellent relationship with President Bush, with the President now regarding the British Prime Minister as his most trusted and loyal ally as demonstrated in the numerous press conferences and speeches where both men are in attendance. Blair, however, will be under no illusions that the cornerstone of this relationship is founded on British support to US foreign policy in the Middle East, support that has cost him a large majority in Parliament and alienation from much of the EU. But has the personal relationship with Bush actually resulted in any measurable UK influence over the US?

Since Blair's visible support to the President has been primarily through military means, it is helpful to address the question of influence by considering British effectiveness at influencing US military plans and actions, particularly, in some instances, where such action has had strategic consequences. From a non-US perspective, the US military is often generalized as being overly aggressive, with little regard for the 'softer' options available, and also of having a lack of desire (or patience) to participate in operations other than conventional war-fighting, the

very situation in which the US finds itself in Iraq today. While this paper does not seek to analyze the US 'way of war', occasions where the UK has been able to significantly influence the US military are noteworthy.

US and UK forces have exercised and fought alongside each other since the two world wars, to such an extent that UK units are virtually interchangeable with their US counterparts.³⁶ Such is the level of trust and familiarity between the militaries that in the main combat phase of the war in Iraq, US Marine units were placed under command of UK forces that were, in turn, subordinate to a US land-forces commander. Similarly, since creation of the Multi-National Force in Iraq (MNF-I) Headquarters, not only has its deputy been a British general, but also the headquarters has been manned up to twenty percent by British officers, despite overall British forces representing only around five percent of the total forces in Iraq since June 2003.³⁷ This has resulted in significant operational influence at all levels in the headquarters, an example of which is the drafting by two British colonels of the MNF-I Campaign Plan to counter the insurgency, a document that provided the initial operational guidance for what will hopefully become a lasting peace in that country.³⁸

There are other signs that the US is learning lessons from British experience in COIN and Stability Operations. For instance, a British Army colonel has just been selected to head the new Stability Operations Office in the Pentagon that stood up in March 2006, reflecting the very close ties between the militaries of the two nations.³⁹

A more significant example of British influence originating from performance of military personnel was demonstrated by a British Army brigadier who, on return from his tour in Iraq, wrote a paper commenting on the suitability of today's US Army for Counterinsurgency Operations (COIN).⁴⁰ This paper has provoked significant debate within the US Army and has

even been recommended for reading at the Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. In a speech shortly after the report was published in the US, President Bush commented that “[t]he American people know the difference between responsible and irresponsible debate when they see it...And they know the difference between a loyal opposition that points out what is wrong, and defeatists who refuse to see that anything is right.”⁴¹ While the President didn’t mention the report by name, it is possible that it helped frame his comments, demonstrating his loyal support for the British and its military contribution to the GWOT. It is unlikely that such a document would have been given so much attention and circulated at the highest echelons had it originated from a less stalwart ally of the US.

At the political level, Blair’s access to the US has certainly been enhanced by Britain’s military support of American foreign policy. This support led to his invitation to Washington, DC, in July 2003, to give an acceptance speech to Congress in acceptance of the Congressional Gold Medal. In this speech, he agreed that “[t]he mission determines the coalition," an assertion made by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld after the 9/11 attacks and in reaction to Kosovo, which paved the way for coalitions of the willing rather than a NATO operation in Afghanistan. Thereafter, however, Blair was able to use the opportunity as a stage to promote multilateralism in preference to acting alone, and the need for America to “listen as well as lead.”⁴² He also raised issues not related to the war in Iraq, such as the importance of the Kyoto protocol, a subject that galvanises global opposition against US policy almost as much as the war itself. Nonetheless, cognisant of his surroundings, he left the US Congress in no doubt of his position regarding ‘counterweight’ theories to US power, stating that “[t]here is no more dangerous theory in international politics than that we need to balance the power of America with other competitive powers: different poles around which nations gather.”⁴³

There are numerous other examples of Prime Minister Blair's influence over President Bush. For example, in March 2003, the Israelis believed that Bush's hard line towards the creation of an independent Palestinian state was a direct result of Blair's and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw's intervention in the so-called 'Road-map' for Middle East peace.⁴⁴ Of less strategic significance, but nonetheless important to the British public, was Blair's ability to secure the release of four prisoners from the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in January 2005.⁴⁵ And finally, although Blair's support of the independent European defense capability initially angered many in the US, he was probably the only EU leader able to convince Washington that the move should not be viewed as a threat to NATO or US interests, but as complementary.

But it is pointless to examine how the UK has benefited from this relationship without counting the cost. In Iraq, for instance, the size of the British contribution within MNF-I is only due to the fact that the UK was willing to share the risk with the US in 2003, by committing around 45,000 personnel to the war, which represented approximately the same commitment per capita as the US.⁴⁶

Similarly, at the political level, British prime ministers have been required to support the US through thick and thin, or at least avoid exposing it, such as when Prime Minister Thatcher elected to remain silent over the supply of US arms to Iran that were intended to secure the release of US hostages. She had knowledge of this activity a year prior to the 1986 economic summit in Tokyo when President Reagan backed an appeal to end arms exports to states sponsoring terrorism.⁴⁷ Naturally, issues such as this have confirmed the often-quoted opinion in the press (in the UK as well as mainland Europe) that the UK remains little more than the lap dog of the US, and that the UK will do whatever is required to please its master.

Also, at a time when British soldiers are fighting and dying alongside their American counterparts, there are still instances where the apparent lack of British influence over the US is more than alarming, no better illustrated than by the recent US decision regarding the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR). In this case, after five years of intensive lobbying by the UK to the US Congress, and despite the promise of an ITAR waiver from President Clinton in 2001 and a determined effort from President Bush, Congress has decided not to follow through with Clinton's earlier intentions.⁴⁸ The impact of this is that the technology and information sharing that is required between the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the US to make such programs as the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) run smoothly is not taking place, and consequently the programs are put in jeopardy.⁴⁹ As time progresses, this issue will have greater impact on the UK-US relationship, not to mention the effect that it could have on the US defense industry as it tries to expand its global export base and establish new relations with clients such as India. At a time when the US is supposed to be working towards coalition operations as the preferred method of waging war, it is unfortunate that Congress is taking such a restricted view, when interoperability will surely suffer.

This is not an isolated incident of US reluctance to extend the hand of goodwill to those from beyond its borders. For instance, announcement of the sale in February 2006 of operations at six UK-controlled port facilities in the US to the United Arab Emirates company, Dubai Ports World (DPW), caused numerous objections to the \$6.8 billion deal by House and Senate leaders, both Democrat and Republican, who stated that the sale would weaken American homeland security.⁵⁰ This reaction, which killed the deal and bordered on the xenophobic, appeared particularly narrow-minded, since the UAE would have played no part in port security in any

case.⁵¹ Again, this opposition was against the President's wishes, who stated that resistance to the sale "would send a terrible signal to friends and allies not to let this transaction go through."⁵²

While the above paragraphs show that, over recent decades, the UK has had considerable influence over the US, we can now see that there are several important threads that have created the enabling conditions. First and foremost, the relationship between the President and the Prime Minister is crucial and can outweigh party allegiances. History has shown that while Democratic leaders like Bill Clinton tend to be more popular abroad, Republican Presidents Bush and Reagan demonstrated on numerous occasions that they were willing to support the UK despite the wishes of their own party, and in the case of President Bush, at significant personal political risk.

Second, British willingness as a nation to shed the blood of its youth alongside those of the US has created a bond between the two countries that has an indefinable quality of its own.⁵³ This generates respect between the two nations at all levels and across all IOPs and has spun off a multitude of 'softer' mutual benefits, such as a willingness to generate trade. This 'brotherhood' has been strengthened by the fact that the US is feeling increasingly isolated in a world where opposition to the American 'way of war' is on the rise.

Lastly, and contrary to the previous two points, the UK should not be so naïve as to expect that the current UK/US relationship will guarantee an outcome to any situation or that favoritism from the US is a given. The US will still generally continue to behave as any other rational actor, just as did the UK at the height of its military power, and pursue relationships that are primarily in the interest of the state. The disagreements over Kyoto, steel tariffs, the International Criminal Court and ITAR testify to this.

While this may appear to fly in the face of the earlier assessment of British influence, this is not the case. The US knows that it needs to develop relationships with other countries to

enhance its own IOPs. The choice to be made is which countries will generate the greater return on the investment and how significant must that investment be in order to achieve state policy. US support of Prime Ministers Thatcher and Blair suggests that the commitments are large, but then so are the returns. What, for instance, would have been the effect on the US today if its current action in Iraq had been truly unilateral, without UK backing? The real test of influence is not in persuading the US to do what one wants, but in making Americans realize that certain actions are in their own best interests.

If, on balance, the ‘special relationship’ is on a healthy footing, is it really in the British interest to bring the US closer to the EU, as that could dilute the favored British position with the US? In Blair’s speech to Congress, he made his intentions quite clear, stating, “If Europe and America are together, the others will work with us. If we split, the rest will play around, play us off and nothing but mischief will be the result of it.”⁵⁴

Conclusion

The above analysis has explored the background to the relationship between the European Union and the United States, from the viewpoint of each power in turn, to demonstrate why many believe that ‘it has gone sour’.⁵⁵ While the EU is changing fast, there appear to be polarized views on both sides of the Atlantic, the Americans regarding the Europeans as unable to respond to crises in a timely manner and with one voice, and the EU considering that the US is becoming increasingly unilateralist with particular regard to its foreign policy. However, with both sides now so interdependent on each other and sharing such common values and policies, as demonstrated by their security strategies, a continuing divergence in the relationship will be counterproductive at best, and in a world threatened by terror and mass destruction, catastrophic at worst.

Although the 2006 Munich conference on security policy showed some signs of reconciliation, there are still some ‘counterweight’ theorists within an EU where visions of trans-Atlantic harmony should reside. With a track record spanning decades of good relations with the US, it falls to the UK to foster an atmosphere of greater tolerance and understanding on both sides of the water to avoid the counterweight theory becoming a self fulfilling prophecy.⁵⁶

For British politicians, history has shown that while maintaining the ‘special relationship’ comes at a cost, both politically, as well as in human terms for the troops they commit to the battlefield, the benefits have resulted in considerable influence over the United States. The UK must continue to rise to not only this challenge, but also to improving US relations with Europe, and it is in its best interest to do so. A Europe that is closer to the US will also view the UK-US relationship with less animosity. In any future US-led conflict in the GWOT, it is likely that the UK will want to continue to show solidarity with its long-term partner and commit forces as before. As such, it is also likely that the UK will be pivotal in cementing that ‘coalition of the willing’, particularly within Europe. So if the UK is considered a respected member of the EU, and EU-US relations hopefully remain on a stronger footing, this task will be all the easier for Britain’s prime minister.

Nonetheless, there are still those who believe that the UK does not have the capacity to hold the middle ground between the EU and the US, and must therefore chose allegiance to either of them, but not to both – an argument often based around the UK military’s ability to integrate with the US, as well as with any future EU defense force. However, such beliefs do not stand up to scrutiny. Politically, on numerous occasions Prime Minister Blair has demonstrated his allegiance to the EU, such as during his presentation to Congress in July 2003 and in his determination to develop the European defense force. From his perspective, he sees the US as a

nation that shares the same ideals as the UK and is willing to use force when required, as is the UK, but he also sees the UK as uniquely positioned to illustrate to the US the EU way of ‘doing business.’

From a military perspective, the UK expends every effort minimizing the technological and doctrinal gaps between the UK and the US, and as such has attained interoperability with the US that exceeds that of any other country. With the UK at the forefront of EU defense force development, this will have a positive effect on European forces, which in all likelihood, will be required to integrate within US-led operations in the future. The UK’s future position regarding its trans-Atlantic aspirations is best summed up by the Prime Minister himself:

“For Britain, for once the word "unique" is fitting. We have a unique role to play. Call it a bridge, a two lane motorway, a pivot or call it a damn high wire, which is how it often feels; our job is to keep our sights firmly on both sides of the Atlantic, use the good old British characteristics of common sense and make the argument. In doing so, we are not subverting our country either into an American poodle or a European municipality, we are advancing the British national interest in a changed world in the early 21st century. And yes, we should be optimistic and confident of [our] ability to do it.”⁵⁷

With the UK’s capacity and willingness to influence the US towards greater cooperation with the EU established, it is up to the US to take an inward look and determine if there is, in fact, any merit to the ‘European Way of War’ as endorsed by Geoff Hoon.⁵⁸ If, as Ronald Asmus states, “When the USA and the EU cooperate, they can set a global agenda,” then surely with a little help from an intermediary such as the United Kingdom, this is in the realm of the possible.⁵⁹

Notes

¹ Javier Solana, "A Secure Europe in a Better World, European Security Strategy," Brussels, 12 December 2003, p.9. http://ue.eu.int/cms3_fo/showPage.ASP?id=266&lang=EN&mode=g; Kristin Archick, "The United States and Europe: Current Issues," *CRS Report for Congress*, Washington D.C., 10 June 2005. <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/48370.pdf>

² Peter van Ham, "Trans-Atlantic tensions: How a relationship goes sour," *International Herald Tribune*, 7 February 2006, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/02/06/opinion/edham.php>.

³ John C. Hulsman, "Cherry-Picking: US and European Relationship," *House Committee on International Relation Relations, Subcommittee on Europe*, 11 June 2003, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/tst061103.cfm>.

⁴ Notably Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and potentially Turkey, http://europa.eu.int/abc/governments/index_en.htm.

⁵ As illustrated in the paper by the Centre for European Reform, "A European Way of War." When this paper was introduced by Geoff Hoon at the Reform Club, London, 1 July 2005, he paraphrased the paper illustrating the softer options of power preferred by the European Union, http://www.cer.org.uk/articles/speech_hoon01july04.html.

⁶ The US NATO Ambassador, Nick Burns, stated that the attempt by the Europeans to create an autonomous planning capability separate from NATO was "one of the greatest dangers to the transatlantic relationship," as covered in an article "Defence: Atlantic or European" by Paul Reynolds, the *BBC News Online* world affairs correspondent, 21 October 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3210418.stm>.

⁷ Peter van Ham, 2006.

⁸ Solana, p.13.

⁹ Javier Solana, Secretary General of the Council of the European Union/High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, since October 1999.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.10.

¹¹ "National Security Strategy for the United States of America," The White House, September 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>.

¹² Ronald D. Asmus, "Rethinking the EU: Why Washington Needs to Support European Integration," *Survival*. (Vol 47 no 3, Autumn 2005), pp.93-102, <http://www.gmfus.org/doc/AsmusSurvivalEURethink.pdf>.

¹³ While around 100,000 troops have been pledged to the EU Force to date, member nations have been slow to modernize and in numerous cases represent little more than 'troops on paper' at this stage. <http://www.nato.int/docu/facts/2000/dev-esdi.htm>.

¹⁴ The original meeting of the EU officials was held at the symbolic Petersberg Hotel, near Bonn, in 1992.

¹⁵ Opinion gained from the authors personal experiences during the conflict in Kosovo in 1999.

¹⁶ Around 350,000 Commonwealth and Malayan troops and police participated in the Malayan Emergency, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malayan_Emergency.

¹⁷ Geoff Hoon, "A European Way of War," (address, Centre for European Reform, The Reform Club, London, 1 July 2005), http://www.cer.org.uk/articles/speech_hoon01july04.html.

¹⁸ Dana Priest, *The Mission - Waging War and Keeping Peace with America's Military*, (New York:W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), pp.267-8.

¹⁹ As intimated by discovery of Al Qaeda cells in the UK, Italy, Germany, Spain and Belgium, ESS p.3.

²⁰ NSS, p.1.

²¹ Edwina Campbell, *The Russian-American “Strategic Partnership” and its Impact on the US Approach to NATO Enlargement*, The Danish Institute of International Affairs, February 2003, http://www.dupi.dk/www.dupi.dk/htdocs/action.lasso?-database=Udgivelses&-response=en22000.html&udgivelse_emneord=21&-token.type=mix&-search.

²² Kristin Archick, *The United States and Europe: Current Issues*, Congressional Research Service Report to Congress, (Washington D.C., June 2005). <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/48370.pdf>.

²³ The Directorate General for Trade of the European Commission, “EU-US bilateral trade relations,” http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/usa/index_en.htm. (accessed 20 February 2006).

²⁴ The Mercosur was created by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay in March 1991 with the signing of the Treaty of Asuncion. It originally was set up with the ambitious goal of creating a common market/customs union between the participating countries on the basis of various forms of economic co-operation that had been taking place between Argentina and Brazil since 1986. http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/mercosur/intro/.

²⁵ All information regarding the “The 42nd Munich Conference on Security Policy” is taken from the Munich Conference on Security Policy Website, where full transcripts of the speeches are available at: http://www.securityconference.de/index.php?menu_2006=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&.

²⁶ Dr. Merkel gave the opening speech at the conference and highlighted the theme of “Restoring the Transatlantic Partnership.” http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?menu_2006=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&id=170&.

²⁷ Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, (address, 42nd Munich Conference on Security Policy, 4 February 2006), http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/reden.php?menu_2006=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&jahr=2006&.

²⁸ Angela Merkel, (address, 42nd Munich Conference on Security Policy, 4 February 2006), http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/reden.php?menu_2006=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&jahr=2006&.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Michèle Alliot-Marie, (address, 42nd Munich Conference on Security Policy, 4 February 2006), http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/reden.php?menu_2006=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&jahr=2006&.

³² However, according to David Ignatious of the Washington Post, since August 2004, behind closed doors the French and US have significantly improved relations, with the French Presidential Advisor, Maurice Gourdault-Montagne, making regular trips to Washington DC to visit his counterpart, Stephen Hadley, the National Security Adviser to the US President. To date, the purpose of the relationship has centered on the Near/Middle East, notably Syria, Israel, Iran and Iraq. See “Bush’s New Ally: France?” http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/31/AR2006013101081.html?nav=rss_opinion/columns.

³³ Donald H. Rumsfeld, (address, 42nd Munich Conference on Security Policy, 4 February 2006), http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/reden.php?menu_2006=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&jahr=2006&.

³⁴ Taken from a book review by Brad Miller of the ‘National Review’ on 27 May 1991, of “Reagan and Thatcher,” by Geoffrey Smith, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991. http://newssearch.looksmart.com/p/articles/mi_m1282/is_n9_v43/ai_10728868#continue.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Notwithstanding certain technological differences that result in minor interoperability issues only.

³⁷ Down from around thirty percent during the main combat operations phase of the War in Iraq.

³⁸ Information gathered in 2005 by the author in a study of Phase IV Operations in Iraq during 2003-04, on behalf of the Directorate of Operational Capability, Ministry of Defence, UK.

³⁹ Information from a visiting speaker to the Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 2006.

⁴⁰ Brigadier Aylwin-Foster of the British Army wrote, "Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations," on his return from Iraq where he was second in command of the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I) under US Gen Petraeus. The paper was published in the *Military Review* (November-December 2005), <http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/milreview/download/English/NovDec05/aylwin.pdf>.

⁴¹ George W. Bush, (address, Veterans of Foreign Wars on the War on Terror, 10 January 2006), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/01/20060110-1.html>.

⁴² Tony Blair, (address, The US Congress, Washington, D.C., 17 July 2003), <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/07/17/blair.transcript/>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Chris McGreal, "Israelis fear Blair's Influence Over Bush," *The Guardian*, Jerusalem, 28 March 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/israel/Story/0,2763,924412,00.html>.

⁴⁵ Carol D. Leonnig, and Glenn Frankel, "U.S. to Send 5 Detainees Home From Guantanamo," *Washington Post*, 12 January 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A982-2005Jan11.html>.

⁴⁶ .75 personnel per 1000 UK citizens were committed to the War in Iraq. For the US this figure was .76. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Falconer.

⁴⁷ Taken from a book review by Brad Miller of the 'National Review' on 27 May 1991, of "Reagan and Thatcher," by Geoffrey Smith, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991. http://newssearch.looksmart.com/p/articles/mi_m1282/is_n9_v43/ai_10728868#continue.

⁴⁸ Mark Joyce, "ITAR Waivers: Congress Unmoved by 'Special Relationship'" *RUSI Newsbrief*, January 2006. <http://www.rusi.org/publications/newsbrief/ref:P43C3A2006B8E8/>.

⁴⁹ "ITAR Fallout: Britain to Pull Out of F-35 JSF Program?" *Defense Industry Daily*, 7 December 2005, <http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/2005/12/itar-fallout-britain-to-pull-out-of-f35-jsf-program/index.php>.

⁵⁰ Barbara Ferguson, "Bush Backs DPW in Row Over Deal," *Arab News*, 23 February 2006, <http://www.arabnews.com/?page=4§ion=0&article=78243&d=23&m=2&y=2006>.

⁵¹ This case has striking similarities to the case in June 2005, when the US blocked a Chinese bid to acquire the US oil company, Unocal Corp, for \$18.5 billion. The deal went to Chevron instead, the only rival to tender. See "China's Unocal Bid Raises Political Red Flags," *FoxNews.com*, 27 June 2005, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,160656,00.html>.

⁵² "Bush threatens veto in ports row," *BBC.co.uk*, 22 February 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4737940.stm>.

⁵³ Another example of this effect is the relationship between Australia and the US, which has never been stronger since Australian involvement in the war in Iraq.

⁵⁴ Tony Blair, 2003.

⁵⁵ Van Ham, 2006.

⁵⁶ Asmus, 2005.

⁵⁷ Tony Blair, (address, The Lord Mayor's Banquet, London, England, 20 November 2004), <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page6583.asp>.

⁵⁸ Hoon, 2005.

⁵⁹ Asmus, 2005.

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