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British foreign policy since 1997

Three key motifs of British foreign policy during the premiership of former Prime Minister Tony Blair were the pursuit of an activist philosophy of 'interventionism', maintaining a strong alliance with the US and a commitment to placing Britain at the heart of Europe. Between 1997 and 2007 there were also important reforms to the strategic and institutional frameworks for the formulation and delivery of foreign policy. Focusing on these areas, this Research Paper reviews the development of British foreign policy since 1997. In doing so, it also looks at how much has changed since Gordon Brown replaced Tony Blair as Prime Minister in June 2007.

The Paper is not an exhaustive consideration of all aspects of British foreign policy or of every aspect of the operations of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office since 1997. For issues not covered by this Paper, Members and their staff should contact the appropriate Research Sections of the Library. They may also want to consult the Library's Research Papers on *British defence policy since 1997* and *British defence policy since 1997: Background issues*. Also relevant are Standard Notes SN/IA/4742, *The foreign policies of the main opposition parties* and SN/IA/4743, *British foreign policy since 1997: A select bibliography*.

Jon Lunn, Vaughne Miller and Ben Smith

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Summary

Three key motifs of Tony Blair's 10-year premiership were an activist philosophy of 'interventionism', maintaining a strong alliance with the US and a commitment to placing Britain at the heart of Europe. While the 'special relationship' and the question of Britain's role in Europe have been central to British foreign policy since the Second World War, many have argued that interventionism was a genuinely new element. There were also other, less immediately visible, changes to British foreign policy during his premiership as a consequence of reforms to the strategic and institutional frameworks for the formulation and delivery of that policy.

Although there has been some recalibration in terms of these three key motifs since Gordon Brown became Prime Minister in June 2007, so far there has been more continuity than change in British foreign policy since Blair left office. This is also true in terms of the strategic and institutional frameworks.

Tony Blair's adoption of an interventionist foreign policy was set in motion by the 1999 Kosovo crisis, during which he made his now famous 'Chicago speech', unveiling a 'doctrine of the international community'. However, the events of 11 September 2001 created a context in which the emerging concept of 'humanitarian intervention' was affected by the perceived imperatives of the 'war on terror'. Blair's interventionism was criticised on three main grounds: that while it was sincerely intended, it was fundamentally misguided; that while the broad intentions were good and the overall objectives desirable, implementation was sometimes misguided or inconsistent; and, finally, that it was largely a cynical smokescreen for 'business as usual'. Blair and his supporters mounted vigorous defences, reasserting the unavoidability of needing on occasions to deploy 'hard power', but the war in Iraq left them struggling to regain the initiative.

The Brown Government has sought to re-legitimise interventionism by (re)linking it more closely to conflict prevention and humanitarian agendas, including through the emerging legal norm known as the 'Responsibility to Protect'. However, it has not entirely repudiated the exercise of military power. It could hardly do so while British troops remain in Afghanistan and Iraq. It has emphasised that military action in future genuinely will be a 'last resort'. In this regard, Iran could be the biggest test on the horizon. But observers question whether either the political appetite or operational capability exists for significant new military operations in the foreseeable future.

Tony Blair began his premiership by seeking to reformulate the 'special relationship' between the UK and the US in the aftermath of the Cold War. While President Bill Clinton was in office, he strongly promoted the idea of Britain as a 'bridge' between the US and Europe. Despite their ideological proximity, Blair and Clinton did not always see eye to eye, for example over Kosovo. Blair and Clinton's successor, President George W Bush, were brought together on a 'war footing' following the events of 11 September 2001. Blair decided that the 'war on terror' provided an opportunity to demonstrate British commitment to its relationship with the US and to act as a go-between with the rest of the world, including Europe. However, the attempt to make Britain the 'bridge' between the US and Europe ultimately foundered over Iraq. The 'bridge' metaphor subsequently disappeared from British official discourse. Critics also argued that Blair had been unable to negotiate any meaningful 'paybacks' from the Bush administration on other issues in return for his loyalty, for example

on Israel and the Palestinians. For a while, the very term ‘special relationship’ reportedly fell out of favour in British official circles.

After Gordon Brown came to power, his new government, while continuing to describe the US as its most important bilateral partner, appeared initially somewhat to distance itself from the Bush administration. There were indications of discontent on the part of the administration about British plans to further reduce troop numbers in Iraq, although these plans were formed during the last year of the Blair premiership. However, since spring 2008 the Brown Government has initiated a *rapprochement*. The process of troop reduction in Iraq has been put on hold for the moment. It seems likely that the main goal is to create more permissive conditions for a revival of the ‘special relationship’ around a shared and more multilateral global agenda when the next President takes over in the White House in January 2009. However, some analysts argue that there are longer-term structural forces at work, leading to increasingly divergent strategic interests, which could hinder any such future revival.

Tony Blair came to power in 1997 echoing pledges of predecessors to put Britain ‘at the heart of Europe’. He did so with the advantages of a party that was not particularly divided over Europe and a massive parliamentary majority. However, while strongly committed to EU enlargement, it was – again like its predecessors – ambivalent about closer integration, tending to prefer voluntary and intergovernmental co-operation, for example, on the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and determined to secure Treaty ‘opt-outs’ and national vetoes for Britain when deemed necessary. In addition, it held back from joining the single European currency, the euro, on the grounds that the economic conditions were not right. While it supported the idea of an EU Constitution in principle, it felt compelled to agree to hold a referendum on it, although this subsequently became unnecessary. Two waves of enlargement during the Blair premiership created a wider choice of allies for Britain within the EU. However, by the time he left office, many of the more pro-integration countries within the EU felt that he had broken his pledge of ten years earlier.

The Brown Government has so far acted much as a Blair Government would probably have done had its term of office continued. Its main preoccupation has been to navigate the treacherous political waters of the *Treaty of Lisbon*, taking care to counter portrayals of it as a revival of the Constitution or as primarily an instrument for further integration. If this can be achieved, the Government hopes that the EU will subsequently focus on more ‘outward-looking’ agendas, including further enlargement and strengthening the Union’s capability to project power and influence around the world. Brown has spoken approvingly of a “Global Europe.” For as long as Gordon Brown is Prime Minister, it is difficult to envisage dramatic changes in Britain’s generally cautious posture towards the euro. He is viewed by many observers as more eurosceptic than both his predecessor and the current Foreign Secretary, David Miliband.

With regard to the strategic and institutional frameworks for the formulation and delivery of British foreign policy, the Blair premiership was a period of major change. Successive governments under his leadership sought to respond to the blurring of the division between ‘foreign’ and ‘domestic issues’, and the revolution in communications. Both had significant implications for the FCO’s overseas network as efforts were made to create more ‘joined up government’. Also introduced during the Blair premiership was a public sector management philosophy that placed much greater emphasis on detailed target-setting and other means of measuring performance. These were loosely linked to a series of ‘efficiency’ and

‘effectiveness’ agendas over the decade. Although not without their critics, Public Service Agreements, Strategic Priorities and White Papers became an important part of the foreign policy lexicon. In the process, questions were raised about the calibre of management and leadership within the FCO. In addition, the role of public diplomacy was also upgraded. Last but not least, new structures were established within government to assist in projecting Britain’s concerns within EU decision-making institutions and processes.

These reforms, in many of which Gordon Brown had a major hand when Chancellor, have continued to work their way through the system now that he is Prime Minister. The Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, has sought to create a ‘new Strategic Framework’ for foreign policy that, while broadly consistent with those elaborated during the Blair premiership, is smarter and leaner. More ‘joined-up government’ is still a priority, although it has not advanced as quickly as many of its supporters would like. As for the FCO, it faces a tight financial settlement. It is increasingly viewed as the ‘hub’ of British foreign policy, rather than its sole operator. Efficiency agendas have remained important. All of this has ongoing implications for the overseas network.

The fact that the story so far is mainly one of continuity between the Blair and Brown premierships certainly does not mean that British foreign policy will not change much in future. In the short- to medium-term, a moment may come when there will be a ‘tough choice’ to be made about whether to sanction a significant new deployment of British forces. The main impulse towards bigger changes in British foreign policy in the medium- to long-term is likely to be transformation in the wider political and economic context within which Britain conducts its foreign policy. Some observers argue that such shifts can already be detected. For example, although it may not yet have altered its fundamental character, the rise of China and India is beginning to affect British foreign policy. Another shift would be a reversal of trends towards economic and political globalisation. The previous epoch of globalisation (1890-1914) collapsed and was followed by a period of war, revolution and protectionism. There are a host of other factors, including in the spheres of the environment and energy, which could trigger transformations in Britain’s foreign policy. There may also over time be further ‘Europeanisation’ of foreign policy – a development which some hope for but others fear.

Of course, making predictions is always a risky business. Despite the emergence over the past decade of a growing array of technologies of strategy, planning and risk assessment in foreign policy, it may also be wise to bear in mind the old adage: ‘expect the unexpected’.

CONTENTS

I The Blair premiership

Part I of this Research Paper surveys British foreign policy during the premiership of Tony Blair. Sections A to C discuss what many commentators would consider the three key motifs of his 10-year premiership: an activist philosophy of 'interventionism'; the 'special relationship' between the UK and the United States (US); and the UK's role in Europe.[10] These three motifs strongly overlapped with and influenced each other strongly over the decade. While the last two have been central to British foreign policy throughout most of the period since the Second World War, the first is largely the product of the post-1989 years. Many have argued that the adoption of an activist philosophy of interventionism constituted the biggest change to British foreign policy during the Blair premiership.

A. Interventionism

1. Origins: Kosovo, the Chicago speech and beyond

If one philosophy arguably came to embody British foreign policy under former Prime Minister Tony Blair, it was interventionism. Given this fact, it is perhaps ironic that he was not initially the main driver behind this impulse.[11] That role was played by his first Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, who proposed in the first few weeks of the new Labour Government to inject 'an ethical dimension' into British foreign policy, most notably through what he proclaimed would be greater attention to human rights issues, including in relation to arms transfers.[12] Although it was Blair who gave the go-ahead for the establishment of the development arm of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Overseas Development Administration, as a separate ministry, to be known as the Department for International Development (DFID), he was not particularly involved in pushing its agenda during his first term (1997-2001).[13]

Tony Blair's interventionist foreign policy was fully set in motion by the 1999 Kosovo crisis and then reinforced by Britain's role in helping to end the conflict in Sierra Leone.[14] During the Kosovo crisis, in a now famous speech he made in Chicago, Blair unveiled his 'doctrine of the international community'. In part responding to those who argued that

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10 There is, of course, plenty of scope for debate about what the three major foreign policy motifs of the Blair premiership were. Writing in 2004, Paul Williams identified multilateralism, Atlanticism and neo-liberalism as the three 'big ideas' of Blair's Government, arguing that it had failed up to that point to resolve the tensions between them. See P. Williams, "Who's Making UK Foreign Policy?", *International Affairs*, 80, 5, 2004, p. 922

11 J. Kampfner, *Blair's Wars* (London, 2003), pp. 4, 8

12 One of the Government's main achievements in the sphere of human rights was its strong support for the International Criminal Court. See House of Commons Library Research Paper 01/39, *The International Criminal Court Bill.* On arms transfers, see House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/2729, *UK Arms Export Policy* (20 August 2007).

13 The main driver was Clare Short, who said that she would only lead Britain's development effort if a separate Department was established. Kampfner, *Blair's Wars*., p. 64

14 For further background on Kosovo, see House of Commons Library Research Papers and Standard Notes: RP 98/73, *Kosovo*; RP 99/48, *Kosovo: Operation Allied Force*; SN/IA/4480, *Kosovo: Beyond Stalemate at the Security Council* (17 October 2007). On Sierra Leone, see SN/IA/740, *Sierra Leone: UK Military Involvement* (13 March 2001).

legal approval from the United Nations Security Council should have been sought prior to military intervention in Kosovo, he argued:

> This is a just war, based not on any territorial ambitions but on values. We cannot let the evil of ethnic cleansing stand. We must not rest until it is reversed. We have learned twice before in this century that appeasement does not work. If we let an evil dictator range unchallenged, we will have to spill infinitely more blood and treasure to stop him later.[15]

He went on to state:

> We are witnessing the beginnings of a new doctrine of international community. By this I mean the explicit recognition that today more than ever before we are mutually dependent, that national interest is to a significant extent governed by international collaboration and that we need a clear and coherent debate as to the direction this doctrine takes us in each field of international endeavour.[16]

The idea of 'mutual dependence' was linked to a belief that individual states could no longer exercise total sovereignty over their fate simply by keeping to themselves and not interfering in the affairs of other states. It also fed into the argument, made later in the speech, that the boundaries between the 'domestic' and the 'foreign' had become increasingly blurred in policy terms in today's globalising world.[17] Given these developments, his view was that a blanket policy of 'non-intervention' was not just undesirable – it was no longer an option. In situations where genocide or crimes against humanity were being committed, intervention became a positive moral obligation. Commentators often summarised Blair's philosophy as one of 'liberal interventionism'. It is a phrase that has lived on after his political departure. Blair's Chicago speech also gave powerful momentum to concepts of 'humanitarian intervention', which were being widely debated at that time.

However, even at the 'founding moment' of his philosophy of interventionism in 1999, Tony Blair was careful to argue that he was not in favour of an indiscriminate or arbitrary implementation of the principle. In the Chicago speech he laid out five key questions which had to be considered before deciding "when and whether to intervene":

- Are we sure of our case?
- Have we exhausted all diplomatic options?
- Are there military operations we can sensibly and prudently undertake?
- Are we prepared for the long-term?
- Do we have national interests involved?[18]

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15 See:http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1297.asp. In 2000 the International Independent Commission on the Balkans declared the Kosovo intervention as "illegal but legitimate". See: Independent International Commission on Kosovo, *The Kosovo Report*, 2000

16 See: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1297.asp

17 In 2001, Peter Hain, then a Minister in the FCO, went so far as to question in a pamphlet whether a 'foreign policy' was needed any more. See *The End of Foreign Policy? British Interests, Global Linkages and Natural Limits* (London, 2001).

18 He did not regard these as "absolute tests". With regard to a possible future set of rules on intervention, Tony Blair went on to state in the same speech that "any new rules […] will only work if we have reformed institutions with which to apply them." See: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1297.asp

In July 2000 Robin Cook elaborated further on the issue of when and whether to intervene by setting out six principles that should guide the international community in situations where there were massive violations of international humanitarian law and crimes against humanity being committed. It should:

- Establish a "strengthened culture of conflict prevention"
- View the use of armed forces as a last resort
- Be clear that the immediate responsibility for halting violence lies with the state where it is occurring
- Intervene where a state is unwilling or unable to prevent, or is actively promoting violence
- Ensure that any use of force should be proportionate to the objective and consistent with international law
- Ensure that any use of force is collective and, wherever possible, has the authority of the Security Council[19]

Some have argued that Blair's enthusiasm for interventionism was little more than an updating for the modern world of the Labour Party's long-established internationalism. But there is little doubt that, as foreign affairs increasingly preoccupied him, he developed his own distinct approach – perhaps most notably, an unusually positive attitude for a Labour politician towards 'hard power', including the use of military force, as a means of achieving foreign policy objectives.[20]

2. The impact of 9/11

Emboldened by the apparent successes of Kosovo and Sierra Leone, Tony Blair's commitment to interventionism intensified further after the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001 (henceforth, 9/11) and the US-led military action against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan.[21] Blair's support for interventionism became increasingly expressed through the paradigms of 'security' and 'counter-terrorism' after 9/11, leading critics to claim that respect for human rights and international law often in practice became subordinated to that paradigm during Blair's second and third terms in office. These critics alleged that this was demonstrated by British complicity over Guantanamo Bay and 'extraordinary rendition', and by excessively restrictive anti-terrorism measures at home.[22]

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19 Robin, Cook, "Guiding humanitarian intervention", Speech to the American Bar Association, London, 19 July 2007

20 Tony Blair committed Britain's armed forces to action more often than any Prime Minister since Winston Churchill: Operation Desert Fox in Iraq (1998); Kosovo (1999); Sierra Leone (2000-3); Afghanistan (2001 – present); Iraq (2003-present).

21 For further background on the campaign against international terrorism and Afghanistan, see the following House of Commons Library Research Papers and Standard Notes: RP 01/72, *11 September 2001: The Response*; RP 01/81, *Operation Enduring Freedom and the Conflict in Afghanistan*; RP 01/112, *The Campaign against International Terrorism: Prospects after the Fall of the Taliban*; SN/IA/3831, *Afghanistan and Narcotics* (4 June 2007).

22 See, for example, P. Sands, *Lawless World. America and the Making and Breaking of Global Rules* (London, 2006). For further background, also see House of Commons Library Standard Notes SN/IA/3816, *Extraordinary Rendition* (25 June 2007) and SN/IA/3962, *Guantanamo Bay: An Update* (18 July 2007).

According to many commentators, Blair's decision to sign Britain up to the 'war on terror' (although neither he nor his Government used the term much) reflected a sincere belief that al-Qaeda and its network of supporters posed an existential threat to the western/universal values that he espoused. However, in taking this position he placed British foreign policy at the service of a neo-conservative Bush administration with a different, more strongly unilateralist view of interventionism based on the doctrine of 'pre-emptive action'. These commentators asserted that it was this that led Blair astray over the war in Iraq but was also illustrated by his apparent reluctance to intervene in support of calls for a ceasefire following the Israeli military incursion into southern Lebanon in 2006.[23]

One such commentator was John Kampfner, who claimed that Blair developed a default position of "go with the Americans" in crisis situations. He argued that Blair's problems began "when George W Bush and the neoconservatives around him saw in the new global dangers the need to assert a doctrine of pre-emption and US primacy." Blair's main failure, he concluded, was to overestimate the influence which Britain could bring to bear on US foreign policy as payback for its virtually unconditional loyalty.[24]

3. Critiques of Blairite interventionism

Broadly speaking, critiques of an interventionist British foreign policy during the Blair premiership fell into three main categories:

- it was sincerely intended but fundamentally misguided;
- the broad intentions were good and the overall objectives desirable, but the implementation was sometimes (or often) misguided or inconsistent;
- it was largely a cynical smokescreen for 'business as usual'.[25]

Each of these critiques is now addressed in turn.

a. Sincerely intended but fundamentally misguided?

In terms of the belief that the approach was sincerely intended but fundamentally misguided, the key criticism voiced was that Blair had strayed too far during his premiership from the central objective of British foreign policy, which was a clear-sighted pursuit of the country's 'national interest'. This critique drew much of its inspiration from the more traditional 'realist' view of foreign policy. Some claimed that he had fallen victim to an illusion that there were few or no contradictions between 'universal values' and

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[23] For further background on Iraq, see the following House of Commons Library Research Papers and Standard Notes: RP 99/13, *Iraq: Desert Fox and Policy Developments*; RP 03/22, *Iraq: Developments since UNSCR 1441*; RP 03/50, *The Conflict in Iraq*; RP 04/58, *Iraq: Political and Security Issues at the Handover*; SN/IA/4227, *New Strategy for Iraq: Summary and Reaction* (15 January 2007); SN/IA/2713, *Iraq: Calls for an Inquiry* (8 June 2007). See also House of Commons Library Research Paper RP 07/08, *The Crisis in Lebanon.*

[24] Kampfner, *Blair's Wars*, p. 350

[25] It is important to note that this is a deliberately simplified scheme for purposes of analytical clarity. It is also worth noting that these critiques did not correspond in any linear way with political affiliations. For example, there were Conservative 'idealists' as well as traditionally-minded 'realists'. Most critical lLbour backbenchers were disappointed 'idealists' and/or radical 'realists'.

British 'national interests' that could not be reconciled. Blair stated in the 1999 Chicago speech:

> Now our actions are guided by a more subtle blend of mutual self interest and moral purpose in defending the values we cherish. In the end, values and interests merge. If we can establish and spread the values of liberty, the rule of law, human rights and an open society then that is in our national interests too. The spread of our values makes us safer.[26]

Michael Ancram, a former shadow Foreign Secretary, was amongst those who criticised this position, stating:

> Our role in international affairs must not be based on romantic dreams of curing the world, nor on an unquestioning acceptance of US policy, but on realism and on what is in the British national interest. From what I have heard today, I cannot be certain that this is necessarily the Government's position.[27]

Some also argued that Blair had failed to recognise that the political, economic and military will or capability to implement an interventionist approach simply did not exist, whether at the national or international level, and might never to do so, given the nature of the world order. Sir Rodric Braithwaite, a former advisor to John Major when he was Prime Minister, claimed:

> There is a huge gap between his rhetoric and his capabilities. Too often, he is unaware of the limits imposed on him by reality. The idea of humanitarian intervention is wonderful, until you start trying to apply it in practice.[28]

b. Good intentions and desirable objectives but misguided or inconsistent implementation?

The 'disappointed friends' who took this position often began by referring to the positive achievements of the Blair premiership on a wide range of foreign policy issues such as Kosovo, Sierra Leone, the International Criminal Court, African development and climate change.[29] Only then did they move onto its failures, which for them often involved 'double standards'. For example, they asked why, when it came to countries with extremely poor human rights records, the UK had acted meaningfully (in concert with other EU countries) on Burma but not on China, Russia or Saudi Arabia?[30] A commentator expressed this view in the following terms:

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[26] See: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1297.asp. It is also worth noting the following definition of 'British interests', as provided by then Foreign Secretary Jack Straw in 2005: "British interests worldwide can be described as the promotion of a secure and prosperous United Kingdom in a safe, just and prosperous world". This was the mission statement of the FCO. See HC Deb 26 May 2005 c186W. A critic would argue that here again values and interests have been conflated.

[27] HC Deb 20 July 2006 c542

[28] "Led Astray. How Iraq cast a shadow over Blair's foreign policy successes", *Financial Times*, 11 May 2007

[29] For further background, see the following House of Commons Library Research Papers and Standard Notes: RP 07/51, *Gleneagles G8 Commitments on Debt Relief and Aid: Two Years On*; SN/EP/3440, *The Commission for Africa*; SN/SES/3919 (13 February 2006).

[30] For further background, see House of Commons Library Research Papers: RP 04/16, *Burma*; RP 6/36, *A Political and Economic Introduction to China*.

> The UK has pursued a rather inconsistent policy towards rights-violating governments abroad. Where the country is small, or where there are no major trade or geopolitical interests at stake, the UK has been prepared to be quite tough on human rights issues. For example, the UK has taken a strong public stand in opposition to human rights violations in Burma and, in the last few years, in Zimbabwe. While responding to human rights violations in larger and more powerful states is obviously more complex and difficult, the UK does not appear to have given adequate priority to human rights in its relations with key countries like Russia, China and Saudi Arabia. In these cases, economic or geopolitical interests have consistently taken precedence over human rights issues. [31]

These 'disappointed friends' had other charges to lay against Labour Governments under Tony Blair: Why the introduction of human rights criteria with regard to arms transfers but nothing, for example, on brokering or monitoring end-use?[32] Why such slavish adherence to the 'special relationship' under a neo-conservative President? Why such a reliance on military force as opposed to other, sometimes 'softer', strategies of intervention? Why so little involvement in UN peacekeeping operations? Such concerns drew much of their inspiration from an 'idealist' view of foreign policy.[33]

One argument made by those who took this position was that, post 9/11, errors of judgement had flowed not from values but from an increasingly 'presidential' and 'sofa' style of government, in which 'spin' was far too dominant. The February 2003 dossier on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction was often cited as evidence.[34] In addition, some argued that Blair had also failed to do enough to generate the political, economic and military will and capability to make this approach more consistently possible. Non-Governmental Organisations and parts of the British media were strongly represented in the ranks of those arguing from these varied standpoints.

Another claim made was that the Government had often failed to ground the pursuit of positive ethical objectives in informed historical and political analysis. David Marquand was a particularly trenchant exponent of this view:

> Blair's fatal flaw was not just that he knew no history. It was that he had no sense of history, that he was constitutionally incapable of thinking historically […] No one with a sense of history could possibly have thought that 9/11 marked a historical turning-point, that Saddam Hussein posed an unprecedented threat to

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31 D. Mepham, "Human Rights, Justice and Security", in D. Held and D. Mepham, *Progressive Foreign Policy. New Directions for the* UK (London, 2007), p. 68. Some might argue that the record on Burma and Zimbabwe was less positive than the IPPR suggests. However, John Rentoul quotes Tony Blair as saying to Clare Short, when she was still a member of his government, that: "If it was down to me, I'd do Zimbabwe as well." "The tragedy of Tony Blair", *Independent on Sunday*, 18 March 2007. For further background on Zimbabwe, see House of Commons Library Research Paper 05/58, *Zimbabwe after the 2005 Parliamentary Election*.

32 For a survey of the record of Labour Governments under Blair on arms transfers, see Saferworld, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. A Decade of Labour's Arms Exports,* London, May 2007.

33 This idealism is often rooted in a cosmopolitan approach to world affairs, in which every person is conceived of as a world citizen and a member of a single moral community.

34 As argued by Clare Short in her book, *An Honourable Deception. New Labour, Iraq and the Misuse of Power* (London, 2004). The dossier was called by some the 'dodgy dossier'. See also House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/3130, *Iraq: Weapons of Mass Destruction and the '45 Minutes' Intelligence* (13 July 2004).

> the world, or that Iraq, of all places, could be transformed, at the point of a gun, into a beacon of western-style democracy.[35]

Several observers who were otherwise sympathetic to Blair's approach expressed the conviction that the damage suffered to Britain's reputation in the world as a result of Iraq had obstructed its ability to achieve other progressive foreign policy objectives, whether in relation to the EU, Darfur and Zimbabwe or to the reform of international institutions.[36] Gareth Evans, President of the International Crisis Group, was quoted as saying of Blair's recourse to humanitarian justifications for the war in Iraq:

> He was completely off-target in trying to use this as a justification for Iraq when other defences crumbled away. He has helped create a suspicion of neo-colonialism.[37]

The belief also emerged in some quarters that the growing focus on African development during Blair's second term, as reflected by the Government's sponsorship of the Commission for Africa, which reported in March 2005, at a time when the UK held the Presidency of the G8, was in part designed to counter critics of the war in Iraq within the Labour Party and wider civil society.[38]

c. A cynical smokescreen for 'business as usual?'

The final argument, that the approach was largely a cynical smokescreen for 'business as usual', usually denied that there had been a substantial rupture with past British foreign policy during the Blair premiership and emphasised long-standing alleged continuities in the 'special relationship' between the UK and the US. Advocates of such arguments often drew upon more radical 'realist' approaches to foreign policy, although many also retained a passionate commitment to 'idealist' goals. One example of an extremely disappointed idealist was Carne Ross, a British diplomat who resigned over the war in Iraq. He wrote: "I question whether 'values' have not simply become a more palatable and politically-correct excuse for realist 'business as usual." [39]

Many within this camp argued, following writers such as Noam Chomsky, that the main US preoccupation was to maintain its global economic and political dominion over the

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35 "A man without history", *New Statesman*, 7 May 2007. In the aftermath of the war in Iraq, some argued that Blair had ignored advice from the Foreign Office in deciding to support the intervention. However, Jonathan Steele later claimed that the level of historical and political analysis in the Foreign Office had also been poor. "Only a full inquiry can avert another disaster like Iraq", *Guardian*, 24 January 2008. His argument is broadly supported by Sir Hilary Synnott, a retired FCO diplomat who served in Basra after the war in Iraq, in his book, *Bad Days in Basra* (London, 2008).

36 For further background on Darfur, see House of Commons Library Research Paper 06/08, *Sudan: The Elusive Quest for Peace*.

37 Quoted in "Led Astray. How Iraq cast a shadow over Blair's foreign policy successes", *Financial Times*, 11 May 2007

38 "From Blair to Brown – the economists are coming", *Africa Confidential*, 8 June 2007. The Commission for Africa report fed into the G8's July 2005 Gleneagles Agreement on debt, aid and trade for development. There is insufficient space in this Paper to discuss in depth this important 'soft' dimension of British interventionism. Suffice to say that this dimension was far less politically controversial than were 'harder' interventions such as those in Afghanistan and Iraq. On responses to the report of the Commission, see P. Williams, *British Foreign Policy under New Labour* (Basingstoke, 2005), p. 95.

39 C. Ross, *Independent Diplomat* (London, 2007), pp. 123-4, 142. Ross acknowledges that he was a relatively recent convert to the idealist standpoint.

world and that Britain was, as ever, its loyal subordinate in this endeavour. It was claimed that all that had changed was that, following 9/11, the goal of maintaining this dominion had been pursued by particularly aggressive, militaristic means in response to both the ideological threat of militant Islam and an increasingly urgent need to secure control over the world's oil reserves in the Middle East, including Iraq. According to those espousing these views, the concept of 'humanitarian intervention' should more accurately have been called 'military humanitarianism'. Some preferred simply to see it as the latest incarnation of imperialism.

Many of the leading figures in the UK 'Stop the War Coalition' strongly supported an analysis of the war in Iraq that highlighted the issue of energy security:

> US oil policy is shaped by interlocking concerns – to bring down the overall price of oil, since cheap oil powers its economy overall (the US now imports nearly 60 per cent of the oil it uses each year, accounting for more than a quarter of world oil consumption), while maintaining the profits of its big oil companies […] A US-controlled Iraqi oil industry, privatised and turned over to oil corporations from the US and 'friendly' countries, would allow Washington to achieve its long-cherished goal of busting the Opec cartel, which daily commits the unforgivable sin of trying to fix the price of oil in the interests of the producing countries rather than the oil companies. With Iraq out of the cartel, Opec would no longer control sufficient output to fix the world price.[40]

Another strong exponent of the 'smokescreen' view was Mark Curtis. In 2003 he wrote about

> some of the major foreign policies of the Blair government: its illegal wars; its support for a 'war against terrorism' that is acting as a pretext for a new phase of global intervention and US imperial power; its support for repressive elites and state terrorism; its arms exports that help sustain repressive governments; its aim to reshape the global economy; and its extraordinary role as recognised international expert on state propaganda (mislabelled 'spin') […] The liberal intelligentsia in Britain is in my view guilty of helping to weave a collective web of deceit. Under New Labour, many commentators have openly taken part in Labour's onslaught on the world, often showering praise on Tony Blair and his ministers for speaking the language of rights, development and global security as they proceed to demolish such noble virtues in their actual policy.[41]

Even British policy on issues such as the International Criminal Court, climate change or African development was not immune from being viewed by some observers in this camp as part of the "web of deceit." For example, some critics argued that Britain under Blair did little or nothing to challenge US actions which ensured that American forces enjoyed immunity from the jurisdiction of international tribunals, including the ICC, so colluding in the imposition of 'victor's justice'. Others went so far as to accuse Britain of playing an active role in 'crimes of aggression' under the UN Charter, pointing out that,

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40 A. Murray and L. German, *Stop the War. The Story of Britain's Biggest Mass Movement* (London, 2005), pp. 38-9

41 M. Curtis, *Web of Deceit. Britain's Real Role in the World* (London, 2003), pp. 3-4

according to the Nuremberg Tribunal after World War II, this was the 'supreme international crime'.[42]

4. Cases for the defence

Tony Blair often sought to respond to those critics who allowed for his good intentions. However, he was brusquely dismissive of those who subscribed to the 'smokescreen' view. In the spring of 2006 he made a series of three major foreign policy speeches. He was unrepentant about the overall trajectory of foreign policy pursued by successive Labour Governments since 1997, although he did recognise that mistakes had been made.[43] He ended the third of these speeches with this declaration:

> In my nine years as Prime Minister I have not become more cynical about idealism. I have simply become more persuaded that the distinction between a foreign policy driven by values and one driven by interests, is obviously wrong. Interdependence begets the necessity of a common value system to make it work. In other words, the idealism becomes the real politik […] our values are our guide. To make it so, however, we have to be prepared to think sooner and act quicker in defence of these values. Progressive pre-emption if you will. There is an agenda for it, waiting to be gathered and capable of uniting a world once divided.[44]

Other Ministers, while tending to be slightly more subdued in tone, also defended the conduct of British foreign policy since 1997:

> Ten years on, the results are still uncertain and the judgements are still to be assessed. Many of us who were close to the heart of foreign policy for a long time will have many unanswered questions and many sober reflections to keep us company in our quieter moments. However, we also have much to be proud of – much that has lasting value and is of great credit to this Government, to this Prime Minister and to the people who elected him in three elections.[45]

Other Ministers placed 'British failures' within the context of wider failures by the international community as a whole:

> When are we going to live up to the fine and inspiring words of the UN declaration of human rights? […] If we are to uphold the principle and practice of dealing with these problems multilaterally – in the end, that is a much better solution than countries acting alone – the UN has to acquire the will and the means to act. We have not yet done so. It is time that we did.[46]

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42 For example, see: A. Toscano, "Sovereign impunity", *New Left Review*, 50, March/April 2008, pp. 128-35

43 See: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page9224.asp; http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page9245.asp and; http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page9549.asp.

44 See his speech of 26 May 2006 at: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page9549.asp

45 Baroness Symons, House of Lords debate on foreign policy, HL Deb 21 June 2007 c326

46 Then Secretary of State for International Development Hilary Benn, HC Deb 5 June 2007 c228, ending a debate on Darfur.

Blair, arguing in a January 2007 speech against the case for the pursuit of progressive values solely through the deployment of 'soft power', asserted:

> The parody of people in my position is of leaders who, gung-ho, launch their nations into ill-advised adventures without a thought for the consequences. The reality is we are charged with making decisions in this new and highly uncertain world; trying as best we can, to make the right decision. That's not to say we do so, but that is our motivation. The risk here […] is that the politicians decide it's all too difficult and default to an unstated, passive disengagement, that doing the right thing slips almost unconsciously into doing the easy thing […] There is a case for Britain, in the early 21st Century, with its imperial strength behind it, to slip quietly, even graciously into a different role. We become leaders in the fight against climate change, against global poverty, for peace and reconciliation; and leave the demonstration of 'hard power' to others. I do not share that case but there is quite a large part of our opinion that does. They will say yes in principle we should keep the 'hard power', but just not in this conflict or with that ally. But in reality, that's not how the world is. The reason I am against this case, is that for me 'hard' and 'soft power' are driven by the same principles. The world is interdependent. That means we work in alliance with others. But it also means problems interconnect. Poverty in Africa can't be solved simply by the presence of aid. It needs the absence of conflict. Failed states threaten us as well as their own people. Terrorism destroys progress. Terrorism can't be defeated by military means alone. But it can't be defeated without it. Global interdependence requires global values commonly or evenly applied. But sometimes force is necessary to get the space for these values to be applied: in Sierra Leone or Kosovo for example. So for me, the setting aside of 'hard power' leads inexorably to the weakening of 'soft power'.[47]

In the aftermath of the war in Iraq in 2003, with the concept of 'humanitarian intervention' in apparent headlong retreat, the British Government became a strong supporter of an emerging legal norm which, its advocates hoped, would recast and re-legitimise the interventionist project. The new formulation, which was still at a relatively early stage of evolution, was known as 'The Responsibility to Protect' (R2P).[48]

Blair's philosophy of active interventionism did receive significant support beyond Parliament. As well as citing the 'successes' of Kosovo and Sierra Leone, some accused critics of interventionism of overly downplaying the scale of the human rights abuses and the threat posed to Western and/or 'universal values' by the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Ba'athist regime in Iraq, and failing to understand the existential threat posed by al-Qaeda and its networks.[49] Other sympathisers took a more nuanced view, being less preoccupied with defending every aspect of Blair's record and more concerned to defend the continuing need for ethical considerations to be given proper weight in British foreign policy. They asserted that past 'failures' of intervention did not necessarily negate the

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47 See: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page10735.asp

48 For further discussion of R2P, see Part IIA of this Paper and Library Research Paper RP 08/55, *Reinventing humanitarian intervention: Two cheers for the Responsibility to Protect?*

49 Amongst defenders of war in Iraq, there was a significant cohort on the Left. For a particularly strong defence of Blair's approach, see O. Kamm, *Anti-Totalitarianism: The Left-Wing Case for a Neo-Conservative Foreign Policy* (London, 2005). Another defence is mounted in J. Lloyd, *Iraq and World Order* (London, Foreign Policy Centre, 2003). See also the debate between Johann Hari and Nick Cohen in the summer 2007 edition of *Dissent*, which is available via: www.dissentmagazine.org.

obligation to act in other situations where intervention could help to end massive violations of international human rights law or crimes against humanity.

A related argument for the defence sought to counter claims about 'double standards' or inconsistency – for example, on Israel/Palestine or Burma – by arguing that this also did not mean that interventions should never be undertaken at all.[50] One scholar argued in favour of decision-making processes about when or whether to intervene based on clear general criteria – such as those set out in Blair's Chicago speech – and sound judgement, rather than rigid rule-based approaches, asserting:

> […] the demand that the US and other Western countries formulate an uncompromising and universal principle which will tell them when to intervene and when not to intervene, is fundamentally misconceived […] One of the effects – intended or not – of emphasizing the alleged desirability of non-arbitrary moral rules is to legitimize a black-and-white account of the moral universe under which actions are either wholly altruistic or wholly selfish – and since states are never *wholly* altruistic this move is usually a prelude to a denial that altruism can be a factor at all in the conduct of international affairs. Contrary to this absolutism, there is no reason to think that when states act to right a wrong they may not *also* be motivated by self-interest […] there is no viable universal moral rule that can tell statespersons what is the right thing to do in particular circumstances. They must exercise their judgement as best they can; sometimes their best may not be good enough. [51]

This was written before the war on Iraq. As seen earlier, even sympathetic observers accepted that on Iraq the British Government might have fallen short of meeting the criteria set out by Blair and Cook in their 1999 and 2000 speeches.[52] Indeed, Cook resigned from the Government over the war in Iraq.[53] Others argued that the same could increasingly be said of Afghanistan, despite its status in many quarters as the 'good war'.[54]

By the end of the Blair premiership, his philosophy of interventionism had lost much of its initial lustre. There was uncertainty about how far it would survive at all as a component of British foreign policy under his successor. This question is addressed in Part IIA of this Paper.

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50 For further background on the Middle East peace process, see the following House of Commons Library Research Papers: RP 05/29, *The Middle East Peace Process: Prospects after the Palestinian Presidential Elections*; RP 06/17, *The Palestinian Parliamentary Elections and the Rise of Hamas*; RP 07/60, *Hamas and the Seizure of Gaza*.

51 C. Smith, "Selective humanitarianism: in defense of inconsistency", in D. Chatterjee and D. Scheid, *Ethics and Foreign Intervention* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 43, 46

52 Samuel Brittan wrote in 2006: "What is wrong is not the criteria but the ease with which the UK Prime Minister believes they are met." "Two views of foreign policy morality", *Financial Times*, 14 August 2006

53 By that time he was Leader of the House rather than Foreign Secretary.

54 Afghanistan is discussed in more depth in Part IIA of the Paper.

B. The special relationship: the UK and the US

1. Blair-Clinton (1997-2000)

According to some political analysts, all pretence of a special relationship between Britain and the US should have died with the end of the Cold War, when the main basis for Britain's value to the US, as a trustworthy ally and host of American military bases in the context of the struggle against communism, expired.[55] However, the new Labour Government quickly came up with a revised formulation through which to sustain the special relationship. This was the idea – not wholly new – of Britain as a 'bridge' between the US and Europe. This was not a wholly new idea. However, previous governments had not highlighted it as a key rationale for Britain's close alliance with the US.

In his first major foreign policy speech at the Mansion House in November 1997, Tony Blair stated:

> Our aim should be to deepen our relationship with the US at all levels. We are the bridge between the US and Europe. Let us use it.[56]

Tony Blair sought to build European support for Britain's bridging role by arguing that this would reduce the prospects of American isolationism in a post-Cold War world. Blair addressed such fears in a speech to the French National Assembly in May 1998:

> I know that some feel that being close with the United States is an inhibition on closer European cooperation. On the contrary, I believe it is essential that the isolationist voices in the United States are kept at bay and we encourage our American allies to be our partners in issues of world peace and security.[57]

Later in the same year, Blair developed this theme further, saying that Britain could be "pivotal":

> It means realising once and for all that Britain does not have to choose between being strong with the US, or strong with Europe; it means having the confidence to see that Britain can be both. Indeed, that Britain must be both; that we are stronger with the US because of our strength in Europe; that we are stronger in Europe because of our strength with the US.[58]

He went on to praise the shared history and values of the US and Britain, and to denounce 'euroscepticism' as a betrayal of British interests.

Some observers argued that, over his period in office, Blair did show that he was genuinely committed to the idea of Britain as a 'bridge'. However, towards the end of the

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55 For an example of such arguments, see J. Dickie, *Special No More. Anglo-American Relations: Rhetoric and Reality* (London, 1994)

56 Speech by Tony Blair at Lord Mayor's banquet, 10 November 1997

57 See: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1160.asp

58 Speech by Tony Blair on foreign affairs, 15 December 1998

Blair premiership, the 'bridge metaphor' disappeared from official discourse.[59] For Philip Stevens:

> From the beginning his own reputation was held hostage to US hubris. The central assumption of Mr Blair's foreign policy - that Britain is a natural bridge between Europe and North America - buckled under the weight of the divisions in Europe about Iraq.[60]

The relationship between the British and US Governments, while always officially remaining close, was not uniformly positive throughout the Blair premiership. One factor in this was the relationships between the leaders of the two countries: first, between Blair and President Bill Clinton (1997-2000), and then between Blair and President George W Bush (2001-2007).

The victory of the Democratic candidate, Bill Clinton, in the 1992 presidential election had caused a cooling in the relationship between Washington and London. The Conservative Party had openly sided with the Republican incumbent George HW Bush, and the Clinton Administration was reported to have 'punished' Britain subsequently with restrictions on intelligence sharing.[61] Following Labour's victory in May 1997, Tony Blair and Bill Clinton embarked on an ambitious project to create a new centre-left political philosophy called the 'Third Way'. There were regular meetings between Clinton and Blair, including officials, and talk of an 'international movement'. However, the 'Third Way' project never gained much momentum in practice and the term soon fell out of use.

Blair and Clinton did not always see eye to eye. For example, there was some tension in 1998 over developments on the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), where senior US officials feared that Britain was turning away from the special relationship and downgrading the importance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).[62]

Their main disagreement came over Kosovo, where Blair worked hard during early 1999 to persuade Clinton to support a NATO ground invasion. After the Rambouillet conference in 1998, the notion of a NATO-led military intervention gained broad acceptance. But the question of whether to prepare for a ground invasion became the fault line between NATO's leaders. Tony Blair became the 'principal hawk' in Europe.[63] French officials were said to be perplexed by Blair's allowing Britain to become isolated by arguing in favour of sending in ground forces, which was unpopular with both the Clinton administration and the European NATO allies. The then German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, accused Britain of splitting NATO. For Louise Richardson, the strategic rationales for Blair's position were:

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59 World affairs speech by Tony Blair to the Lord Mayor's banquet, 13 November 2006

60 "Persuasive populist who fought many battles - but lost the war", Financial Times, 11 May 2007

61 "A special relationship? The US and UK spying alliance is put under the spotlight", *Financial Times*, 6 July 2004

62 P. Riddell, *Hug them Close Blair, Clinton, Bush and the Special Relationship* (London, 2004), p. 96. For further background, see House of Commons Library Research Paper, *British Defence Policy since 1997*.

63 P. Martin and M. Brawley (eds), *Alliance Politics, Kosovo and NATO's War* (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 146

> The credibility of NATO, the 'special relationship' as the cornerstone of postwar British foreign policy and Britain's need to stake a claim to the leadership of European defense.[64]

In her view, the main American interest in co-operating with Britain on Kosovo was that it allowed "a veneer of multilateralism" to be applied to US actions.[65] It was notable that, while Britain was supplying only eight per cent of NATO forces in Kosovo, the NATO spokesman appearing every night on television screens was the Briton Jamie Shea.

In the end, NATO air strikes were sufficient to bring about Serbian capitulation without the need for a ground invasion. While the Kosovo crisis led to tensions between the UK and the US, it had not resulted in any permanent damage.[66] Indeed, some commentators took the view that the special relationship was in better condition than might have been expected given the fact that the Cold War, which had provided its fundamental rationale since World War II, had ended.[67]

2. Blair-Bush (2001-7)

Despite the greater political distance between a British Labour Prime Minister and a Republican US President, the relationship between Blair and Bush appears to have been closer than that between Blair and Clinton. Blair had put out feelers to the Republicans during the presidential campaign, but after Bush's victory many commentators feared that the US would become increasingly isolationist in its foreign policy. Those predictions were confounded by events a few months later. This partly reflected the fact that the events of 11 September 2001 brought them together on a 'war footing', which they remained on through to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The two men went on to form an unlikely friendship, which some attributed to their shared Christian faith. For James Naughtie it went wider than that:

> This is only a fragment of the truth, and one that is quite misleading. But a wider definition of moral conviction does help to explain how it was that Blair turned the historic closeness of London and Washington into something different in his era, and powerful enough to span two administrations of different political complexions.[68]

The 9/11 attacks swept away any notion that the US could ignore the rest of the world, and the administration responded with the 'Bush doctrine': the US should seek to strengthen its borders and take the battle against terrorism to its enemies abroad, including through pre-emptive action. Blair adopted some of the language of the 'war on terror', differing from Bush in his analysis principally in that he wanted to ensure that the US did not go it alone and would as far as possible form alliances and mobilise multilateral institutions, above all the UN. However, as discussed in Part IA of this Paper, many observers argued that he did not challenge the US view at crucial moments. For

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64 P. Martin and M. Brawley (eds), *Alliance Politics, Kosovo and NATO's War* (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 151

65 *Ibid.,* p. 153

66 "Anglo-American 'special relationship'", *BBC News Online*, 6 April 2002

67 See, for example, J. Dumbrell, *The Special Relationship. Anglo-American Relations from the Cold War to Iraq* (Basingstoke, 2006)

68 J. Naughtie, *The Accidental American: Tony Blair and the Presidency* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 117

example, the administration's decision to sideline NATO from the invasion of Afghanistan was accepted by the Blair government, and the establishment of the internment camp at Guantánamo Bay did not provoke a negative response.

As for Iraq, until the moment when the US approach to Iraq began to solidify, European divisions were contained. However, Victor Bulmer-Thomas argued:

> …by mid-2002 Tony Blair had concluded that President Bush was determined to invade Iraq and that Britain needed to be a partner in this exercise. The British role was therefore to provide diplomatic cover and to enrol allies in Europe and elsewhere as far as possible. This was without a shadow of doubt the defining moment of Blair's foreign policy – indeed, the defining moment of his whole premiership.[69]

The main problem for Blair was that, as the Prime Minister saw an opportunity to demonstrate British commitment to the US relationship and to act as a go-between, persuading reluctant countries of the rightness of a cause in which he believed, Blair's most important partners in Europe were heading in the opposite direction and were not amenable to persuasion.

Blair now argued that opposition across Europe to US policy on Iraq amounted to an attempt to set up Europe in opposition to the US. Opening the 2003 debate in Parliament on the Iraq war, Blair said:

> What we have witnessed is indeed the consequence of Europe and the United States dividing. …The heart of it has been the concept of a world in which there are rival poles of power – the U.S. and its allies in one corner, France, Germany, and Russia and its allies in the other. [70]

Some commentators in the US strongly endorsed this view and felt that by siding with Bush, Blair was in fact resisting this division into two camps.[71] French President Jacques Chirac countered that the Americans seemed to want to run the world alone, while Europeans like him advocated a multipolar system.

Most commentators agree that Tony Blair did not view British support for US policy on Afghanistan or Iraq as some kind of down-payment for the privileges of the 'special relationship', but genuinely believed in those policies, and that to support them reflected enduring common interests and values. Some critics believed this view to be naïve and misguided, in the process selling British foreign policy short. Sir Rodric Braithwaite, former British Ambassador to Moscow and former head of the Joint Intelligence Committee, was among those who felt that Blair should have insisted upon specific 'paybacks' for this support and been willing to walk away if they were not offered. He wrote:

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69 V. Bulmer-Thomas, "Blair's foreign policy and its possible successors", Chatham House Briefing Paper 06/01, December 2006

70 Debate on a motion to approve the actions of Her Majesty's government on Iraq, HC Deb c760-911, 18 March 2003

71 For example, see William Schneider, "Nobody's poodle now", *National Journal*, 5 April 2003

> In dealing with the Americans we need to follow the basic principle of negotiation: you must always make it clear that you will, if necessary, walk away from the table. That is something that British prime ministers, submariners, and codebreakers have been loath to contemplate.[72]

Others questioned whether Blair had really had much influence to trade in negotiations with the Bush administration. One American perspective came from senior State Department adviser Kendall Myers. In a public lecture entitled "How special is the United States-United Kingdom relationship after Iraq?", delivered at Johns Hopkins University in November 2006, Mr Myers said that a comment by the then US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, during the run-up to the war in Iraq, to the effect that the US could undertake the invasion without Britain's help if necessary, had been a brutally clarifying insight into the true nature of the special relationship:

> That was the giveaway. I felt a little ashamed and a certain sadness that we had treated him [Mr Blair] like that. And yet, here it was, there was nothing – no payback, no sense of a reciprocity of the relationship.[73]

He went on to describe the attitude within the administration:

> We typically ignore them and take no notice. We say, 'There are the Brits coming to tell us how to run our empire. Let's park them'. It is a sad business and I don't think it does them justice.[74]

George Bush himself was asked how much influence Britain had had over the formulation of US policy after 9/11. He said:

> Well, first of all, I understood immediately that we were at war, and I made up my mind that I would use all my power -- obviously within the law – to protect the American people and prosecute this war. And so I don't think there was much… I'm the kind of guy that when I make up my mind – you know, I appreciate advice and counsel, but we were going.[75]

However, Anatol Lieven countered that British military support during the war in Iraq was not insignificant to the US, and that the political support Blair supplied for the invasion was also invaluable. In his view, the US could have been completely alone at certain points if it had not been for the considerable sacrifices that Blair made, against the grain of British public opinion.[76]

Lawrence Freedman argued that on issues such as Iraq, where the US leadership was divided over US interests and policy, Blair did have some influence over the Bush administration:

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72 R. Braithwaite, "End of the Affair", *Prospect*, May 2003

73 "Britain's special relationship 'just a myth'", *Daily Telegraph,* 1 December 2006

74 *Ibid*

75 As quoted in C. Coughlin, *American Ally. Tony Blair and the War on Terror* (London, 2006), p. 365.

76 A. Lieven, "The hinge to Europe: don't make Britain choose between the US and the EU", *Carnegie Endowment Policy Brief No. 25*, August 2003

> Working with Secretary of State Colin Powell in August 2002, he persuaded Bush, against the wishes of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney, to take the Iraq problem to the UN Security Council to give any action more legitimacy.[77]

However, in Freedman's view, the decision to go to the UN once again backfired, underlining opposition to the invasion rather than gaining legitimacy for it, and making the case for action more dependent on evidence of weapons of mass destruction that subsequently proved to be illusory.[78]

Perhaps the main issue on which Tony Blair might have explicitly sought payback was in relation to US policy on promoting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. After 9/11 Blair consistently argued that progress in the Middle East peace process was essential in countering the notion, said to be widespread in the Arab 'street', that the 'war on terror' was in reality a thinly-disguised war on Islam. The Bush administration tended instinctively to view things differently. Indeed, wary of repeating the alleged failure of the Clinton initiative in 2000, it showed little interest in the Middle East peace process until after the war in Iraq. During a visit to the US in November 2001, Tony Blair tried unsuccessfully to persuade Bush to negotiate with Yasser Arafat, whom he considered a "necessary evil. Bush increasingly viewed him as just evil".[79] In 2003, as the US sought to build support for its policy on Iraq, Blair was instrumental in persuading Bush to endorse the 'roadmap' for Israeli-Palestinian peace. However, this move failed to convince most observers either that the Bush administration was listening seriously to British concerns or that it intended to devote serious energy to the problem.

Anatol Lieven wrote in 2003:

> As a simple matter of pride, it is […] of course deeply galling to the British to see the wishes of the Israeli government continually favoured over those of Britain. Despite the Bush administration's increased commitment to the "Road Map for Peace" since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, most of British opinion — including, in private, many British officials—has little faith that this will in fact lead to a just and stable peace.[80]

Then, in the summer of 2006 Tony Blair controversially followed the American line by not calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities in the war between Israel and Hezbollah. This led some to question whether he had abandoned efforts to persuade the US to be more even-handed in its approach to the Middle East. Conservative backbencher Sir Peter Tapsell went so far as to accuse Tony Blair of:

> …collusion with President Bush in giving Israel the go-ahead to wage unlimited war for 10 days, not just against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, but against

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77 L. Freedman, "The Special Relationship, Then and Now", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (2006), pp. 61-73

78 *Ibid*

79 B. Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York, 2002), p. 297

80 Lieven, "The hinge to Europe: don't make Britain choose between the US and the EU"

> civilians in residential Beirut, drawn from all faiths and nationalities—a war crime grimly reminiscent of the Nazi atrocity on the Jewish quarter of Warsaw.[81]

After the conflict, Blair travelled to California and set out his position on the benefits of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a speech, making pointed references for the need for more US action:

> But, and it is a big 'but', this progress will not happen unless we change radically our degree of focus, effort and engagement, especially with the Palestinian side. In this the active leadership of the US is essential but so also is the participation of Europe, of Russia and of the UN. We need relentlessly, vigorously, to put a viable Palestinian Government on its feet, to offer a vision of how the Roadmap to final status negotiation can happen and then pursue it, week in, week out, till it's done. Nothing else will do. Nothing else is more important to the success of our foreign policy.[82]

Some found it difficult to reconcile Blair's belief in the need to offer a vision of successful final status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and his refusal to call for an immediate end to hostilities in Southern Lebanon, claiming that the conflict there had made rapprochement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority more difficult and less popular with the Palestinian public.

As problems in Iraq continued and Donald Rumsfeld was replaced by Robert Gates, it began to appear somewhat easier for British viewpoints on the Middle East to be heard within the Bush administration. In November 2006, following the report of the Iraq Study Group, Blair urged Bush to open a dialogue with Iran and Syria on a Middle East settlement. Bush initially rejected the Study Group's recommendations, but as pressure mounted to try new options in Iraq in 2007, the administration somewhat softened its opposition.

Another issue on which Tony Blair hoped to influence George Bush was climate change. Bush's failure to sign the Kyoto Treaty and his reluctance to accept that human activity was responsible for global warming had frustrated international environmentalists. The *Economist* reported:

> American intransigence has been particularly irritating to Tony Blair, because climate change is one of the areas where the British prime minister might have got some reward for his support over Iraq.[83]

As with the Middle East peace process, movement in Bush's position was slow in coming and failed to convince many doubters when it did arrive. The President largely resisted Tony Blair's pressure to change US policy at the 2005 G8 Gleneagles summit. A statement was signed accepting human activity as the principal cause of climate change but the hoped-for firm targets were not agreed. However, in 2007 at the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany in 2007, Bush signed a statement that indicated a more serious

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81 HC Deb 25 July 2007 c718

82 See: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page9948.asp

83 "It may be hot in Washington too - Climate change", *Economist*, 4 November 2006

approach to climate change, committing the US to a new process of dialogue that would include key developing countries such as India and China, and aiming to set targets by 2008 for reducing emissions. It might appear that, while Tony Blair had been spurned on climate change in 2005, German chancellor Angela Merkel had subsequently been rewarded, but in reality the foundations for the Heiligendamm success were laid by preparative teamwork by Blair and Merkel so it should not be seen as simply a snub to Blair.[84]

Many observers claimed that, while the special relationship may have waxed and waned during the Blair premiership, ongoing close military cooperation and intelligence sharing between the US and Britain revealed that the fundamentals of the relationship remained sound.[85] Others were not always so sure. For example, Tony Blair sought to persuade both the Clinton and Bush administrations that, with British and US forces operating closely together in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, the US should make renewed efforts to share defence technology more freely with Britain in order to improve their interoperability.

The US International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) prevents the export of US defence-related technology without the granting of specific licences. President Clinton originally agreed as long ago as 2000 that Britain should be granted a waiver. However, this came to nothing. The Bush administration's subsequent attempts to persuade Congress to agree also ended in failure, leading to the proposal being shelved for a period. The Director General of the UK Defence Manufacturers' Association commented in 2005 that the UK had failed to capitalise on the potential goodwill that involvement in Iraq had created; "…a harder-nosed UK government would have made it a condition of entry from the start".[86] However, in June 2007, perhaps as a parting gift to Tony Blair, the US and the UK signed a Treaty which would have the effect of lifting ITAR restrictions on the transfer of military technology to the UK, or at least of significantly mitigating them.[87] But the Treaty has yet to be ratified by the US Senate and there are concerns that it could be blocked there.[88] If it is, this initiative could end up illustrating the continuing weakness of British influence over US policy during the Blair premiership, rather than its strength.[89]

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84 "Cheers all round for 'winner' Merkel", Financial Times, 9 June 2007

85 T. Donnelly, "The big four alliance: the new Bush Strategy", *National Security Outlook*, American Enterprise Institute, December 2005

86 "Sealing the 'special relationship'", *Janes Defence Weekly*, 28 September 2005

87 "Storming ITAR", *Aerospace International*, 23 January 2008. Australia is also set to benefit from a similar Treaty.

88 "Buy-American laws concern UK procurement head", *Defense News*, 6 May 2008; "Senate: No OK for trade treaties without details", *Defense News*, 21 May 2008

89 This issue illustrates the fact that it would be mistaken simply to reduce assessments of the relationship between Britain and the US during the Blair premiership to those between President and Prime Minister, not least because of the decentralised nature of the US political system. Positive relations at the highest level have not always been replicated at other levels within the political and bureaucratic hierarchy.

C. The UK: at the heart of Europe?

a. Britain and Europe prior to 1997

Successive British Conservative Prime Ministers – from Harold Macmillan, who made the first UK application to join the then European Economic Community (EEC), to John Major – asserted that Britain should be 'at the heart of Europe'.[90] Some commentators believed that such rhetoric, though positive about Europe, did not necessarily mean that these leaders really saw the UK's future, following the end of Empire, in Europe, but that they wanted to be in a position to slow down the process in continental Europe towards closer integration and promote instead a model of a free trade community of nation states. In 1959 Macmillan had proposed a looser, European free trade alternative for the UK, which appealed to subsequent Conservative leaders such as Margaret Thatcher and John Major.[91] The Major Government was particularly heavily constrained by the party and ideology from being too integrationist.

Labour was unenthusiastic about the 'European project' during much of the period prior to 1997. Indeed, in 1962, when British membership of the EEC was first attempted, the Labour Party leader, Hugh Gaitskell, famously said EEC membership would mean "the end of a thousand years of history".[92] In the run-up to the 1975 referendum on whether Britain should remain a member, most of the Labour Party campaigned against it. At the 1983 general election the Labour manifesto called for UK withdrawal from the successor to the EEC, the European Community (EC).[93] However, under the leadership of Neil Kinnock, Labour manifestos became increasingly positive about Europe.

Perhaps the initiative with greatest impact on British politics during the 1980s was the 'Social Charter' of workers' rights initiated by the Commission President Jacques Delors and adopted by all Member States except the UK in 1989. It marked the Conservative shift away from Europe and the Labour move towards it. The so-called 'Social Chapter' was subsequently part of the *Treaty on European Union* (Maastricht Treaty) in 1992, which created the European Union (EU). That year the Labour manifesto stated that Britain should play an active part in policy areas such as economic and monetary union (EMU) and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Over the decades since the creation of the Coal and Steel Community in 1952 there were periodic initiatives to deepen relationships between Member States – that is, to intensify institutional cooperation and the harmonisation of their policies. Such bursts of activity were complemented by periodic bouts of negotiations about widening membership. Until the 1990s, Member States generally preferred to tackle deepening

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90 Speech by John Major in Bonn, 11 March 1991

91 The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) was launched in 1960. In her speech in Bruges, Belgium, 20 September 1988, Margaret Thatcher said: "Our destiny is in Europe, as part of the Community", but also that the EC should be a "family of nations" involving "willing and active cooperation between independent sovereign states".
Full text available at: http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=107332

92 Speech to Labour Party Conference, October 1962

93 This was one of the most radical, left-wing manifestos in Labour's history and included pledges on the abolition of the House of Lords, unilateral nuclear disarmament, withdrawal from NATO and a vast extension of state control over the economy.

ahead of widening. Successive British Governments tended to resist moves towards greater integration, in which France and Germany were usually in the vanguard, in favour of more intergovernmental approaches to institutional co-operation. They also tended to be strong advocates of enlargement. While committed to enlargement because of its impact on the future stability and prosperity of Europe as a whole, it was hoped – as has ultimately happened – that the process would also over time create a larger number of allies for Britain.

The actions of British Governments were also impelled by larger strategic considerations, not least sustaining the transatlantic relationship. The end of the Cold War left the political and strategic environment in Europe in a state of flux. Member States of the EU were keen to establish new forms of defence co-operation. They were also eager to reap the 'peace dividend' that the fall of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact brought about and many saw greater co-operation as key to achieving savings. The US was keen to see its European allies take on a greater share of the defence burden but without damaging NATO. While the UK maintained a largely 'pro-Atlanticist' stance, viewing the development of a European foreign and defence capability as an essential means of strengthening the NATO alliance, France and Germany were pro-Europeanist and strongly advocated the establishment of an independent EU military identity. The Major Government was a strong supporter of the intergovernmental approach that was agreed in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty in relation to the establishment of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

On coming to office in 1997, Tony Blair promised that the new Labour Government would finally deliver where its predecessors had failed by genuinely putting Britain at the 'heart of Europe'. The Paper now looks at how far this promise was realised.

2. Tony Blair's first term

a. New Labour and new Europe

In the 1990s, as many social democratic parties in Europe were moving away from traditional socialism towards a more free market approach, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson were among those who created 'New Labour' as a proponent of the so-called 'Third Way'. Reform of the Labour Party and reform in Europe were central to the New Labour creed. The Labour election manifesto in May 1997 stated:

> We will stand up for Britain's interests in Europe after the shambles of the last six years, but, more than that, we will lead a campaign for reform in Europe. Europe isn't working in the way this country and Europe need. But to lead means to be involved, to be constructive, to be capable of getting our own way.[94]

There were pledges about leadership in Europe, deploying British influence in Europe and standing up for Britain's interests in Europe. Labour by now opposed withdrawal from the EC, but it was ambivalent about closer integration, endorsing it rather as "an

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[94] See: http://www.bbc.co.uk/election97/background/parties/manlab/9labmanconst.html

alliance of independent nations choosing to cooperate to achieve the goals they cannot achieve alone".[95]

When Tony Blair became Prime Minister in 1997 it was not clear how he would deal with Europe. William Paterson and Penny Henson had noted in 1995, "Unlike John Smith, Tony Blair has no history as a committed European".[96] Stephens described him as a "convinced but unsentimental European", but with no personal memory of World War II and therefore no real appreciation of the ensuing difficulties or "the nightmares of those in a previous generation who never came to terms with the fact that Britain had lost the peace".[97] Yet Tony Blair spoke passionately about ending the "isolation of the last twenty years" and being a "leading partner in Europe".[98]

Tony Blair's new government, unlike Conservative predecessors, was not deeply divided over Europe, and when Doug Henderson, the new Minister for Europe, attended his first Council of Ministers meeting just after the 1997 election victory, other Member State ministers were optimistic that the success of New Labour signalled a new dawn for social democracy in the EU. Stephens commented: "European leaders were at last dealing with a partner able to deliver on his promises. Major's constant plea had been that he could not carry his Cabinet or party. Blair's control of both was absolute".[99]

All British Prime Ministers with the exception of Edward Heath had adopted an 'à la carte' approach to EU membership, allowing the UK to opt out of unpopular elements of the Treaties. The UK was already in the small group of Member States with Treaty 'opt-outs' and Tony Blair maintained this allegiance, while pledging a commitment to signing the EU's Social Chapter.[100] Blair took over from John Major the negotiations on the new EU Treaty which was concluded in Amsterdam in June 1997. The social policy opt-out was reversed, as promised, but on the integration of the Schengen *acquis* and the new Treaty title on freedom, security and justice the Government was less enthusiastic.[101] The subject matter of Schengen and the new Title, with its implications for the traditionally sensitive areas of border controls, immigration, policing and judicial practice, gave rise to more UK opt-outs. Tony Blair negotiated a special position contained in Treaty Protocols and Article 69 of the Treaty of Amsterdam. Under the opt-out provisions the UK could accept some or all of the Schengen *acquis* at a later date, with the unanimous agreement of the other Member States, and would not have to participate in the new title. Not only would Schengen arrangements not apply to the UK, but the UK would be

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95 See: http://www.bbc.co.uk/election97/background/parties/manlab/9labmanconst.html

96 W. Paterson and P. Henson, "The Labour party's European policy", in W. Paterson. P. Henson and P. Shipley, *The European Policies of Labour and Conservative Party in Great Britain* (Sankt Augustin, 1995), p. 28

97 P. Stephens, "The Blair Government and Europe", *The Political Quarterly,* 72 (1), 2001, p.68

98 Speech by Tony Blair at Malmö, Sweden, June 1997

99 P. Stephens, "The Blair Government and Europe", *The Political Quarterly,* 72 (1), 2001, pp 67–75

100 The 'Social Chapter' is the popular name for the Social Policy Agreement made between all EU Member States except the UK at Maastricht in December 1991 (Treaty on European Union or TEU) and incorporated in the Social Protocol to the TEU. The TEU and the Protocol came into force on 1 November 1993.

101 The Schengen Agreement consists of two agreements concluded between EU States in 1985 and 1990 which concern the abolition of systematic border controls between the participating States. The Schengen *acquis* is based on a Council Decision of 20 May 1999 at http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/1999/l_176/l_17619990710en00010016.pdf

fenced off from future developments in this area under the new title, unless the Government decided to opt into such measures.[102]

This 'pick and mix' strategy meant that the Government could be positive about EU developments in Westminster and avoid the adoption of unpopular measures, but it was not regarded by other EU Member States as putting the UK 'at the heart of Europe'. Thus, although in his first term Tony Blair agreed to the Social Chapter, more defence and CFSP cooperation and some 'communitarisation' of the 'third pillar', the Government secured a number of opt-outs from significant EU policies and refused to give up the national veto over taxation, social security and border controls.[103] From the implementation of Amsterdam until the end of 2007, the UK opted into roughly the same number of Justice and Home Affairs measures as it opted out of.

The Government retained the opt-out from EMU and initially appeared to have found a diplomatic solution to the dilemma of wanting to be at the heart of Europe but not adopt the euro. There was no constitutional barrier to EMU and the Government supported in principle British participation, but there were economic reasons for delaying the decision. The Government wanted to defer the decision until after the next general election, thereby allowing more time to bring the UK's economic cycle into line with Continental Europe. In May 1998, when the European Council under the British Presidency formally approved the introduction in January 1999 of the euro for eleven Member States, there was still no clarification of Britain's position or a timetable for UK adoption of the euro, which gave rise to criticism from other EU leaders. Most commentators agreed that France, Germany and Austria, all euro members, dominated the summit, with the UK looking "increasingly awkward and isolated".[104] The succeeding Austrian Presidency took the lead in the launch of the euro, which the UK, as a non-participant, did not attend. The Government's failure to adopt the euro also affected evaluations of the British EU Presidency, which many observers remember mainly as a proliferation of Council and committee meetings.

At home, divisions within the Cabinet over the euro were the first indication that New Labour was no longer united over Europe. The pro-European Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, and Trade and Industry Secretary, Peter Mandelson, were positive about EMU, but Chancellor Gordon Brown did not allow the FCO's political arguments to intrude upon the Treasury prerogative to decide on whether the economic conditions for euro entry had been met. However, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown together defended Britain's euro

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[102] The Government opted into 15 measures in the area of civil and judicial cooperation, 12 on illegal immigration, one on legal immigration, 15 on asylum, four on visas and residence permits, three on accession measures, 17 on negotiating mandates and readmission agreements and three on funding programmes. They opted out of four measures on civil and judicial cooperation, nine on illegal immigration, 10 on legal immigration, one on asylum, 45 on visas and residence permits, three on border controls, and four on negotiating mandates and readmission agreements. In two cases (standards for security features and biometrics in passports and travel documents and a European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the EU) the UK gave notice of its wish to take part in a measure under the relevant Treaty and Protocol provisions but was excluded from doing so.

[103] The 'third pillar' of the European Union contains the intergovernmental aspects of Justice and Home Affairs and later the "Provisions on police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters" (Title VI TEU).

[104] "A Stumble at the Start / Britain's Awkward Moment : Blair's Role in Bank Deal Fails to Clarify Country's Position in EU", *International Herald Tribune*, 4 May 1998

stand before other EU States, maintaining that their budgetary policy, the decision to give control of interest rates to the Bank of England and the introduction of regional campaigns and conferences on the euro were evidence of British preparations for euro adoption. While Blair was not in any hurry to adopt the euro and insisted he would wait for "clear and unambiguous" evidence that EMU would benefit the UK, the Commons Treasury Select Committee reached the conclusion that it would take at least five years to judge whether the euro was successful and right for Britain.[105]

While the Blair Government was more positive about Europe than its predecessors, public negativity continued under Blair at much the same strength as it had been under the Major and previous Conservative governments. Public opinion was against the euro, with polls at the time showing over 50% against and around 35% in favour.[106] Business, on the other hand, was supportive. MORI's 'Captains of Industry' poll in 1998 found business leaders 72-21 in favour of euro entry. Announcing an 'Outline National Changeover Plan' in February 1999, the Treasury confirmed its 1997 statement that because of the magnitude of the decision on euro entry, it believed "as a matter of principle" that whenever a decision to recommend entry was taken by Government, it should be put to a referendum.[107]

In December 1998 Tony Blair agreed in Saint Malo a defence cooperation initiative with the French Government, laying the foundations for the agreement in December 1999 on the creation of a European Rapid Reaction Force (RRF). However, he disagreed with the French President, Jacques Chirac, over the role of the force and the Nice summit agreed that NATO would remain the basis for the EU's collective defence. The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, called the compromise agreement "an outbreak of peace and a great success".[108]

In May 1999 the Charlemagne Prize Committee[109] awarded Tony Blair the Charlemagne Prize for his "outstanding contribution to European unification". The Committee described him as an outstanding politician who had understood the importance of the process of European unification for the future of the continent. It added that Mr Blair had brought the UK closer to Europe and wanted to play an active and constructive role in the future and the development of the process of European integration within the framework of the European Union. The Committee thought that under Blair the position of the UK had since 1997 taken on a new dynamism and that he was the embodiment of a new and decisive move towards Europe.

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105 Treasury Select Committee, *The UK and Preparations for Stage Three of Economic and Monetary Union*, Fifth Report, Session 1997-98
Available at: http://pubs1.tso.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmtreasy/503v/ts0506.htm
For further information on British euro entry, see: House of Commons Library Research Paper 03/53, *The Euro: Background to the Five Economic Tests*

106 For further early poll results, see: House of Commons Library Research Paper 00/34, *The Euro-Zone:Year One*

107 HM Treasury, *Outline National Changeover Plan*, 32/99, 23 February 1999

108 "Blair and Chirac avoid clash on military force", *Independent*, 9 December 2000

109 The Charlemagne Prize goes back to the immediate post-war period in 1949. It was awarded for the first time in 1950. The award of the prize to Tony Blair was is in part due to his work in Northern Ireland in the forging of a peace agreement.

One of the achievements lauded by the Committee was Britain's role in promoting the CFSP and its counterpart, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The Franco-British summit at St Malo in December 1998 has been regarded as a turning point in the development of an EU military capability. After years of inaction the initiatives agreed at St Malo represented a shift in political attitudes and a willingness to see a coherent EU military capability develop. It provided the springboard for subsequent initiatives put forward at the European Council summits in Cologne and Helsinki in 1999 that saw the establishment, among other things, of the Helsinki Headline Goal and the EU Rapid Reaction Force. In agreeing to the St Malo initiatives and subsequent developments in European defence, the UK has remained pro-Atlanticist, arguing that such measures have been essential as a means of shoring up the European pillar of NATO and that the Atlantic Alliance remains the cornerstone of UK security policy. Within this framework, however, the Blair government accepted moves towards a greater EU involvement in CFSP and ESDP than previous British governments.

In his speech accepting the Charlemagne Prize, Tony Blair emphasised that valuing national identity was not incompatible with supporting European integration:

> To be pro-British you do not have to be anti-European. We treasure our national identity, as you do. But in creating the European Union we have the chance not to suppress our national interest, but to advance it in a new way for a new world by working together.
>
> Since our election, I believe relations between Britain and the rest of the European Union have been transformed. At the IGC in Amsterdam in June 1997, in Cardiff in 1998, in Berlin this March we have acted constructively. In our joint statement at St Malo with our French colleagues, we helped initiate a long overdue debate about the future of European defence. In February this year we published a national changeover plan for Britain to join the single currency. We have declared our support in principle for UK membership, though stressed the necessary conditions that have to be met for us to join. The intention is real. The conditions are real.
>
> I have a bold aim: that over the next few years Britain resolves once and for all its ambivalence towards Europe. I want to end the uncertainty, the lack of confidence, the Europhobia. I want Britain to be at home with Europe because Britain is once again a leading player in Europe. And I want Europe to make itself open to reform and change too. For if I am pro-European, I am also pro-reform in Europe.
>
> We should lay to one side the theological debates about European super-states. No one I know wants some overblown United States of Europe. People who believe France, Germany, Spain, Italy for example do not have a clear sense of nationhood, have little understanding of them. We are proud nations and we work together.
>
> The European ideal is best seen in terms of values rather than institutions; of a European society in which our key values of freedom, solidarity, democracy and enterprise are shared and reinforced together; in which our diversity becomes a source of strength; our cultural heritage enriches us, and whereby representing those values to the outside world, we fulfil our global responsibility.[110]

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[110] Speech by Tony Blair accepting the Charlemagne Prize, 13 May 1999

In accordance with a 1997 election manifesto pledge, the Government brought the UK into line with a previously resisted EC Treaty requirement concerning a uniform election procedure for elections to the European Parliament (EP). The *European Parliamentary Elections Bill* brought in proportional representation (PR) for EP elections in 1999.[111]

In 2000 Tony Blair endorsed and promoted the Lisbon Strategy, a programme to turn the EU into the "most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world".[112] These developments were not regarded universally as proof of Britain's enthusiasm for Europe, however, and some thought they were a way of diverting attention from the Government's continued lack of commitment to the euro.

In a much cited speech to the Polish Stock Exchange in October 2000, Tony Blair set out his views of Britain's new role in Europe as a "staunch ally" of new applicants (such as Poland), "wielding its influence at the centre of Europe".[113] He described previous British policy towards the rest of Europe as "marked by gross misjudgements […], hesitation, alienation, incomprehension, with the occasional burst of enlightened brilliance which only served to underline the frustration of our partners with what was the norm".[114] He spoke of the "compelling reasons" for Britain being in the EU, which had not been regarded in the past as "compelling", and outlined his views on the UK's EU membership.

> From Europe's perspective, Britain as a key partner in Europe is now a definite plus not a minus. Britain has a powerful economy, an obvious role in defence and foreign policy and there is genuine respect for Britain's political institutions and stability. Also, in a world moving closer together, with new powers emerging, our strength with the United States is not just a British asset, it is potentially a European one. Britain can be the bridge between the EU and the US.
>
> And for Britain, as Europe grows stronger and enlarges, there would be something truly bizarre and self-denying about standing apart from the key strategic alliance on our doorstep. None of this means criticisms of Europe are all invalid. They aren't, as I shall say later. But to conduct the case for reform in a way that leaves Britain marginalised and isolated (and that, despite the efforts of John Major, was the reality we inherited three years ago), is just plain foolish.
>
> For Britain, as for those countries queuing up to join the European Union, being at the centre of influence in Europe is an indispensable part of influence, strength and power in the world. We can choose not to be there; but no-one should doubt the consequences of that choice and it is wildly unrealistic to pretend those consequences are not serious. In particular, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind, that our strength with the US is enhanced by our strength with the rest of Europe and vice versa.[115]

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111 At the party conference on 30 September 1993 Tony Blair, then Shadow Home Secretary, said that 'we will reform the voting system for the European Parliament'. Conference accepted the Plant report's proposals for the European Parliament. For background to the Bill, see House of Commons Research Paper 97/120, *The European Parliamentary Elections Bill [Bill 65 of 1997/98]*

112 Lisbon European Council Presidency Conclusions, March 2000. Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm

113 Speech by Tony Blair to the Polish Stock Exchange, 6 October 2000
Available at: http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page3384.asp

114 *Ibid*

115 Speech by Tony Blair to the Polish Stock Exchange, 6 October 2000
Available at: http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page3384.asp

Blair sought to clarify the British position on EMU, stating that the political and constitutional issues were important, but not an "insuperable barrier". However, it would be a mistake, he said, to "join prematurely simply on political grounds, without the economic conditions being right". He insisted: "Britain's future is and will be as a leading partner in Europe".[116]

At the Nice IGC in December 2000 Blair agreed to give up 17 national vetoes in favour of qualified majority voting (QMV) in amendments to the Treaties which aimed to speed up the decision-making process. However, he would not compromise in the areas of tax, social security, border controls, EU financing and defence. Denmark, Britain's main ally in stopping the harmonisation of social security, backed down after being offered a compromise and the UK lost other allies, Germany and Sweden, who backed down over asylum policy and taxation.

Tony Blair had a prominent position in helping to shape the EU's emerging security and defence policy. The development of an ESDP framework since 1998 has been based on the premise that the EU would act within the remit of the Petersberg tasks only when NATO as a whole chose not to be engaged. This effectively sets up the EU as one option for military crisis management within an operational hierarchy that places NATO at the top and this hierarchy has been reflected in the UK's planning assumptions.[117] Since the St Malo agreement the Government, arguably, has had to revise its strongly Atlanticist position and accept a more independent European stand.[118] The importance of NATO and the ESDP as complementing rather than competing against NATO was reiterated in the MOD's defence white paper published in December 2003. NATO and the EU would be the organisations of choice through which the UK would develop responses to international crises. Demanding expeditionary operations were unlikely to be conducted without the US, either at the head of a coalition or within NATO. However, the limitations of the consensual nature of decision making within NATO and the EU was also acknowledged and therefore the need to establish 'coalitions of the willing' for dealing with specific threats when appropriate was also emphasised.

3. The second Blair term

a. EMU again

After the 2001 general election and another large parliamentary majority for Labour, Tony Blair again came under pressure in Europe on the euro issue. On 1 January 2002 twelve of the then fifteen Member States introduced euro notes and coins. Chancellor Brown adhered to the policy that the economic conditions had to be right before entry, but the Government said a decision would be made on the euro within two years. Some observers thought Blair would want to go down in history as a great moderniser, for

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[116] *Ibid*

[117] See: House of Commons Library Research Paper 04/71, *The Defence White Paper*

[118] V. Knowles and S. Thomson-Potterbohm, "The UK, Germany and ESDP: Developments at the Convention and the IGC", *German Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 4, December 2004. Available at: http://www.iiss.ee/files/7/IIS6008%20expansionPetersberg.pdf. Also see: House of Commons Library Research Paper RP 06/32, *European Security and Defence Policy: Developments since 2001*

whom securing Britain's place in Europe would be "key to his legacy".[119] *Businessweek* commented:

> He hears from Continental leaders and pro-European advisers that unless Britain adopts the single currency, it risks becoming marginalized outside an increasingly influential European Union. Yet Blair knows he would have to spend heavy political capital to persuade skeptical Britons to join. "Blair has a real dilemma," says Ruth Lea, policy director of the Institute of Directors, a business group. "He wants to be at the heart of Europe, but he clearly can't be unless he goes into the euro."

The Government continued preparatory work for the introduction of the euro. The Treasury had already set up a Euro Preparations Unit (EPU), which still exists but with a much reduced number of staff,[120] and established a preference for a 'Managed Transition Plan', where euro services would be introduced in stages.[121] Consultations on the transition plan were held through workshops, bilateral meetings and written submissions from the public, private and voluntary sectors. An assessment of the five economic tests was published in June 2003, which concluded that the UK had made "real progress" towards meeting the five tests.[122] However, on balance, the Government concluded, there had not been a "sustainable and durable convergence of sufficient flexibility to cope with any potential difficulties within the euro area".

In a statement to the Commons on 9 June 2003, Chancellor Brown said that the results of the assessment confirmed the Government's view that "membership in a successful single currency would be of benefit to the British people as well as to Europe".[123] But he also told the House that four out of the five 1997 economic tests had not been met. Following the 2003 statement, the Government committed itself to an annual review of progress, the outcome of which is reported in the Budget each year.[124] Brown also announced the publication of the draft Euro Referendum Bill in the autumn of 2003, the introduction of paving legislation and the publication of the complete version of the third British national changeover plan.[125] He sought to demonstrate the Government's commitment to the euro by setting out the possible timetable for a changeover, its management, and the impact on consumers, business, financial services, and the voluntary and public sectors. He concluded that: "in this statement, we strengthen our

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119 *Businessweekonline* June 25, 2001 at http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/01_26/b3738073.htm

120 It had four staff in 2006 compared with 17 in 2003. See HC Deb 8 May 2007 c186W.

121 Details of the plan were included in the third outline National Changeover Plan of 9 June 2003. See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/documents/international_issues/the_euro/assessment/studies/euro_assess03_studmiddlesex.cfm .

122 HM Treasury, *UK Membership of the Single Currency: An Assessment of the Five Economic Tests*, Cm 5776, June 2003. See also the Government's EMU studies at: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/documents/international_issues/the_euro/assessment/studies/euro_assess03_studindex.cfm

123 HC Deb 9 June 2003 c 408

124 In the March 2008 Budget, the Government did not propose a euro assessment be initiated and said the situation would be reviewed again in 2009. See also *Government Response to 6th Report of Treasury Select Committee, 2002-03*: *'The UK and the Euro'*, HC187, Session 2002-3

125 See: House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/PC/2851, *The Draft Single European Currency (Referendum) Bill*", 8 January 2004

commitment to and support for the principle of joining the euro and show that the gains to the country and to our businesses are greater than anticipated.[126] The statement was seen by the pro-euro lobby as a road map for euro entry and there was considerable support for it from business. Others thought there was no case to support the euro and that the statement was about a political power struggle between Blair and Brown rather than the UK's economic interest.

Nick Carter of De Montfort University has written about the "potential for indefinite procrastination" in Labour's euro policy:

> The 'all options open' position of 1995 to 1997, which made much of the possibility of joining in 1999, did not actually commit Labour to any substantive policy on the euro. Indeed, it must be doubted whether Labour was ever serious about joining the euro in 1999. Labour's 1997 manifesto pointed out 'formidable obstacles' in the way of 'first wave' membership. The point of the exercise was to emphasise Labour's openness towards Europe in contrast with the Tories' euroscepticism, and to play upon the deep divisions within the Conservative party over Europe. The October 1997 statement, meanwhile, 'did not rule out postponing the really "hard choices" for many years to come', as the New Statesman (31 October 1997) recognized.
>
> It is important to note, however, that Labour did at one time intend to join the euro sooner rather than later. From 1995 until 18 months or so after the October 1997 statement there appears to have been a genuine expectation within the Labour leadership of early(ish) entry: 'a decision, subject to a referendum, early in the next parliament' as Brown said in 1998. For evidence of this one need only read 'The Pros and Cons of EMU' published by the Treasury in October 1997 which declared itself 'sympathetic to the EMU project' while 'acknowledging the risks', or note the evident enthusiasm within government during late 1997 to early 1999 'to prepare' for EMU which culminated in the first National Changeover Plan. The October 1997 statement did not alter this: it was but a formal recognition of an obvious fact (lack of convergence) and an attempt to end recent media-fuelled market speculation that Labour would join the euro shortly after its launch (speculation that had driven share prices up and sterling down).
>
> Since mid-1999, however, Labour has become far less bullish about euro entry. Indefinite procrastination has become the de facto euro policy of the government. That the Treasury could carry out a 'detailed assessment' of the five economic tests in only five months in 1997 but now needs to undertake 'preliminary work – technical work', according to Brown, before any new assessment can even begin demonstrates this shift only too clearly.[127]

Carter concluded that euro entry was not really just about economics and meeting government demands, but about faith, "a commodity that British governments have habitually lacked when it comes to European integration". He continued:

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[126] HC Deb 9 June 2003 c 415

[127] N. Carter, "Whither (or Wither) the Euro? Labour and the Single Currency", *Politics,* Vol. 23 Issue 1, February 2003

> Blair is aware that 'half-hearted partners are rarely leading partners'. He also recognises that 'The euro project ... is, of course, an intensely political act' despite its overtly economic character. He and Brown, however, have failed to draw the appropriate conclusions. They have failed to recognise that the 'intensely political act' requires concomitant 'political will'– an act of faith – to bring it to realisation. The euro must be made to happen. This failure separates us from our euro zone neighbours and constrains British influence in the EU. It is what currently marks new Labour's European policy, for all its rhetoric of positive engagement, as little more than a variation on an old theme: with, but not really of, Europe.[128]

b. NATO and/or CFSP/ESDP?

Tony Blair's second term was marked by international crises which tested Britain's allegiance to Europe and the US. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, while the EU agreed that El Qaeda had to be eliminated, only the UK played a significant role in the US-led action in Afghanistan. This led to criticism from other EU leaders that Tony Blair was being "aggressive".[129] Talks between the UK, Germany and France were also criticised by the then European Commission President, Romano Prodi, who found them "divisive".[130] Blair's support for the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 also conflicted with the majority of opinion among EU leaders, Chirac and Schröder in particular. This event in particular split Europe into 'old' and 'new' Member States. CFSP Watch 2004 commented:

> The moves by France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg in April 2003 to establish an EU military operations headquarters at Tervuren angered HMG. It was characterised by HMG as an attempt to subvert NATO while providing no real substance or capabilities. However, later in the year at Berlin, Prime Minister Blair was reported as agreeing to a separate planning capacity for the EU. This caused some tension with the US. HMG argues that it is willing to see such a European HQ slowly evolve out of the EU planning cell, but that this should emerge through experience. The UK has now accepted that an EU planning capability should be established, but with close links to NATO. The UK has been keen to make it clear that the EU is not creating a full headquarters but is instead seeking to enhance the EU military staff (EUMS) through a non-permanent cell with civil and military components. HMG's fears that the cell would allow the EU to act autonomously have been allayed by the cell having the implementation of military operations listed as a low ranking priority.[131]

The basis of the Government's support for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Security and Defence Policy was reiterated by Tony Blair at the Labour Party conference in September 2004:

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[128] N. Carter, "Whither (or Wither) the Euro? Labour and the Single Currency", *Politics,* Vol. 23 Issue 1, February 2003

[129] Belgian Foreign Minister, Louis Michel, Ghent summit October 2001, as reported in: "Analysis: Europe's fragmented voice", *BBC News Online*, 17 October 2001

[130] "Blair welcomes EU anti-terror support", *BBC News Online*, 19 October 2001

[131] *CFSP Watch 2004 – United Kingdom*
Available at: http://www.fornet.info/CFSPannualreports2004/CFSP%20Watch%20UK.pdf

> And here am I, told by the pro-Europeans to give up on America and the Atlanticists to forget about Europe.
> And yet I know Britain must be at the centre of a Europe now 25 nations reunited after centuries of conflict the biggest economic market and most powerful political union in the world and I know that to retreat from its counsels would be utter self-defeating folly.
> And I know to cast out the transatlantic alliance would be disastrous for Britain.
> And I believe so strongly that if Europe and America could only put aside their differences and united around a common cause, the future could be different and better.[…][132]

Discussions on EU Treaty amendments at the Convention on the Future of Europe in 2002 took place in a changed and challenging security environment following the 9/11 attacks. In spite of his prominent position in helping to shape EU defence policy, during the drafting of the *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe* (the so-called 'EU Constitution') in 2003–4, Tony Blair did not propose specific amendments to the IGC relating to external relations, CFSP or ESDP. He supported the post of EU Foreign Minister (and later, in the *Treaty of Lisbon*, the High Representative for the CFSP), in particular his/her control via the Council – and therefore governments - of the proposed EU External Action Service, but he opposed any moves to introduce QMV in the CFSP/ESDP beyond existing QMV elements in the TEU (e.g. unanimity for decisions on foreign policy but some QMV for implementation). The Government initially opposed proposals for permanent structured cooperation[133] in the CFSP, preferring to focus on building capabilities and was wary of an 'avant guard' of Member States which could lead to a two-tier EU in defence. However, following Franco-British-German talks in November 2003, Tony Blair was more inclined to accept compromise proposals, as long as they concerned "capabilities, not operations".[134]

Blair upheld Britain's 'special relationship' with the US, resisted major 'communitarisation' of foreign and defence policy and insisted that the Trans-Atlantic Alliance and NATO should remain the cornerstone of European defence. However, he supported expanding the Petersberg Tasks,[135] which did not threaten the role of NATO, and the establishment of a civilian-military cell at the Military Staff of the European Union (EUMS),[136] provided it was integrated with the NATO framework.[137] In December 2003 the Prime Minister confirmed that the planning cell would be set up for humanitarian and peacekeeping aims with no standing operational capability and that it did not need to be covered by the new Treaty.[138]

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[132] Speech by Tony Blair to the Labour Party Conference, 28 September, 2004. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/3697434.stm

[133] The new mechanism included in the EU Constitution and later established by the Lisbon Treaty for "those Member States whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions".

[134] Jack Straw, Evidence to Standing Committee on the Intergovernmental Conference, 1 Dec. 2003

[135] The 'Petersberg tasks' are part of the ESDP under Article 17 TEU. They cover humanitarian and rescue tasks, peace-keeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking.

[136] The EUMS is composed of military experts seconded from Member States to the Council Secretariat and is the source of the EU's military expertise.

[137] Tony Blair confirmed this approach at a meeting on 24 November 2004 with President Jacque Chirac.

[138] Charles Grant, "EU can sell its defence plan to Washington", *Financial Times*, 2 December 2003

In its White Paper on the EU Constitution the Government's position, which was supported by the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, was that a "flexible, inclusive approach and effective links to NATO are essential to the success of ESDP. We will not agree to anything which is contradictory to, or would replace, the security guarantee established through NATO".[139] The British view prevailed and the final wording in the Constitution and later in the *Treaty of Lisbon* was that for those EU States in NATO, NATO "remains the foundation of their collective defence" and the instrument for implementing that commitment.[140] The CFSP remains an intergovernmental process distinct from other policy areas and unanimity remains the norm for decision-making. The CFSP provisions are supplemented by an IGC Declaration confirming that they will not affect the responsibilities of the Member States, as they currently exist, for the formation and conduct of their foreign policy, or of their national representations in third countries and international organisations.[141] The Government supported the new European Defence Agency (EDA), which it saw as a way of improving European capabilities. The EDA was established in 2004 under a British Director, Nick Witney, and achieved full operational status in January 2005.[142]

4. The third term: Blair's Legacy

The key issues of the third Blair term were the UK Presidency of the EU, the collapse of the EU constitutional project with the two negative referendums on the EU Constitution and the conclusion of its successor, the *Treaty of Lisbon*.

The Government had announced in April 2004, in what appeared to many observers to be a response to public and media pressure, that the EU Constitution would be put to a referendum. The 2005 Labour Party election manifesto pledged to "campaign wholeheartedly for a 'Yes' vote to keep Britain a leading nation in Europe".[143] Britain would, it stated, "help spread democracy and freedom around the world" and the Government would be "leaders in a reformed Europe".[144] The EU Constitution was commended as "a good treaty for Britain and for the new Europe" and legislation was introduced in early 2005 to prepare for its ratification and for a referendum. Following the negative referendum results in France and the Netherlands in May and June 2005 the Government decided to postpone the Second Reading of the European Union Bill "until the consequences of France and the Netherlands being unable to ratify the treaty are clarified".[145] Mr Straw said that neither future legislation nor a referendum had been ruled out.[146] The Bill was later suspended indefinitely and, although some other Member States

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139 HM Government, *The European Constitution*, Cm 5934, September 2003

140 Official Journal of the European Union, C Series, 306, 17 December 2007. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:0010:0041:EN:PDF

141 Intergovernmental Conference, Declaration 30, CIG 3/1/07 REV 1, 5 October 2007. Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/cg00003re01en.pdf

142 House of Commons Library Research Paper RP06/32, *European Security and Defence Policy: Developments since 2003* examines the structure and role of the Agency in more detail.

143 See: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/13_04_05_labour_manifesto.pdf

144 *Ibid*

145 HC Deb 6 June 2005 c 992

146 *Ibid*

continued with their ratification procedures,[147] the British Government's position remained that there was no point in continuing.[148]

Britain took over the EU Presidency in July 2005, making its priorities the future financing of the Union (following the inconclusive outcome of the European Council on 16-17 June 2005) and reform of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP).[149] Outlining the UK Presidency programme to the EP on 23 June 2005 Tony Blair described himself as a "passionate pro-European", continuing:

> I believe in Europe as a political project. I believe in Europe with a strong and caring social dimension. I would never accept a Europe that was simply an economic market. […]To say that is the issue is to escape the real debate and hide in the comfort zone of the things we have always said to each other in times of difficulty.
> There is not some division between the Europe necessary to succeed economically and social Europe. Political Europe and economic Europe do not live in separate rooms.
> The purpose of social Europe and economic Europe should be to sustain each other.
> The purpose of political Europe should be to promote the democratic and effective institutions to develop policy in these two spheres and across the board where we want and need to cooperate in our mutual interest.[…]
> In our Presidency, we will try to take forward the Budget deal; to resolve some of the hard dossiers, like the Services Directive and Working Time Directive; to carry out the Union's obligations to those like Turkey and Croatia that wait in hope of a future as part of Europe; and to conduct this debate about the future of Europe in an open, inclusive way, giving our own views strongly but fully respectful of the views of others.[150]

The Prime Minister outlined to the Commons in December 2005 the achievements of the UK Presidency:

> […] over the last six months, the UK Presidency has delivered the historic launch of accession negotiations with Turkey and Croatia, a long-standing British objective. We have delivered a number of important pieces of legislation, including the REACH regulation on chemicals and the Data Retention Directive, an important measure against terrorism. We have delivered reform of the EU sugar regime and a strengthening of the EU position on climate change. And we have delivered an EU budget deal which is €160 billion cheaper than the original Commission proposals, provides for a huge transfer of spending from the original 15 to the new member states of eastern Europe, and which preserves the British rebate in full on the CAP and all spending in the EU 15.[151]

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147 Latvia, Cyprus, Finland, Luxembourg and Malta went on to ratify after June 2005.

148 See also House of Commons Library Research Paper 05/45, *The Future of the European Constitution*

149 See the UK Presidency website at: http://www.eu2005.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1107293521089

150 See: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page7714.asp

151 Tony Blair, Statement on the European Council to the House of Commons, HC Deb 19 December 2005 c1563-80

Some provided a different view of the UK Presidency. The Government's refusal to abandon the British budget rebate and Blair's insistence on renegotiating the CAP led to accusations from other Member States that he was 'non-Communautaire'.

Tony Blair addressed the EP again on 26 October 2005 and tried to revive interest in his economic reform plan for the EU before the Hampton Court summit in December, which focused on Europe's role in relation to globalisation.[152] In spite of the rhetoric and the ambitious Presidency aims, from his speech to the EP in June to the one in October 2005, Tony Blair allegedly spent so little time among EU representatives that an Austrian MEP circulated a mock 'missing persons' notice featuring the British Prime Minister.

In 2006, as talk of Tony Blair's resignation increased, there were press reports of a Government plan to counter public negativity, scepticism and apathy with an overtly positive campaign to promote the EU, particularly among the young and educated, by linking it to a range of popular European – though not necessarily EU - events (such as the Cannes Film Festival, UEFA competitions, the Eurovision Song Contest).[153]

The remainder of Tony Blair's brief third period in office was marked by his role in the discussions leading to the adoption of the IGC mandate on a new reform treaty and his refusal to hold a referendum on ratification, in spite of its similarity with the EU Constitution. During the EU discussions preceding the IGC on the reform treaty, the British Government objected to several of the 2004 EU Constitution provisions, including legal status for the Charter of Fundamental Rights, a single legal personality for the EU, a reference to the primacy of EU law, and qualified majority voting (QMV) in police and judicial cooperation. It wanted to retain the present three-pillared structure and it called for a stronger role for national parliaments. States such as Poland and the Czech Republic were regarded as UK allies in support of a new, minimalist treaty, while other so-called 'maximalist' States, including Germany, Belgium, Italy and Spain were keen to retain the substance and fundamental principles of the Constitution.

In a press interview on 19 April 2007 Tony Blair said he was prepared to endorse a fast-track adoption of institutional reforms in order to facilitate decision-making in the EU of 27. He would agree to Treaty changes of an institutional nature without a referendum if the amendments did not alter the basic relationship between Europe and the Member States. There were reports in early 2007 that the Government had warned the German Presidency against "too much change" in a new treaty, because this would make a referendum necessary.[154] The Government wanted a slimmed down treaty and preferably one which could be ratified without a referendum, which would, "as with previous EU treaties […] be signed by … the Prime Minister and then submitted to Parliament for approval as part of the ratification process".[155]

The Treaty reform discussions, which led to the adoption by the European Council of an 'IGC Mandate' in June 2007, were the subject of a number of Foreign Affairs and

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[152] See: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page8384.asp
[153] "Everyone must love the EU, says Tony Blair", *Mail on Sunday*, 2 December 2006
[154] "Blair sees chance to avoid Euro referendum", *Guardian*, 24 April 2007
[155] Geoff Hoon, HC Deb 16 May 2007 c 779W

European Scrutiny Committee reports, but government transparency was sometimes lacking. In evidence sessions the Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett, was reluctant to tell the Scrutiny Committee what position the Government would take on certain issues[156] and her accounts of what was, and was not, happening in EU discussions were a cause of some frustration to members of the Committee, who felt the Government might have misled it.[157]

Reporting to the Commons on the outcome of the June 2007 European Council which agreed the Mandate, Tony Blair insisted all the Government's 'red lines' for the future reform treaty had been met. The 2004 moves to QMV would be retained but the UK would keep its opt-out and opt-in arrangements regarding the euro and measures on asylum, immigration and border controls in Title IV. There would be no extension of QMV into areas such as taxation and benefits. There would also be a particular UK exemption from the Charter of Fundamental Rights in a protocol stating that the Charter did not create justiciable rights in the UK which went beyond the country's national law. Blair concluded:

> The most important aspect of the new treaty is that it allows the European Union to move on to the issues that really matter. For too many years, we have been bogged down in a debate about institutions. With the increase from 15 to 27 member states, change is essential, but with this agreement, we can now concentrate on issues that really matter: energy security, organised crime and terrorism, globalisation, further enlargement and making Europe's voice more effective internationally.
>
> This agenda is surely quintessentially one in Britain's interests. Over the past 10 years, Britain has moved from the margins of European debate to the centre. This is absolutely right for Britain. Whether in defence or economic reform or in energy policy or the environment, or of course most particularly in enlargement and the appointment of the new Commission President, Britain has for a decade been in a leadership position in Europe. That is exactly where we should stay. I commend this agreement to the House.[158]

Tony Blair had negotiated for the UK on 21-22 June 2007, but he handed over to Gordon Brown on 27 June. An IGC was launched on 23 July 2007 to discuss and refine technicalities under the Mandate, with a view to EU Heads of State or Government concluding Treaty amendments in October 2007.

Widely divergent views have been expressed about whether Tony Blair delivered on his pledge to put Britain at the heart of Europe during the decade that he was in power. Although he took a pragmatic approach towards further EU integration in its dealings with the EU institutions, Tony Blair continued the long British tradition of preferring voluntary cooperation and intergovernmental approaches to further integration. He

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156 European Scrutiny Committee, Evidence Session on Institutional Reform, Uncorrected Oral Evidence, HC640-I, 7 June 2007. Available at: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmeuleg/uc640-i/uc64002.htm

157 *Ibid*. For example, see the comments by Richard Younger-Ross.

158 HC Deb 25 Jun 2007 c 23

promoted the 'Open Method of Coordination' (OMC),[159] which implied a weaker Commission, widening the Union rather than deepening, and strong Council (i.e. intergovernmental) leadership.[160]

Nonetheless, the approach taken during the Blair premiership did in many respects have more effect on EU policies than that of previous British governments and contributed to a degree of 'Europeanisation' of UK politics, although how much is disputed. Until 2003 and the run-up to the war in Iraq, Tony Blair had some success in bridging the gap between the US and the EU. Throughout the decade he was Prime Minister, his governments gave enthusiastic support to efforts to promote economic flexibility and competitiveness and helped to shape the EU foreign, security and defence policy. Julie Smith, writing in mid 2005, characterised Tony Blair's first term in office as "proactive", while, by contrast, his second term was "more reactive".[161] Smith, like other commentators, notes a crucial theme that ran throughout the Blair period: the continuing opt-out from the euro. Blair's relationship with Gordon Brown was described by Peter Hennessy as a "dual monarchy" in which each tended to think they were "in the lead on Britain and the euro".[162]

John Lichfield, while portraying Blair as a man who betrayed his pledge to put Britain at the heart of Europe, nonetheless depicted a leader who had an unprecedented influence on Europe and EU policies:

> […] in some respects, the "British agenda" has ruled in the European Union in the past 10 years as never before. The EU has become much larger without being, institutionally, deeper or stronger. The European Commission now worships at the Blairist altars of globalism, competitiveness and the free market, rather than its old dogma of harmonisation and farm subsidies. The arch-Blairist Peter Mandelson has become the archbishop of free trade in Brussels.[163]

Acknowledging that Blair was popular in the new Eastern European Member States, he argued that the Government's relationship with the US and its support for the US over Iraq were a major disappointment to 'old' Europe. Above all, he added, Tony Blair did not succeed in persuading the British public on Europe: "British public opinion remains frozen in its Thatcher-era view of the EU as a monstrous conspiracy".[164] He also asserted that Blair played "to the British Eurosceptic gallery" by fighting over who should

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[159] The OMC was introduced by the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 and has been applied widely since then. It is intergovernmental and based on voluntary cooperation among States, allowing for the adoption of best practice with a view to closer convergence. Guidelines and timetables are agreed, taking into account national and regional differences, and accompanied by periodic monitoring.
See Presidency Conclusions, para. 37, Available at:
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm

[160] The OMC also implies a horizontal Europeanisation of Member State policies, giving rise to greater cooperation and convergence among Member State governments.

[161] J. Smith, "A missed opportunity? New Labour's European policy 1997–2005", *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 4, July 2005

[162] P. Hennessy, "Rulers and Servants of the State: the Blair Style of Government 1997 – 2004", *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol 58, No. 1, 2005

[163] "Blair's departure: The view from Europe", *Independent*, 11 May 2007

[164] *Ibid*

pay for the British budget rebate, rather than taking a positive lead after the French and the Dutch voted against the EU Constitution in 2005.[165]

However, the current Commission President, José Manuel Barroso, speaking as Tony Blair prepared to leave office, took a different view. He thought Blair had "taken Britain from the fringes to the mainstream of the European Union […] by engagement, not by vetoes".[166]

Looking ahead to the likely British stance on Europe under Tony Blair's successor, Gareth Harding anticipated that there would be considerable continuity:

> Blair has simultaneously been at the vanguard of the debate in Europe and the most listened-to European leader in Washington for over 10 years. Straddling the Atlantic is uncomfortable position to be in. But Blair always refused to choose between Europe and the United States, and Brown is likely to follow suit.[167]

II Foreign policy under Brown[168]

With think-tanks close to the Labour Party, such as the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), declaring British foreign policy during the Blair premiership to be a "mixed picture" and arguing that his successor needed to "jettison the worst features", it seemed likely that there would be some changes in British foreign policy in the post-Blair era.[169] However, the question which commentators asked was: how much would the changes be largely a matter of language or tone, and how much would they be a matter of substance?

On 25 September 2007, David Miliband gave an important speech to the Party Conference at which he announced the arrival of a "second wave" in British foreign policy under Labour. The speech was billed as marking a significant shift from the foreign policy of the Blair era. Below are key extracts from the speech:

> For ten years we've been uncompromising in defence of our values, unapologetic that every citizen of every nation deserves the freedom and equal rights of a true democracy. I believe we were right to do so. But when I went to Pakistan, I met young, educated, articulate people in their 20s and 30s who told me millions of Muslims around the world think we're seeking not to empower them but to dominate them. So we have to stop and we have to think. The lesson is that it's not good enough to have good intentions. To assert shared values is not enough. We must embody them in shared institutions […] I'll always defend our alliance with the US and our membership of the EU […] The lesson is that while there are

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165 "Blair's departure: The view from Europe", *Independent*, 11 May 2007

166 "Barroso tribute to Tony Blair", European Commission Office in the UK, Press Release, 11 May 2007. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/press/frontpage/10052007_en.htm

167 Gareth Harding, "Tony Blair's Legacy: The View From Europe's Continental Capitals", *World Politics Review*, 26 June 2007. Available at: http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=883

168 Only Research Papers and Standard Notes that have not already been referred to in Part 1A of the Paper are cited in Part IIA.

169 "Introduction", in D. Held and D. Mepham (eds), *Progressive Foreign Policy. New Directions for the UK* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 9-10

> military victories there never is a military 'solution' […] Europe needs to look out, not in, to the problems beyond its borders that define insecurity within our borders. It doesn't need institutional navel-gazing and that is why the Reform Treaty abandons fundamental constitutional reform and offers clear protections for national sovereignty […] Yes the world can be a scary place. Yes it's tempting to lower our sights. But in progressive politics we must always be restless for change. And that means we have to be restless about the future, not the past […] Progress is possible. Britain has a vital role to play. And the prize is immense. Not the end of history but more people better educated, better fed, better off, better able to make their own history. Better able to share, peacefully, this 'crowded, dangerous, beautiful world'. And that, after all, is what our foreign policy, the second wave of New Labour foreign policy, is all about.[170]

The BBC journalist Nick Robinson was one of several commentators to wonder at the time whether there would be much that was new about this 'second wave':

> Beyond the words and beyond the carefully calibrated signals what has actually changed in British foreign policy? […] The lesson of the first wave of New Labour foreign policy is that it was shaped by events and was best assessed by what ministers actually did and not the speeches they gave. The same, I suspect, is true of the second wave.[171]

Ian Davis, Co-Executive Director of the British American Security Information Council, writing just as Brown took office, predicted:

> Brown's foreign policy will be similar to Blair's. But expect new shades and tones […] as a rough guide, a Brown foreign policy is likely to be a little less pro-Bush, more cautious about the deployment of British troops overseas, more explicitly multilateralist and more engaged with the global justice agenda than that of Tony Blair.[172]

The Brown premiership has reached the one-year mark. Most analysts agree that it is still too early to say definitively whether there will prove to be significant substantive differences between the Blair Governments and their successor in the sphere of foreign policy. With a view to facilitating what can at this stage be only a tentative comparison, Part II of the Paper reviews the record so far of this 'second wave' of British foreign policy under Gordon Brown. It does so through the prism of the same three key motifs that were discussed with regard to the Blair premiership in Part I: 'interventionism'; the 'special relationship' between the UK and the US; and the UK's role as a member of the EU.

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170 See: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7012356.stm

171 See: http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/nickrobinson/2007/09/new_wave_of_for.html

172 "Gordon Brown PM: A new dawn in UK foreign policy or business as usual?", BASIC Media Advisory, 27 June 2007. Available at: http://www.basicint.org/pubs/Press/070627.htm

A. Interventionism

1. Recasting principles

The Brown Government has sought to recast the philosophy underpinning interventionism. The broad principle has been retained but there have been significant changes in tone and emphasis. Gordon Brown's first major foreign policy speech in November 2007 spoke of "hard-headed intervention" but noticeably prioritised "reform of our international rules and institutions" rather than the exercise of 'hard power' or promoting universal values.[173] Observers also argue that he has maintained a clearer distinction in his speeches between interests and values than Blair did and that "pragmatism has replaced idealism at Number 10".[174]

Brown's November 2007 speech arguably had echoes of what Francis Fukuyama, in repudiating US neo-conservative agendas in 2006, called for as a replacement, namely "realistic Wilsonianism".[175] Martin Wolf, writing in the *Financial Times,* offers a more generic description of this political philosophy: "liberal realism".[176] But there has been no wholesale repudiation of past military interventions, including with regard to the war in Iraq. That was always unlikely given that Gordon Brown was part of the Cabinet throughout the entire Blair premiership.

One of the most extended considerations of the issue of interventionism by a member of the Brown Government was the contribution of Lord Malloch-Brown to a House of Lords debate on 'liberal intervention' in November 2007. In it, he spoke in support of humanitarian intervention, which, although a "subset" of liberal intervention, has, he stated, a "tighter, clearer definition of rules, terms and rationales" attached to it, leading to "interventions of necessity" rather than "interventions of choice" He added that humanitarian intervention is "very specifically motivated by the protection of people rather than by the claim of regime change." Speaking about Tony Blair's 1999 'Chicago' criteria, he said:

> "Mr Blair's conditions have been reviewed very well today. Therefore, I offer a slightly separate but overlapping set of criteria against which one might want to assess such interventions: first, that they are rule-based; secondly, that we are willing to sustain them over many decades; thirdly, that they are adequately burden-shared with others to allow us to sustain them; and, fourthly—this is what I think Mr Blair had in mind—that they are doable and achievable and that we will not end doing more harm than good and causing more loss of life."[177]

Under the Brown Government, the case for a multi-dimensional approach to security and reconstruction (political, social and economic) has been promoted strongly. Among other

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[173] In the speech, he referred to the EU, UN, G8, IMF and World Bank as candidates for reform. One of the new roles of the World Bank, as he sees it, is to become "a bank for the environment". See: http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page13736.asp

[174] "No crusades for Brown", *Daily Telegraph*, 18 March 2008

[175] "What's the big idea?", *Guardian*, 3 February 2007. After Woodrow Wilson, who was the early 20th Century US president who pushed for the establishment of the League of Nations.

[176] "America needs 'liberal realism' at the heart of its foreign policy", *Financial Times*, 14 June 2006

[177] HL Deb 15 November 2007 c626-30

things, it is viewed as a crucial element in ensuring that the political, economic and military will and capability to realise the objectives of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is generated over time. The Brown Government views R2P as a crucial element in creating more credible and effective frameworks for future interventions. Its thinking has been shaped not just by the course of events in Afghanistan or Iraq, but also in response to the crisis in Darfur, where the performance of the international community has been found wanting by many observers.[178]

In his November 2007 speech, Brown said:

> Today, there is still a gaping hole in our ability to address the illegitimate threats and use of force against innocent peoples […] if we are to honour that responsibility to protect we urgently need a new framework to assist reconstruction. With the systematic use of earlier Security Council action, proper funding of peacekeepers, targeted sanctions – and their ratcheting up to include the real threat of international criminal court actions – we must set in place the first internationally agreed procedures to prevent breakdowns of states and societies.[179]

He went on to make a series of specific proposals on security and reconstruction:

> […] where breakdowns occur, the UN – and regional bodies such as the EU and African Union – must now also agree to systematically combine traditional emergency aid and peacekeeping with stabilisation, reconstruction and development […] I propose that, in future, Security Council peacekeeping resolutions and UN envoys should make stabilisation, reconstruction and development an equal priority; that the international community should be ready to act with a standby civilian force including police and judiciary who can be deployed to rebuild civic societies; and that to repair damaged economies we sponsor local economic development agencies – in each area the international community able to offer a practical route map from failure to stability.[180]

So, while not renouncing 'hard power', there has been a renewed emphasis on 'non-military' dimensions of intervention. This has been so even with regard to Afghanistan, which is now by far Britain's largest military deployment abroad. In December 2007, in the immediate aftermath of the boost provided to supporters of the British mission in Afghanistan by the re-taking of the strategically important town of Musa Qala, Gordon Brown set out the Government's strategy for the future in Afghanistan. He began by outlining its four main elements:

> Having been reviewing our strategy since July, I now want to announce the next stage. It is a long-term and comprehensive framework for security, political, social and economic development in support of Afghanistan. This long-term

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178 For further discussion of the R2P, see House of Commons Library Research Paper, 08/55, *Reinventing humanitarian intervention: Two cheers for the Responsibility to Protect?*

179 See: http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page13736.asp

180 *Ibid*. In a subsequent parliamentary answer, David Miliband added: "For reconstruction to follow peacekeeping, UN peace support operations need to be more integrated. UN bodies and other international agencies need to work towards common strategic interests and behind a common operations plan. The Peacebuilding Commission was established in 2005 as an advisory body to direct this integrated approach." See: HC Deb 18 December 2007 c1359W

> comprehensive framework entails, first, more Afghan ownership, with the Afghan army, police and Government building on NATO military achievements and taking over more responsibility for their own security. Secondly, we support localisation and then reconciliation, with Afghans building on the creation of a democratic constitution by developing and strengthening their institutions not just at national but at provincial and local level as we support that search for political reconciliation. The third aspect is reconstruction. In what is still one of the poorest countries on earth, where only one in three has clean drinking water, life expectancy is just 43, and 80 per cent. of women cannot yet read, we will help to ensure, through reconstruction and development, that more Afghan people have an economic stake in their future. Fourth, to underpin this, we will help to ensure greater burden sharing by all partners and allies, with each of us playing our part—as hard-headed realists, not idealists—in the long haul to help the Afghans themselves to govern and secure their own land, and together therefore shifting our emphasis from short-term stabilisation to long-term development.[181]

Only then did he go on to make the case for continued strong British military involvement in Afghanistan:

> The foundation, now and in the future, for our comprehensive framework is military support for the Afghan Government against the Taliban-led insurgency, also denying al-Qaeda a base from which to launch attacks on the world. Throughout last winter, Taliban propagandists repeatedly promised a "spring offensive". Instead, it is the British and other NATO forces, together with the Afghan army, who have taken the initiative. We have been driving the insurgents and extremists out of their hiding places, preventing them from regrouping and attacking the areas around the provincial capitals where stability is taking hold.
>
> It is this military success that has preserved Afghanistan's emerging democracy: a constitution, fragile but still intact; a free media; and a changing society where, unlike six years ago when women were banned from education, from work, and from virtually all of public life, there is now a higher proportion of women MPs in Afghanistan than in many western countries, and 5 million children are at school, 2 million of them girls once denied education.
>
> We need to hold and to reinforce what we have achieved together, so Britain will maintain a strong military force in Afghanistan of around today's figure of 7,800. That is a contribution second in size only to America's.[182]

The Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, has also made a number of important contributions to the debate on the future of interventionism. Some observers detected signs of renewed enthusiasm for a more assertive interventionism in a speech made by Miliband on the 'Democratic Imperative' in February 2008 in Oxford. In it, he argued that, notwithstanding the controversies over Iraq and Afghanistan, 'hard power' should not be disavowed.[183] He defined its different elements as "targeted sanctions, international criminal proceedings, security guarantees and military intervention". Linking them

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[181] HC Deb 12 December 2007 c303-4W.
In this speech, Brown said that Britain will make available £450 million in development and stabilisation assistance for Afghanistan during 2009-12.

[182] *Ibid*

[183] This was a point he made again in a subsequent speech in May 2008, when he said: "Afghanistan gives a lie to the argument that we have to choose between hard power and soft power". See: http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/newsroom/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=3816688

explicitly to the continued importance of democracy promotion, Miliband went on to elaborate on the idea of 'security guarantees', which had not been raised in this context before:

> Paul Collier argues in his forthcoming work on 'democracy in dangerous places', that the offer of a security guarantee to a new but fragile government, conditional upon them abiding by democratic rules, could create a strong incentive for them to abide by the democratic process. To date, our only experience of security guarantees has been of the sort that NATO provides against external aggression. There are a whole range of reasons why Collier's idea would be difficult. How would you judge which regimes merit the guarantee, for instance? How would you avoid perverse incentives? Who would intervene to put down the coup and how would they avoid complicating or exacerbating political divisions? But it is surely right that we consider carefully how best we can support fledgling, fragile democracies, as we are doing in Afghanistan, Iraq and Sierra Leone.[184]

This section of Miliband's speech provoked some strong reactions. For example, while Timothy Garton-Ash applauded the general argument, he claimed that Miliband's attempt to link it to Iraq was a mistake. He argued that it would be unfortunate if the speech came to be seen as another attempt to legitimise the war in Iraq. He also regretted the fact that the Foreign Secretary had used the phrase "civilian surge" – adapting a word used to describe the US-led military strategy to reduce the violence and enhance security in Iraq under General David Petraeus – to explain what had happened in Burma in autumn 2007, when pro-democracy protestors challenged the authority of the military junta there. He went on to argue, noting that Miliband had said nothing in the speech about it, that security guarantees of the kind proposed by him could only be made effective in the context of the EU (he made no mention of NATO).[185] However, Miliband has emphasised elsewhere the importance of the EU strengthening its capability to intervene effectively in the world beyond its borders.[186]

The Foreign Secretary returned to the theme of 'The Democratic Imperative' in a speech in Washington, DC, in May 2008. However, this time he focused on Pakistan and Afghanistan and did not invoke Iraq. In addition, while the speech covered similar ground to the issues raised in the February 2008 speech, he made no mention of 'security guarantees' on this occasion.[187] Only time will tell whether this is because, having road-tested the idea in this context, it has been decided that there is not much mileage in it.

Miliband has also sought to challenge the traditional stance of many countries, not least rising powers in Asia, in favour of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. However, in this instance, rather than emphasising the importance of interventionism *per se*, Miliband has deployed language with which his audience may be more comfortable. He has promoted the concept of 'responsible sovereignty'. Arguing that "shared threats and interests" engendered by processes of globalisation are

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184 See: http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/newsroom/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=1626960

185 "To strengthen Miliband's case, drop Iraq, add Europe", *Guardian*, 14 February 2008

186 See his 15 November 2007 Bruges speech, "Europe 2030: Model power not superpower". Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7097162.stm

187 See: http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/newsroom/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=3816688

changing the 'rules of the game' for the international community, he said in a speech made in Beijing in February 2008:

> The nation state is the founding unit of affiliation and organisation in this age as in the one that has gone before. But national sovereignty becomes responsible sovereignty when nations pay heed both to the domestic demands of their own citizens and to their international responsibilities to citizens of the world beyond their borders. Patriotism requires internationalism.[188]

In May 2008, he made a further speech on the issue in which he stated that "the rights of the nation state are profoundly important and mustn't be traded away".[189] However, he added:

> […] in the end as an international community we cannot carry on debating in a slightly sterile way, on the one hand a caricature of liberal interventionism, which says it's a trigger-happy view of how one should intervene anywhere and on the other hand a caricature of non-intervention, which says that no state has any responsibilities or business with the outside […][190]

2. Interim performance report

What has happened in practice during the first year of the Brown Government? The Government has so far shown no appetite for new large-scale military interventions. Ongoing political and humanitarian crises in Darfur, Burma and Zimbabwe have provoked no moves in this direction. Indeed, implicitly differentiating Brown from Blair, one analyst has gone so far as to claim:

> My guess is that if Slobodan Milosevic had waited 10 years before marching into Kosovo, the west would have wrung its hands and turned its back.[191]

Quite apart from the philosophical or political calculations that might have shaped such restraint, it may in part reflect other important constraints. The British armed forces are severely stretched. Many experts have expressed strong doubts over whether Britain has the capability to take on significant additional military missions in the foreseeable future.[192] These doubts appeared to be confirmed by the MOD in May 2008, when it warned that the armed forces are running at well below strength and "cannot simultaneously be ready for the full range of contingent operations provided for in planning assumptions."[193]

In terms of Britain's existing military commitments, the Brown Government has so far limited itself to carrying out the initiatives announced during the final year of the Blair premiership. Accordingly, the number of British troops in Iraq has been significantly

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188 See: http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/newsroom/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=3037586
189 See: http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/newsroom/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=3490469
190 *Ibid*
191 "Burma's victims pay the bill for foreign policy realism", *Financial Times*, 16 May 2008
192 Many, including Opposition spokespersons and retired military figures, would say that they are in fact overstretched. See House of Commons Library Research Paper , *British Defence Policy since 1997*.
193 "Armed forces 'can't cope with more missions'", *Daily Telegraph*, 13 May 2008

reduced, although in April 2008 it was announced that further reductions below the current level of about 4,000 troops had been postponed due to the changing situation on the ground in Basra.[194] As was announced towards the end of the Blair premiership, there has been a significant increase in the number of British troops in Afghanistan to 7,800. On 16 June 2008, it was announced that an additional 230 military personnel would be sent. Afghanistan has so far been a much less contentious theatre of military operations within the Labour Party and beyond.[195]

Philip Stephens, writing last year in the *Financial Times*, while sympathetic to NATO's mission, raised doubts about whether it can succeed:

> I have often heard European politicians describe Afghanistan as an existential test of Nato's, and thus of the west's, resolve in the fight against violent Islamism. They are right. What is missing is the shared strategic analysis and resolve to turn tactical victories into long-term advantage […] The west's politicians know that they cannot afford to lose to the Taliban, but are not prepared to ask for the sacrifices needed to win. They talk of victory but will not admit the price in blood and treasure […] Civilian aid is a fraction of what it needs to be. And while the west looks impatiently at its watch, the Taliban can afford to bide its time.[196]

Nine months later, writing in June 2008, his assessment was little changed:

> The question that western donors to Afghanistan might have asked themselves at this week's Paris conference was an obvious one: why are we there? In the event it was easier to write the cheques.[197]

The planned appointment of Paddy Ashdown, which the Brown Government strongly promoted, as a powerful new UN Envoy to Afghanistan, playing an important role in co-ordinating the efforts of the international community, was part of a strategy designed to convince the doubters.[198] However, President Karzai's vetoing of the appointment in January 2008, which was accompanied by criticism of Britain's performance in Helmand Province, where its military forces are concentrated, did little to dispel their doubts.[199] Karzai was reportedly unhappy about alleged British sponsorship of diplomatic efforts to do deals with so-called 'moderate Taliban'.[200] In the weeks that followed the non-appointment of Ashdown, a series of pessimistic reports were issued, warning that Afghanistan risked returning to 'failed state' status.[201] There has also been heavy criticism of the British strategy for reducing opium production in the country. It is too early

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194 It had been hoped to reduce numbers to about 2,500. HC Deb 1 April 2008 c628-30. For further background, see House of Commons Library Standard Notes: SN/IA/4099, *Coalition Forces in Iraq: Recent Developments* (20 September 2007).

195 For further background, see House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/4143, *ISAF in Afghanistan: Recent Developments* (17 October 2007).

196 "Basra to Helmand: from the frying pan into the fire", *Financial Times*, 31 August 2007. Sir Sherard Cowper Coles, Britain's ambassador in Kabul, predicted in mid 2007 that British involvement in Afghanistan would last at least 30 years.

197 "A war that badly needs a definition of victory", *Financial Times*, 13 June 2008

198 Paddy Ashdown was amongst them but believed that the situation in Afghanistan could still be turned around.

199 See: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7211667.stm

200 "Afghan chief criticises Britain", *BBC News Online*, 21 February 2008

201 "Afghanistan risks 'failed state'", *BBC News Online*, 30 January 2008

to make a firm judgement on the impact of the new British strategy on Afghanistan announced by Gordon Brown in December 2007, which, in addition to the military forces deployed on the ground, involves a commitment of £450 million for development and stabilisation assistance between 2009-12, but few could cavil at an assessment that the fate of Afghanistan still hangs in the balance.[202]

The big future test case of British willingness (and ability) to commit significant additional troops to a new military operation could be Iran, where elements within the Bush Administration have at points called for strong action that might extend to air strikes against nuclear installations unless it stops its uranium enrichment programme.[203] The Brown Government has publicly marched largely in step with the US on sanctions against Iran and has ruled nothing out. However, the Brown Government has shown no visible enthusiasm for military action against Iran. It has been a strong backer of an approach which combines offering incentives to Iran to abandon plans they might have to develop a nuclear weapons capacity, while imposing sanctions if it fails to accept them. Further UN sanctions were mandated by the Security Council in March 2008.

In terms of incentives, this has involved offering Iran "internationally agreed access to an enrichment bond or nuclear fuel bank".[204] Two packages based on this approach have now been offered. The most recent version was presented to its leaders in June 2008. However, there are currently no signs that a diplomatic deal with Iran on this or a similar basis is imminent. The British Government has indicated that it will support additional EU and UN sanctions if necessary.

Another test could be the Balkans.[205] Debate continues to rage about whether the NATO military intervention over Kosovo in 1999 remains a 'success story' for interventionism or not. The British Government was quick to recognise Kosovo's statehood in late 2007. The political and security situation in the region remains extremely fragile. However, the Government has consistently indicated that Britain would not go significantly beyond maintaining existing commitments, which includes a battalion on stand-by as part of the NATO Operational Reserve Force.[206] On 29 April, it was announced that this battalion would be sent to Kosovo for one month – June – to help maintain public order there.[207]

During the transition from Blair to Brown in mid 2007, one of Brown's early statements about future foreign policy focused on the economic dimensions of conflict prevention

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202 For the most recent detailed parliamentary assessment, see the International Development Committee's February 2008 report, *Reconstructing Afghanistan*, HC 65, Session 2007-8. The Government's response was published in April 2008 (HC 509).

203 Israel has also threatened to carry out air strikes. For further background, see House of Commons Library Standard Notes SN/IA/4262, *Iran's Nuclear Programme* (24 September 2006) and SN/IA/4263, *Iran: Political System and Recent Elections* (6 February 2007).

204 See: http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page13736.asp. Jack Straw, now the Minister of Justice and a close ally of the Prime Minister, publicly opposed military action against Iran when Foreign Secretary in 2006, at a time when Tony Blair was careful not to rule it out. "If ever there was a nation not to drive to extremes, it is Iran", *Guardian*, 12 April 2006

205 For further background, see House of Commons Library Standard Notes: SN/IA/4480, *Kosovo: Beyond Stalemate at the Security Council* (17 October 2007) and SN/IA/4521, *In Brief: Kosovo lurches towards Independence* (21 November 2007).

206 HC Deb 19 February 2008 c20-22W

207 "More British troops off to Kosovo", *BBC News Online*, 29 April 2008

and resolution, with particular reference to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, where he called for an "economic road map for reconstruction".[208] There have been some results since then with regard to economic assistance to the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Tony Blair, now the Quartet's Envoy, and to whom the FCO and DFID have seconded staff, has provided support for this agenda. However, critics have argued that such initiatives will be of limited value in the absence of a credible peace process between Israel and the Palestinians which is based on the recognition that the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas, which currently controls Gaza, is an important player that cannot be ignored.[209]

In terms of pursuing broader agendas on stabilisation and reconstruction, in a speech to the UN Security Council in April 2008, Brown stated that the stabilisation and reconstruction agenda would be at the top of Britain's priorities when it took the chair in May 2008. He announced that Britain would lead the way by establishing a 1,000-strong UK standby civilian force.[210] In his Kennedy Memorial Lecture in Boston, Massachussetts, two days later, he also called for the establishment of a UN crisis recovery fund "to ensure proper financing for stabilisation and reconstruction in countries emerging from conflict."[211] These commitments were reiterated by David Miliband during a debate in the UN Security Council on 20 May.

It is too early to say what the practical impact or importance, if any, David Miliband's 'Democratic Imperative' speech at Oxford in February 2008 might be for future British foreign policy. Critics claim that Britain's support for democracy promotion continues to be leavened by considerable pragmatism when it comes to powerful states. Following the victory in March 2008 of Dmitri Medvedev in a presidential election regarded by many as an example of 'democratic regression' rather than advance, Gordon Brown reportedly wrote to the winner congratulating him on his victory.[212]

Miliband has also made efforts to persuade China, still the leading exponent of the philosophy of non-interference in the internal affairs of states, to shift away from an absolutist position towards what he has called "responsible sovereignty" (see above). Specific focuses for this message have been Sudan, Burma, climate change and, most recently, Tibet. There have been some signs of movement on this front during 2008 but it is difficult to know whether these are the product of short-term calculations related to the Beijing Olympics or reflect a deeper, more long-term shift in perspective.[213]

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208 HM Government, *Economic Aspects of Peace in the Middle East,* September 2007. Available at: http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/BallsCunliffe.pdf

209 HC Deb 10 December 2007 c161-2W and HC Deb 8 January 2008 c448W. For further background, also see House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/4645, *Gaza: The Latest Crisis* (7 March 2008).

210 See: http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page15286

211 See: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page15303.asp. It is not yet clear how this would relate to the Peacebuilding Commission, which also has funds for stabilisation and reconstruction initiatives.

212 "Tough line from Medvedev as world gives him cool welcome", *Times*, 4 March 2008

213 On Sudan, see House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/4084, *Sudan: Recent Developments* (28 November 2007). On Burma, see SN/IA/4040, *In Brief: Update on Burma* (16 October 2007). For further background on British policy on climate change under Gordon Brown, see SN/SES/4354, *The Climate Change Bill* (19 November 2007).

For some politicians and commentators, recent events in Burma, in the context of the alleged failure of the ruling junta to respond adequately to the humanitarian disaster wrought by Cyclone Nargis during May 2008, have reflected not just a continuing lack of consensus within the UN Security Council about the legitimacy and scope of the emerging legal norm of R2P but also a degree of uncertainty, if not ambivalence, on the part of leading Western governments, including the US and the UK, about actually invoking it, even as a 'last resort'.[214] Indeed, a number of critics have wondered whether the case of Burma demonstrates that the Brown Government is not really that committed to supporting unilateral intervention, including military action, in genuine humanitarian emergencies.[215] Others have disputed such an interpretation, arguing instead that not only are such unilateral interventions often unlikely to be effective, they are only justified where there has been a wilful and extreme failure by the responsible state to prevent conflict or a humanitarian emergency within its own borders and that, following the belated decision of the junta to allow member countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to co-ordinate the international aid effort, the case of Burma has so far fallen narrowly short of that criterion.[216] Speaking on 21 May, Gordon Brown said:

> I do not rule out anything, but I think that the right hon. Gentleman would agree that, in talking to aid agencies […] they still believe that food drops or other drops of aid would be counter-productive and that they still believe that military intervention would be counter-productive at this time. Let us hope, and let us push the ASEAN effort forward.[217]

Some observers have also been critical in recent months of the Brown Government's policy – or alleged lack of it – with regard to a humanitarian and security crisis that has received much less media coverage than Burma: Somalia. Here, the Government has been charged with passively following the US lead on Somalia, whose policy, it is argued, has been shaped excessively by anti-terrorism agendas rather than by humanitarian or conflict-resolution imperatives. The Government disputes such views.[218] Following the experience of the UN and the US in Somalia in the early 1990s, Somalia remains one of the leading 'cautionary tales' of 'military humanitarianism'

There are other important issues that are closely linked to Brown's agendas on conflict prevention and the promotion of reconstruction in fragile states against which his

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214 Britain held the chair of the UN Security Council during May 2008.

215 "As Burma dies, our macho leaders sit on their hands", *Guardian*, 14 May 2008

216 One of R2P's strongest advocates, Gareth Evans, President of the International Crisis Group, has stressed this point on many occasions: "R2P is above all about taking effective *preventive* action […] The responsibility to prevent is very much that of the state itself, quite apart from the international community. And when it comes to the international community, a very big part of *its* preventive response should be to help countries help themselves." See his speech in November 2007 in Bonn, Germany: "Delivering on the Responsibility to Protect: Four Misunderstandings, Three Challenges and How to overcome them". Available at: http://www/crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5190&1=1. For further discussion, see House of Commons Library Paper 08/55, *Reinventing humanitarian intervention: Two cheers for the Responsibility to Protect?* In recent weeks, media commentators (but, so far, not governments) have started to invoke R2P with regard to the political and humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe.

217 HC Deb 21 May 2008 c312

218 See articles by Jonathan Steele, "Kofi Annan and the art of intelligent intervention", *Guardian*, 15 February 2008 and Tom Porteous, "Missing in Africa", Guardian, 23 April 2008. See also House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/4538, *The Horn of Africa: An Update* (7 December 2007). For a recent statement by the Government, see HC Deb 13 May 2008 c1190-1.

government's performance will be tested. For example, the Government has said that it will work for a ban on "the use, production, transfer of those cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians."[219] However, critics argued that Britain should sign up to a total ban. During the course of a conference to finalise an international treaty on the issue in May 2008, and despite reports of opposition from the MOD, the British Government shifted towards support for a total ban.[220] The Government remains a strong supporter of the Arms Trade Treaty, which became a high priority from the second term of the Blair premiership onwards and remains so.

Campaigners against the arms trade will also be waiting to see whether the ongoing review of the 2002 Export Control Act, which created the present legal and institutional framework for the regulation of arms transfers, produces proposals to strengthen that framework. This review began during the Blair premiership. Brown promised action on the "extra-territorial brokering and trafficking of small arms, and potentially other weapons" in his November 2007 speech.[221] In February 2008, the Government published its first report on the progress of the review, indicating that it required further time to consider options.[222] The depth of the Government's wider commitment to regulating the arms trade continues to be questioned. The Serious Fraud Office has appealed against a High Court ruling in April 2008 that its investigation into the al-Yamamah arms deal with Saudi Arabia should not have been halted in December 2006.[223]

Finally, the Brown Government has continued its predecessor's efforts to promote development in Africa. Brown himself was heavily involved on the 'softer' side of Britain's agenda on Africa – aid, debt relief and trade issues – during the Blair premiership. The Government's continuing good faith on this agenda is accepted by most observers. But a world trade deal in the Doha 'development round' remains elusive.

B. The relationship between the UK and the US

Since Gordon Brown took office, the media has focused closely on every speech on foreign policy from both the new Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet, looking for clues as to whether his government would distance itself from the US and align more closely with European partners.

1. The early months: a deliberate distancing?

The persistent unpopularity of President Bush among a large section of British public opinion and the failure of the war in Iraq to deliver quickly the promised benefits raised questions in some minds about the future viability of the special relationship during the final years of the Blair premiership. Indeed, the phrase 'special relationship' reportedly fell out of favour in British official circles in 2006, when the new British Ambassador to

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219 See: http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page13736.asp

220 "US cluster bombs to be banned from the UK", *Guardian*, 29 May 2008

221 See: http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page13736.asp. See also Saferworld, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. *A Decade of Labour's Arms Exports* (London, May 2007), p. 6.

222 See: http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file44407.doc. For further background, see House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/2729, *UK Arms Export Policy* (20 August 2007).

223 "Court condemns end to Saudi arms probe", *Reuters*, 10 April 2008

Washington, Sir Nigel Sheinwald, was said to have let it be known that he disapproved of it. A number of diplomats, largely prompted by the experience of Iraq, were also reported as questioning whether Britain got enough back from the US in return for its steadfast public support.[224] However, recent surveys of British and European public opinion suggest that levels of disapproval on the broader issue of whether the US should play a leading role in the world have 'bottomed out', after growing significantly between 2002 to 2006.[225]

Many commentators felt that Brown would need somehow to distance himself from the Bush administration on taking office. However, there was some confusion, at least initially, over what Brown's attitude to the US would be. A commentator in the *Times* asked in August 2007,

> Will the real Gordon Brown please stand up? I cannot be the only person in the country a little confused by our new Prime Minister. Does he, for instance, like America or not?[226]

Most observers doubted strongly whether any efforts at distancing would extend to the US as a whole. Brown has long been well known for his 'pro-Americanism':

> Brown is not just decidedly Eurosceptic - and that's worth an extra mark or two already from the American right in itself - but he can now speak only American policy wonkese in a Scottish accent. His adoration for Cape Cod, and its supposed Kennedyesque glamour, knows no bounds. He even spent his honeymoon there in 2000. To Brown, America exemplifies the ultimate land of opportunity and efficiency, where hard work is always rewarded and laziness reaps its just desserts.[227]

According to some sources, as Chancellor, Mr Brown was renowned for his "irregular and rather truculent appearances at Ecofin, the [EU] finance ministers' council," where, when he did turn up, he was often said to lecture his European colleagues on deregulating their economies to emulate American success.[228]

The early signs were that the Brown Government did indeed want to put some distance between itself and the Bush administration, if not the US *per se*. In June 2007 Gordon Brown appointed Mark Malloch-Brown, former deputy secretary general of the UN and a critic of US policy in Iraq, as Minister for Africa, Asia and the UN.[229] He received a

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[224] ''Special relationship' dies under Gordon Brown', *Daily Telegraph*, 16 March 2008

[225] In a 2007 survey, 16% of UK respondents approved of Presidents Bush's handling of international relations, while 79% disapproved. 50% thought it desirable that the United States exert strong leadership in world affairs against 43% who thought it undesirable. Asked to rate the warmth of their feelings towards the United States on a scale from 1 to 100, British respondents gave the following scores:

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
68	61	62	57	54	55

Source: German Marshall Fund, Transatlantic Trends 2007

[226] "Does Mr Brown know what he's doing?", *Times*, 1 August 2007

[227] "When Mr Brown goes to Washington", *New Statesman*, 14 May 2007

[228] "All Merkel can hope is to get EU started on road to progress", *Financial Times*, 4 January 2007

[229] John Denham MP, who resigned from government over the war, was also appointed Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills.

peerage and attends Cabinet meetings. Malloch-Brown, described as a "compulsive critic of the White House",[230] and "a profoundly undiplomatic former diplomat",[231] gave a widely-publicised interview in which he said:

> Events determine relationships. For better of worse, it is very unlikely that the Brown/Bush relationship is going to go through the baptism of fire and therefore be joined together at the hip like the Blair/Bush relationship was. That was a relationship born of being war leaders together. There was an emotional intensity of being war leaders with much of the world against them. That is enough to put you on your knees and get you praying together.[232]

However, he went on to say that he thought Prime Minister Brown could nonetheless have a good relationship with the Bush administration because US foreign policy would no longer be driven so strongly by neo-conservative ideas:

> We are getting a dramatic reassertion of multi-lateralism and a more pragmatic diplomacy led by Condi Rice [the US secretary of state], very much with the support of the White House.[233]

Then on 12 July 2007, Douglas Alexander, Secretary of State for International Development, delivered a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations in the US and took the opportunity to criticise excessive reliance on 'hard power':

> In the 20th century a country's might was too often measured in what they could destroy. In the 21st, strength should be measured by what we can build together.

He went on to call for a multilateral approach:

> Multilateralist, not unilateralist, means a rules-based international system. Just as we need the rule of law at home to have civilization so we need rules abroad to ensure global civilization.
>
> We know self-interest and mutual interest are inextricably linked. National interests can be best advanced and protected through collective action. There are few global challenges that do not require the active engagement of the US. We need a global community able to act together through modern effective institutions, including a reformed UN, IMF, World Bank, WTO and EU.[234]

The speech was widely interpreted as a veiled attack on the Bush administration's foreign policy.

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230 "There is military progress in Iraq but it has to be sustained for many more months", *Times*, 14 July 2007

231 "The Outsiders", *Financial Times*, 30 June 2007

232 "'Let's not rely solely on America'. Rachel Sylvester and Alice Thomson talk to Mark Malloch Brown about his, and Britain's, role in the world", *Daily Telegraph*, 14 July 2007

233 *Ibid*

234 The Role of International Development in a Changing World: The Perspective from Britain, Speech delivered at the Council on Foreign Relations (Washington, DC) by Douglas Alexander, Secretary of State for International Development 12 July 2007

The *Independent* said that the speech "sounded like a direct repudiation of almost everything the administration of George Bush has represented over the past seven years."[235] But not all commentators agreed. One argued that:

> Douglas Alexander, the International Development Secretary, has been interpreted as saying that Britain will ditch the blind loyalty to Washington of the Blair years and adopt a more critical, independent approach towards the Bush administration. Yet an element of wishful thinking has crept into this analysis.
>
> In fact, Mr Alexander's words were consistent with central themes of Tony Blair's foreign policy, and the former prime minister could easily have delivered his speech.[236]

In his first speech as Foreign Secretary, given a week after Douglas Alexander's, David Miliband said that "[T]he US is the single most important bilateral relationship."[237] This was interpreted in some quarters as being an attempt to counter the impression of deliberate distancing given by the Alexander speech. Others felt that, since the relationship with the EU could not be described as 'bilateral', Miliband's statement was not particularly significant.

Gordon Brown's first prime ministerial meeting with President Bush in August 2007 was also the source of much media comment. While Brown ran through the list of areas of common interest, underlining a common position with the US on all of them, it was noted that the prime minister failed to direct any personal praise towards the president and used the phrase "full and frank discussions" to describe his conversation with President Bush;[238] in diplomatic language the phrase is usually interpreted to mean 'argument'.

Irwin Steltzer, writing in the *Spectator,* argued that the visit to Camp David was a clear snub to the Bush administration and to the US:

> So it comes to this. British voters are angry because they believe that Tony Blair subordinated their nation's interest to that of the United States, especially since US foreign policy was in the hands of the hated neocons and their president, George W. Bush. So Mr Brown went to Camp David to distance himself both from American foreign policy and the American President.
>
> Which he succeeded in doing — more than even he imagines.
>
> Almost immediately, as if a free hand in foreign affairs is a burden too heavy to bear — aside from pressing for aid programmes for Africa — Brown is setting about surrendering his new-found freedom from America to the EU. And permanently.[239]

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[235] "A new Prime Minister and an impressive break with the past", *Independent,* 14 July 2007
[236] "Alexander's speech is an echo of Blair", *Daily Telegraph*, 14 July 2007
[237] See: http://www.britischebotschaft.de/en/news/items/070719.htm
[238] 'UK and US pledge to continue "special relationship'', Press conference with the president at Camp David, 30 July 2007
[239] "Now we know: Brown is a European, not an Atlanticist", *Spectator*, 11 August 2007

Ideas that the special relationship had indeed cooled persisted into 2008. It was reported in March 2008 that the Prime Minister had not dined with the US Ambassador Robert Tuttle since entering 10 Downing Street, although the prime minister's office responded that he and Mr Tuttle had 'met several times both for official business and at informal occasions'.[240] In an interview Mr Tuttle was asked what he thought of Mr Brown in comparison to Mr Blair. He was reluctant to answer the question directly, but said of Brown:

> You know, Gordon Brown is someone who's been dedicated to politics all of his life. He's very smart, he works very hard and he's someone that I have great respect for.[241]

This sounded somewhat lukewarm compared with his description of Mr Blair:

> I was always, whenever I went in to see (Blair), very impressed with him. I think he was obviously a great politician. A real strategic thinker and someone who was a long thinker. Sort of like President Reagan. And a man of great conviction.[242]

An unnamed British diplomat was quoted as saying:

> There is no crisis in relations, but there are fewer contacts than before. Brown's focus seems to be on doing things with other Europeans rather than pushing ourselves forward as best friends. Since Sarkozy got in, the French have filled the vacuum and we seem happy to let them.[243]

Despite apparent signals of a less intimate relationship, particularly during the first three months of the Brown premiership, there has been contrary evidence to suggest that little has actually changed in practice. For example, further co-operation on missile defence was announced in July 2007. Defence Secretary Des Browne stated that, "at RAF Menwith Hill, equipment will be installed and operated by the US Government to allow receipt of satellite warnings of potentially hostile missile launches…"[244] Some observers saw the announcement as a 'sweetener' before Mr Brown's trip to Washington.

Reported disagreements about the numbers of British troops in Iraq have been held up by some analysts as an example of the deterioration of the special relationship, but this cannot really be sustained. The Brown Government largely followed the troop withdrawal plans inherited from its predecessor until a largely unsuccessful attack by Iraqi government forces on Shi'a militias in Basra in March 2008 showed that the south of the country was far from secure. This led to some criticism in the US of British strategy in Basra, and particularly from Senator John McCain, who said of the draw-down of troops

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240 "Londoners' diary", *Evening Standard*, 11 March 2008

241 "Car dealer, good at special relationships, seeks a new address to practise his arts", *Times*, 16 February 2008

242 *Ibid*

243 ''Special relationship' dies under Gordon Brown", *Daily Telegraph*, 16 March 2008. See also Library Standard Note SN/IA/4629, Franco-American relations since the election of Sarkozy (22 February 2008)

244 HC Deb 463 25 July 2007 c71-2WS

that he "did not think it was a good idea."[245] However, Brown announced on 16 April 2008, just before leaving for his second summit with President Bush, that British troops in Iraq would remain at current levels until the security situation improved:

> We put it on hold because there was tension in Basra itself . . . We wanted to make sure the situation was stable again before we reduced our troops. Our plan is to reduce the numbers, as we've announced, over a period of time.[246]

By June 2008 there were reports that, with security appearing to improve, moves towards further withdrawals might resume in late 2008 or early 2009.[247]

In Afghanistan, British and American forces have been working together, and Bush and Brown have been united in calling for an increase of support from other NATO members. The main discord has been in relation to Britain's role as the lead nation in tackling heroin production, where Britain has resisted US calls for a stronger policy of crop eradication, preferring inducements for farmers to abandon heroin cultivation voluntarily. But this discord predates Brown taking office. Continuing difficulties in Afghanistan may act as an incentive to the Bush administration to further cultivate special relationship if Britain can assist in persuading European countries to commit more troops to Afghanistan.

In February 2008 it was revealed that Government assurances given during the Blair premiership that no US extraordinary rendition flights containing terror suspects had ever landed on British territory were in fact false. Opponents argued that these revelations showed that the Government had no real control over Diego Garcia, one of Britain's remaining Overseas Territories which has been leased to the US, and had failed to be sufficiently proactive in finding out what the US military was doing there.[248] The Government apologised for the error and pledged that there would be no further flights without UK approval.[249] Some called, without success, for a public inquiry.[250] To critics, this development indicated that, despite being under 'new management', Britain was still subordinating itself to American foreign policy priorities.

2. Towards a revival of the special relationship?

The political atmosphere between the Brown Government and the Bush administration warmed noticeably during the spring of 2008. In his Mansion House speech in early April 2008, the Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, was strongly positive about the UK's relationship with the US:

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245 "McCain rues UK pull-out of southern Iraq", *Financial Times*, 7 February 2008

246 "Troops to remain in Iraq until Basra is 'stable'", *Financial Times*, 16 April 2008

247 "Iraq troops decision 'this year'", *BBC News Online*, 9 June 2008

248 For further background, see House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/4463, *The Chagos Islanders* (8 October 2007).

249 It had emerged that two such flights had stopped over on Diego Garcia in 2002. "Embarrassed Miliband admits two US rendition flights refuelled on British soil", *Guardian*, 22 February 2008. Since then, there have been allegations that the US military has also held detainees on ships stationed just outside Diego Garcia's territorial waters. "Whatever happened to…The Observer updated: Diego Garcia", *Observer*, 30 March 2008. See HC Deb 7 May 2008 c932-3W

250 See: HC Deb 21 April 2008 c1712W

> The United States is our single most important bilateral relationship – born of shared values, strengthened by shared sacrifice. I always point out to people that if we want to do good in the world we need the power of an internationalist and engaged United States on our side.[251]

Before leaving for his second meeting in the US with President Bush later in the same month, Gordon Brown talked about the purpose of the visit, echoing Tony Blair's ambitions for the special relationship: "…I feel I can do something to bring Europe and America closer together for the future." However, Brown avoided using the 'bridge' metaphor, which Blair had once been fond of. When asked by the interviewer whether he was as supportive of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as his predecessor, he said "yes".[252]

On 18 April 2008 in Boston, Massachussetts, he responded to claims about his supposed coolness towards the present US administration. In a long speech on foreign policy, delivered at the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, he commented:

> … I am pleased that over the past half century the special relationship between America and Britain which John Kennedy prized remains strong and enduring —- so firmly rooted in our common history, our shared values and in the hearts and minds of our people that no power on earth can drive us apart.[253]

In a significant change from previous speeches, he praised President Bush personally "for leading the world in our determination to root out terrorism and our common commitment that there be no safe haven for terrorists.[254]

Towards the end of the speech, and perhaps with the 2008 presidential election at the back of his mind, he made a point of calling for US leadership in the world and sounded an optimistic note on the potential for cooperation between Europe and America:

> American leadership is and will be indispensable. And now is an opportunity for an historic effort in cooperation: a new dawn in collaborative action between America and Europe – a new commitment from Europe that I believe all European leaders can work with America to forge stronger transatlantic links.[255]

Brown's praise of President Bush may have been easier to make at this time precisely because Bush does not now have much time left in the White House. From 1 January 2009 there will be a new president of the US. During his April 2008 visit, the Prime Minister also met all three potential candidates for the November 2008 presidential election. The warmer political atmosphere was consolidated during David Miliband's visit

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[251] Speech by David Miliband, From Global Empire to Global Hub, 3 April 2008
[252] Full Interview: British PM Gordon Brown, *CBS Evening News*, 14 April 2008
[253] Speech by Gordon Brown, Kennedy Memorial lecture, 18 April 2008
[254] *Ibid*
[255] *Ibid*

to the US in May 2008 and President Bush's stop-over in London as part of his 'farewell tour' of Europe in June 2008.[256]

Looking ahead to the next US presidency, Robert Singh has argued that, while the reality of American power has not changed radically since 9/11, perceptions have, and the main contenders for the forthcoming US presidential election of November 2008 will all want to work more closely with allies and with international institutions in a fashion that will be much more consistent with Gordon Brown's approach to foreign policy:

> … no candidates are promising 'more Bush'. Conventional wisdom instead prescribes a 'return' to multilateralism , an appreciation of US limits, a revived respect for international law and institutions, and a rebuilding of American 'soft power' of diplomacy and persuasion as the surest routes to re-establishing America's global respect and influence.[257]

The two remaining presidential candidates, Barack Obama for the Democrats and John McCain for the Republicans, are also promising to take tougher action on climate change and to abandon controversial terrorist detention policies. It may be that this will help to create a more positive environment in which the 'special relationship' will once again grow stronger. Both have made strongly positive statements about the importance of the US-UK relationship, although it is noteworthy that Barack Obama spoke in terms of ensuring that in future the relationship would be one of equals, implying that it had not been under George W Bush.[258]

However, there remains scope for tension on other policy issues. The Republican presidential candidate, John McCain, has stated his willingness to resort to force if Iran continues to move towards possessing nuclear weapons. It is uncertain how far the Brown Government would follow a future McCain administration down that road, although Brown has taken care not to rule out military action. In his Mansion House speech in November 2007 he simply said that "Iran should be in no doubt about our seriousness of purpose."[259] There could also be significant differences over cluster munitions and efforts to agree an Arms Trade Treaty. On the former, the British Government has shifted towards support for a total ban. On the latter, it remains a leading advocate. There are no guarantees that Bush's successor will be either inclined or able to change the US position of strong opposition to both initiatives.[260]

Phillip Gordon, foreign policy fellow at the Brookings Institution in the US, has warned of the likelihood of a crisis of disappointed expectations following the US presidential election.[261] In his view, Europeans are likely to find that a new administration does not listen to their views as much as they had hoped. Americans are likely to find that

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256 "Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice holds a media availability with Foreign Secretary Miliband, *Congressional Quarterly Transcriptions*, 21 May 2008

257 Robert Singh, 'After Bush', *World Today,* 2 January 2008

258 "Obama: Britain needs a better deal from US", *Evening Standard*, 27 May 2008

259 Speech by Gordon Brown at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, 12 November 2007

260 "US cluster bombs to be banned from the UK", *Guardian*, 29 May 2008

261 Philip Gordon, Senior Fellow for US foreign policy, Brookings Institution, speaking at the Royal United Services Institution conference, 'America and the World after the US Presidential Elections', 1-2 May 2008

European governments do not rapidly move to shoulder a greater security burden, for example by sending more troops to Afghanistan. In this scenario the special relationship could come under renewed strain.

In addition, some have argued that there are longer-term structural forces at work that could permanently undermine the special relationship. For example, Robin Niblett has suggested that Britain does not view terrorism as an almost exclusively external threat in the way that the US does and that this could lead to a divergence in approaches to the issue, with Britain coordinating its domestic and foreign security policies with those of European partners.[262] Niblett writes that conversations with Foreign Office officials have confirmed that:

> constant participation of UK officials and ministers in EU-level discussion on these topics is building a new fabric of instinctive EU consultation at the heart of British foreign policy- making.[263]

Niblett also points to the competition among US presidential candidates to prove their credentials on national security, which may lead to unilateralist foreign policies, and asserts that US strategic interest in Europe is in long-term decline as the relative importance of South and East Asia and the Middle East grows. At the same time, British foreign policy is likely to become increasingly focused on the European neighbourhood, for example the Balkans, Russia and the Mediterranean. Niblett goes on to write:

> Following the Democratic success in the November 2006 mid-term elections, political consensus is building around a more defensive approach to international trade negotiations, inward investment and energy imports, with new security considerations sometimes blended with pure economic protectionism.[264]

Niblett argues that India's and China's economic rise mean protectionism is likely to remain a force. Indeed, given the consensus that middle and lower class incomes in the US have stagnated in recent years, voices calling for a defensive US trade policy may get a lot louder.[265] A more protectionist trend in American politics would not be so welcome with Gordon Brown, who has long been a passionate advocate of free trade.

To sum up, while many observers characterised the Brown Government as being engaged in a "tightrope walk" in its relationship with the US during its first year, as it sought to move out from under the shadow of the Blair-Bush era, developments since April 2008 strongly suggest that it hopes normal business can now be resumed – the special relationship can officially be special again.[266] It remains to be seen whether these hopes are realised.

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[262] Robin Niblett, 'Choosing between America and Europe: a new context for British foreign policy', *International Affairs* 83: 4, July 2007

[263] *Ibid*

[264] *Ibid*

[265] John Plender, 'Mind the gap: Why business may face a crisis of legitimacy', *Financial Times,* 8 April 2008

[266] For example, see: "New British Leader's Tightrope With Bush: Be Close Yet Apart", *Washington Post*, 29 July 2007

C. The UK and the EU

1. Cautiously European?

In May 1999 in a speech to the TUC, Chancellor Gordon Brown said Britain had to be European, "not on the margins but at the centre of Europe", "co-operating, engaging and leading".[267] However, many commentators have assumed that Gordon Brown would be less 'European' than Tony Blair, pointing to his outspokenly critical views as Chancellor about aspects of the economic policies promoted within the EU and his reluctance on the UK joining the euro.

Sir Stephen Wall, the UK's permanent representative to the EU from 1995 to 2000, has considered the different approaches to Europe of Blair and Brown. Gordon Brown, he said, "thinks of Britain and he thinks global, but he doesn't necessarily see Europe as part of the solution in the way that Blair did".[268] Sir Stephen also compared the negotiating styles of Gordon Brown and Tony Blair. Brown's style, he observed, is based on "taking a position and digging in",[269] which is reminiscent of the negotiating styles of Conservative prime ministers in Europe. Blair, on the other hand, was:

> unique among British prime ministers and caused tremendous fluttering in the bureaucratic dovecots when he first came in by setting up the bottom line at the beginning and being prepared to negotiate around it. And partly because he was very good at working the room, at working the telephones, and at engaging with people, more often than not he got what he wanted.[270]

Charles Grant et al have looked at Brown's negotiating style in the EU Council of Ministers:

> Another concern of European governments is Brown's style of negotiating in the EU. Brown has been a dominant figure in Ecofin, the council of finance ministers, where he was respected for both the force of his arguments and the performance of the British economy. But he can be impatient and curmudgeonly, especially when people disagree with him. He has sometimes appeared to view Brussels decision-making as a matter of victories and defeats. But in fact the EU's decisions are often the result of painstaking compromises, designed to gain the support of most, if not all member-states. The EU's underlying philosophy is to avoid zero-sum games, in which one country's advantage is another's pain. Tony Blair famously said that Gordon Brown has "a great clunking fist". But there are very few knock-out blows in EU politics.[271]

In his Mansion House speech at the beginning of the UK Presidency in 2005 Brown had called for "pro-European realism", challenging the protectionist beliefs of leaders such as

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[267] Speech by Gordon Brown to the TUC Conference, 13 May 1999. Available at: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/newsroom_and_speeches/speeches/chancellorexchequer/speech_chex_130599.cfm

[268] *House Magazine* 17 December 2007 p 17

[269] *Ibid*

[270] *Ibid*

[271] C. Grant with H. Brady, S. Tilford and A. Wanlin "European Choices for Gordon Brown", Centre for European Reform, July 2007
Available at: http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/p752_gbrown_cg_2007.pdf

France's former President, Jacques Chirac, and asking "how Europe can move from the older, inward-looking model to a flexible, reforming, open and globally-oriented Europe able to master the challenge from Asia, America and beyond".[272] Clara Marina O'Donnell and Richard Whitman have considered Gordon Brown's record on Europe:

> Despite Brown's strong criticism of some aspects of the EU in its current form, he does have a pro-European integrationist strand to his political DNA. His political career has not been characterized by a reflexive opposition to European integration.
> During Labour's period in opposition, Brown was strongly pro-European (even during the 1980s, when the Labour party was committed to an anti-EC policy), and he supported joining the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM).
> Brown surrounds himself with pro-European aides who have argued for an activist European policy. The fact that Brown dislikes certain economic policies pursued within the EU does not mean he is hostile to the wider underlying concept of the EU or to cooperating with his European partners. Brown may cavil at the direction that Europe is taking, but he does not contest the rationale for its existence. As he stated in his 2005 Labour party conference speech, 'we see British engagement in an outward looking reforming Europe as essential for Britain's future.'[273]

The authors concluded:

> There is little to suggest that Brown is hoping to realize the Blair-led government's ambition of putting the UK at the heart of Europe. Given his known standpoints on a number of European policy issues, either the option of awkward partner or that of pragmatic player appears more likely.[274]

Some observers believed Gordon Brown would seek EU allies on issues he wanted to develop, such as UN reform, climate change, African development and the Middle East peace process, while adopting a more cautious approach to integration, institutional reform and euro membership. In June 2007 Brown met the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and shortly after taking office he visited Berlin again – before the visit to Washington traditionally made by British prime ministers. In Merkel Gordon Brown has reportedly found a natural ally, given her Atlanticist outlook and promotion of structural reforms to boost the EU's economy. The French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, is also a supporter of the Anglo-Saxon 'free market' model.

In his Mansion House speech on 12 November 2007 Gordon Brown reaffirmed his Atlanticist views, declaring that America remained Britain's "most important bilateral relationship". The *Economist* noted that "His remarks on Europe were … sparse", stating only that the EU should be more "outward-looking".[275] O'Donnell and Whitman have asked whether Gordon Brown might be an "awkward partner" in Europe:

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[272] Speech by Gordon Brown at Mansion House, 22 June 2005
Available at: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/newsroom_and_speeches/press/2005/press_57_05.cfm

[273] C.M. O'Donnell and R.G. Whitman, "European policy under Gordon Brown: perspectives on a future Prime Minister", *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 2, March 2007, p. 253-72

[274] *Ibid*., p. 272

[275] "Gordon Brown's foreign policy: Taking shape", *Economist*, 15 November 2007

> The most persuasive evidence to suggest that a Brown administration will be an awkward partner is to be found in his views on the EU's inadequate fitness for the challenge that Europe faces in the future. Essentially, Brown sees the EU as being a 'trade bloc Europe'—an inward-looking and protectionist entity. He argues that global Europe', 'a flexible, reforming, open and globally-oriented Europe'. This critical, economics-based view of the EU has been explicitly detailed in speeches, reports of Her Majesty's Treasury (notably on the CAP) and pamphlets. Given Brown's tenure of almost a decade as Chancellor, the economic area is where one would expect to find his main political priorities. A theme that recurs particularly strongly is that of the challenges created by globalization and the increasing competition facing the UK and Europe from China and India.[276]

Some hoped that Gordon Brown would be better than Blair at achieving closer trans-Atlantic links in conjunction with EU partners. One commentator claimed: "Britain has never achieved the right balance. Tony Blair tried, but gravitated too far towards America. Gordon Brown may have a better chance of getting it right".[277] Hugo Brady from the Centre for European Reform thought that Brown's lack of passion about Europe would allow him to "get further in Brussels than someone so outwardly messianic about it like Blair".[278]

In a period of what is referred to as 'enlargement fatigue', O'Donnell and Whitman have commented on Gordon Brown's stance on the issue:

> This is an area of significant current controversy within the EU, the most salient elements being the perception in a number of member states that the EU is suffering from enlargement fatigue, and opposition to Turkish accession. The UK has traditionally been a supporter of enlargement and there are no indications that a Brown administration would break with that trend. Brown has stated on various occasions that he admired the EU for its enlargement policy to date and in its success in promoting peace in Europe.132 His desire to rebalance the cohesion funds to focus on the EU's poorest countries—mainly the newest member states—is another indication that he supports the new member states and supported enlargement. This consistent support has helped place the UK at the heart of Europe on this issue. Although enlargement of the EU represents a difficult policy area for a number of member states (Austria, France and Germany in particular on the question of Turkish accession), it will be an area with which Brown is likely to be comfortable.[279]

Gordon Brown made a major speech on Europe to senior business leaders in January 2008. In the speech, entitled 'Global Europe', he provided an insight into his priorities now that he is Prime Minister:

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[276] C.M. O'Donnell and R.G. Whitman, "European policy under Gordon Brown: perspectives on a future Prime Minister", *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 2, March 2007, pp. 253-72

[277] "Brown's Britain: Striking an EU-US balance", *Deutsche Welle*, 15 May 2007

[278] *Ibid*

[279] O'Donnell and Whitman, "European policy under Gordon Brown: perspectives on a future Prime Minister" *International Affairs*, 83, 1, March 2007

> […] what is clear is that at this time of global economic uncertainty, we should not be throwing into question -as some would - the stability of our relationship with Europe and even our future membership of the European Union --- risking trade, business and jobs. Indeed, I strongly believe that rather than retreating to the sidelines we must remain fully engaged in Europe so we can push forward the reforms that are essential for Europe's, and Britain's, economic future.
>
> The EU is key to the success of business in the UK:
>
> - Europe accounts for nearly 60 per cent of our trade;
> - 700,000 British companies have trading ties to Europe;
> - And 3.5 million British jobs depend upon Europe.
>
> And even in the face of rapid globalisation, our trade with Europe continues to rise, meaning Europe is as important to the future of Britain than ever.
>
> So European Union membership is good for Britain and British membership is good for Europe.
>
> The European single market gives British businesses access to a market of 500 million people, to cheaper products and services, and to a much wider potential workforce, with a greater range of talents and skills.
>
> And EU enlargement - perhaps Europe's greatest achievement - has strengthened our stability and prosperity even further.
>
> I am pleased that the European Commission, led by President Barroso, understands the absolute priority of strengthening the competitiveness of the European economy and is providing genuine leadership on issues of deepening liberalisation and economic reform.
>
> But if we are to make the most of the opportunities of the new global economy - and strengthen the foundations for economic success in the longer term - we will need to do more to ensure continued stability and to strengthen and deepen economic reform.[280]

Brown outlined a programme for Britain in Europe, establishing a framework for future economic success with essential EU economic reforms. He also made the case for a better EU climate change and environmental policy and for reform of international institutions such as the UN.

Since his January 2008 speech, he has continued to adopt pro-EU rhetoric. After his first bilateral meeting with Commission President Barroso on 21 February 2008 he said that the EU was "essential to the success of Britain, and a Britain fully engaged in Europe is essential to the success of the EU".[281] As well as working with other Member States, Brown emphasised that Britain must work with the Commission "to make the most of the opportunities that are now ahead of us because of globalisation, and … to minimise the risks".[282] Using language reminiscent of Tony Blair, Brown added: "It is by standing together, in defence of our shared values, that we can be a force for stability and justice throughout the world." He did not think that the stability of Britain's relationship with the EU or its future membership should be questioned, and reiterated his call for the EU, through economic reforms, "to focus on what the European citizens really need today, namely: "prosperity and jobs, security, tackling climate change, helping secure stability and prosperity around the world". He underlined the challenge of climate change, calling

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[280] Speech by Gordon Brown on a "Global Europe", January 2008
Available at: http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page14251.asp

[281] "Brown wants Britain in the centre of Europe", *EUObserver,* 21 February 2008

[282] *Ibid*

for the creation of an independent European carbon bank to improve the functioning of the EU's emissions trading scheme.[283]

The Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, has made a number of speeches on European issues. Miliband's strong sense of personal history in the context of post-War Europe has shaped his views on Britain's place in Europe and this is often underlined in his speeches. Many commentators detected tensions between Gordon Brown and David Miliband over the draft text of a speech that Miliband was due to make in Bruges in November 2007, including over the question of developing the EU's defence capabilities.[284]

In his speech in Bruges, Miliband spoke of Britain's destiny being in Europe, continuing:

> Open markets, subsidiarity, better regulation and enlargement are now far more part of the conventional vocabulary of European debate than a United States of Europe, centralised taxation or a common industrial policy. The truth is that the EU has enlarged, remodelled and opened up. It is not and is not going to become a superstate.
> But neither is it destined to become a superpower.
> An American academic has defined a superpower as 'a country that has the capacity to project dominating power and influence anywhere in the world… and so may plausibly attain the status of global hegemon'.
> […]
> The EU is not and never will be a superpower. An EU of 27 nation states or more is never going to have the fleetness of foot or the fiscal base to dominate. In fact economically and demographically Europe will be less important in the world of 2050 that it was in the world of 1950.
> Our opportunity is different. The EU has the opportunity to be a model power.
> It can chart a course for regional cooperation between medium-sized and small countries. Through its common action, it can add value to national effort, and develop shared values amidst differences of nationality and religion. As a club that countries want to join, it can persuade countries to play by the rules, and set global standards. In the way it dispenses its responsibilities around the world, it can be a role model that others follow.[285]

Miliband was optimistic that the EU could do more to shape its long term future, to help its citizens feel more confident about global challenges such as terrorism, climate change, energy security and "societal progress". He thought the EU should focus on "internal not external challenges, institutions rather than ideals", concluding: "We are pragmatic. We have missed some opportunities. But pragmatism and idealism should be partners. And the UK is determined to make them so."[286]

Speaking to the Fabian Society in January 2008, Miliband rejected Tony Blair's vision of Britain as a 'bridge' between Europe and America, stating that Britain should instead

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283 "Brown wants Britain in the centre of Europe", *EUObserver,* 21 February 2008
284 "Gordon the master ventriloquist", *The Sunday Times,* 18 November 2007
285 Speech by David Miliband, "Europe 2030", 15 November 2007. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7097162.stm
286 *Ibid*

become a "global hub" to deal with fundamental shifts in power from West to East and from governments to civilians.[287]

The Minister for Europe, Jim Murphy, spoke in the same month of the "apparently satanic powers" that "detractors of the European Union" often bestowed upon the EU. He said that he believed "passionately" that "the United Kingdom's position must remain at the heart of Europe, and that we should say so loudly and clearly, not just in words but in our deeds". [288] He continued:

> It means not adopting policies which would inevitably mean, if put into practice, detaching Britain from the mainstream of Europe. Europe will figure large in the early months of 2008 in Parliament and overall political debate.
> Some people in the UK feel more European than others. There's nothing odd in that, it's true across Europe. It makes for interesting debate. Like many people in the UK, I recognise that there is a strong philosophical case for European cooperation as a means to permanent peace and rising prosperity.
> […]
> And I'm acutely conscious that it's important for us not just to reflect on the past, about the prosperity, security and peace that has been brought in previous years and previous decades, because we continually need to find ways to retain contemporary consent for Europe.

Following a robust defence of the *Treaty of Lisbon*, Murphy spoke about the great challenges ahead for Europe, which could only be achieved by "pooling our resources, pooling our sovereignty and working for the benefit of all our citizens".[289]

An ICM poll in January 2008 suggested that support for Britain's EU membership was rising and that the British public, while at best ambivalent about the EU, backed the Brown Government's European strategy. However, only 10% thought the *Treaty of Lisbon* would improve things for Britain, including 16% of Labour supporters. 28% of all voters thought it would make things worse, while 50% thought it would make no difference one way or the other. There was not much support for Britain to leave Europe, with 58% saying that British EU membership was good and 35% saying it was bad. The *Guardian* believed the results suggested Labour had "won new support from the political middle ground and may have lost some diehard anti-Europeans".[290]

2. The euro

The Brown Government's policy on euro membership remains as it was set out by Gordon Brown as Chancellor in October 1997 and in his statement on the five tests assessment in June 2003. The longstanding pledge to hold a referendum on the issue before joining the currency remains in place. O'Donnell and Whitman write:

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[287] Speech by David Miliband to the Fabian Society's New Year Conference 2008
Speech by Jim Murphy, "The EU at 27 – Taking on a Global Role", London School of Economics, 9 January 2008
Available at: http://www.lse.edu/collections/LSEPublicLecturesAndEvents/pdf/20080109_JimMurphy.pdf

[289] *Ibid*

[290] "Happy in Europe, but still best friends with the US", *Guardian*, 26 January 2008

> There have indeed been whispers from senior aides that Brown wants to rule out UK membership of the euro for his whole premiership. Brown himself has remained quiet on the issue and sheltered behind the 'five tests' that would need to be passed before UK membership of the euro could be contemplated.

They conclude that it "seems highly unlikely that the UK under Brown will join the euro in the near or medium future thus the country will be consigned to continued exclusion from a key component of the European integration project".[291]

Nonetheless, after four years of relatively little comment in the media, the issue of the euro has begun to re-surface following the recent exchange rate movements, which left the Sterling exchange rate low against a strong euro.

3. *The Treaty of Lisbon*

Gordon Brown's failure to sign the *Treaty of Lisbon* at the same time as the other EU leaders was viewed by commentators as unstatesmanlike and was compared with the behaviour of Harold McMillan in 1955 who, on being invited to take part in the discussions about creating a common market, allegedly told his officials to tell other EU leaders he was 'too busy with Cyprus'. The Bill linked to ratification of the Treaty began its passage through Parliament in December 2007. Gordon Brown has not yielded to public or parliamentary pressure to hold a referendum on the Treaty. He has endorsed the view that Lisbon is not a "constitutional treaty" but an "amending treaty that does not require a referendum".[292] He promised a "full debate … on all the details of the legislation" and insisted that the Government (Tony Blair negotiated the final agreement) had "secured the defence of the national interest in such a way that no fundamental change is taking place in the relationship between the European Union and Britain".[293]

In the *Treaty of Lisbon*, the Government agreed, amongst other things, to the establishment of a European External Service (EAS), provisions for which are included in Article 1(30) of the *Treaty of Lisbon* (TEU). The EAS will work in cooperation with the diplomatic services of the Member States – it will not replace them - and will comprise officials from the relevant departments of the General Secretariat of the Council and the Commission and seconded diplomatic staff from Member States.[294] The CFSP and ESDP remain intergovernmental, as at present, although the new post of High Representative for the CFSP and a more strategic role for the new permanent, full-time European Council President could have implications for the UK.[295] The Government does not think either the President or the High Representative represent any great

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[291] C.M. O'Donnell and R.G. Whitman, "European policy under Gordon Brown: perspectives on a future Prime Minister", *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 2, March 2007, p. 253-72

[292] HC Deb 22 October 2007 c 28

[293] *Ibid*., c 30

[294] For further information see: House of Commons Library Research Paper 08/09, *The Treaty of Lisbon: Amendments to the Treaty on European Union*

[295] Defence was a 'red line' for the Brown Government in discussions over the Treaty. However, ESDP could be a sensitive issue during the forthcoming French EU presidency between July-December 2008. France has indicated that it will be one of its priorities. While France has stated its intention to return to full participation in NATO, which Britain welcomes, it also supports the creation of an independent EU operational planning capability, which Britain opposes. For further discussion, see House of Commons Library Research Paper, *British defence policy since 1997*.

change from existing procedures.[296] The Foreign Affairs Committee concluded in its third report of 2007-08:

> **15.** We conclude that the new post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy has the potential to give the EU a more streamlined international presence and to contribute to the more coherent development and implementation of external policy. We further conclude that it is clear that the High Representative is there to enact agreed foreign policy. (Paragraph 154)
> **16.** We conclude that there are grounds for concern that the holder of the new post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy could face work overload. We recommend that the Government engages with the other Member States and—when known—the nominee for the post to ensure that the potential benefits of the new post are not jeopardised by a plethora of duties and excessive workload. (Paragraph 155)
> **17.** We conclude that the Lisbon Treaty provision for the new High Representative to speak at the UN Security Council will make little difference to current practice. It will not undermine the position of the UK in the United Nations system nor the UK's representation and role as a Permanent Member of the Security Council. (Paragraph 157) […]
> **19.** We conclude that the reshaped role of the President of the European Council could help to generate consensus among EU leaders and lead to greater continuity in the chairing of the European Council. However, we are concerned by the current degree of uncertainty which surrounds the role and by the potential for conflict with the High Representative in representing the EU externally. This could undermine one of the main aims of the current Treaty reform process in the external field. We recommend that in its response to this Report, the Government sets out more clearly its conception of the role of the new European Council President, and its assessment of the likelihood that this will be realised. We further recommend that the Government initiates, in the course of discussions with its counterparts on the appointments to the new posts, the drawing-up of a memorandum of understanding on the respective roles which the European Council President and the High Representative are to play in the external representation of the Union. (Paragraph 170) […]
> **21.** We conclude that the new European External Action Service may serve a useful function as a means of reducing duplication between the Council Secretariat and the Commission and facilitating the development of more effective EU external policies, operating in parallel with rather than as a substitute for national diplomatic services. However, the Lisbon Treaty gives only a bare outline of the role of the new External Action Service, leaving most of the details of its functioning to be determined. This could well be a case of "the devil is in the detail". We conclude that the establishment of the European External Action Service will be a highly complex and challenging exercise. Given the scale and significance of the issues that remain to be resolved, it is vitally important for the Government to be fully engaged in negotiations on these matters, in order to ensure that the European External Action Service works as effectively as possible, and in a way concomitant with UK interests. (Paragraph 189)
> **22.** We recommend that the Government reports regularly to Parliament during 2008 and beyond on the progress of the discussions with other Member States and the EU institutions on the establishment of the European External Action

[296] HL Deb 18 March 2004 c 329

Service, and on the positions it is adopting. Parliament should be kept informed of developments in resolving all the practical, organisational, legal, diplomatic status and financial issues which we have specified in paragraph 182 above. We further recommend that, in its response to this Report, the Government informs us of the arrangements which it proposes to put in place to ensure that Parliament and its committees receive the information necessary to scrutinise on an ongoing basis the work of the European External Action Service. (Paragraph 190)

23. We welcome the opportunity that the new European External Action Service will offer for a greater intermingling of national and EU personnel and careers. We conclude that it would be beneficial to the UK for national secondees to be well represented among the new Service's staff. We recommend that the FCO encourages high-quality candidates among its staff to undertake secondments to the European External Action Service, by assuring them that they will have a "right of return" and that the experience will form a valued part of an FCO career. We recommend that the FCO should also reciprocally encourage European External Action Service staff to undertake secondments within the UK diplomatic service, in the interests of maximising the European External Action Service's collective understanding of UK national interests and foreign policy. (Paragraph 194)

24. We conclude that the emergence in third countries of EU delegations which may be active in Common Foreign and Security Policy areas will at the least require careful management by UK Embassies on the ground. This might be of particular importance in those countries where there is no resident UK diplomatic representation. We recommend that in its response to this Report, the Government sets out its position regarding the conversion of Commission delegations into Union delegations, and informs us of the guidance which it is giving to British posts on working with the new EU bodies. (Paragraph 199)

25. We recommend that in its response to the present Report, the Government sets out its reaction to the proposals that there should be "common offices" of EU Member States in third countries and that the new EU delegations may take on consular tasks. We also recommend that the Government clarifies the role and responsibilities of EU delegations in countries where the UK has no Embassy or High Commission. (Paragraph 203). […]

28. We conclude that the creation of the post of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and of the European External Action Service, represent major innovations in the EU's foreign policy-making machinery. We further conclude that although their establishment does not risk undermining the Common Foreign and Security Policy's intergovernmental nature, the Government is underestimating, and certainly downplaying in public, the significance of their creation. This is unlikely to be beneficial to the UK's position in the EU. We recommend that the Government should publicly acknowledge the significance of the foreign policy aspects of the Lisbon Treaty. (Paragraph 220).[297]

There has been disagreement in Britain over whether or not the *Treaty of Lisbon* involved major changes to the institutional framework for UK foreign policy. Following the negative referendum on the Treaty in Ireland in June 2008, the British Government insisted that the UK parliamentary process would be completed. The European Union

[297] Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign Policy Aspects of the Lisbon Treaty*, HC120, Session 2007-8. Available at: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmfaff/120/12003.htm

(Amendment) Bill was given Royal Assent on 19 June 2008.[298] However, at the time of writing it remains unclear which, if any, of the provisions of the *Treaty of Lisbon* will ever now come into effect, and on what basis.[299]

III Evolving strategic and institutional frameworks for the formulation and delivery of foreign policy

The Blair premiership saw dramatic changes in the strategic and institutional frameworks for the formulation and delivery of British foreign policy. These reforms were designed to improve the coherence and efficiency of the 'foreign policy machine'. This part of the Paper reviews those reforms and then looks at developments under Gordon Brown's premiership since June 2007.

Two inter-related trends have been identified as primarily driving these changes: the blurring of the division between 'foreign' and 'domestic' issues, which meant that the FCO found itself losing its previous monopoly over foreign policy; and the revolution in communications, including the growth of the Internet, which made it easier for 'home' Ministries to deal with counterparts directly, rather than through Embassies, High Commissions or other missions. Other factors have been assigned a significant role in helping to change the strategic and institutional frameworks for British foreign policy between 1997 and today. They include: the rise of a public sector management philosophy that placed much greater emphasis on detailed target-setting and other means of measurement of performance; an expansion in the role of 'public diplomacy' in foreign policy; and the establishment of new structures within government to assist in projecting Britain's concerns within EU decision-making institutions and processes.

A. The Blair decade

1. 'Joined up' and 'open' government

A common phrase used by Ministers and officials during the Blair premiership, although its heyday was during the first two terms, was 'joined up government'. Paradoxically, the first administrative step taken with regard to foreign policy was to remove the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) from the FCO and set it up as a separate Ministry, DFID. This reflected a view that agendas for development should not be subordinated to foreign policy priorities. While this view fairly quickly became accepted, the move did nonetheless create new challenges of communication and coordination between two Government Departments whose mandates would always closely overlap. One retired FCO official, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, stated:

> There were advantages and disadvantages. The advantage was that DFID became a much more focused conveyer of British aid policy […] Therefore there

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[298] Bill 48 of 2007-8. See also House of Commons Library Research Paper RP 08/03, *European Union (Amendment) Bill.* The Treaty is expected to be ratified in July 2008.

[299] See: House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/4758, *The Lisbon Treaty: The referendum in Ireland* (18 June 2008)

> was momentum given to the British aid programme that was probably not there under the Overseas Development Administration. The downside was that the co-ordination between aid policy and foreign policy became a little less well conducted. Naturally enough, jealousies grew, there were budgetary problems and difficulties and there were two Secretaries of State in the Cabinet. The politics and the bureaucracy of the combined area probably diminished to some extent, whereas the professional delivery of an aid programme improved.[300]

According to some, during the course of the decade, an increasingly well-funded DFID effectively became the 'Ministry for sub-Saharan Africa', with the FCO surrendering a significant element of control over foreign policy on the continent.[301] Critics argued that there were costs to this process, as well as benefits, because DFID's approach to development in sub-Saharan Africa sometimes lacked a sufficiently sophisticated 'political dimension', given its focus on development and humanitarian assistance.[302]

The FCO and DFID were not the only Departments for which a 'joined up approach' was viewed as important during the first two terms of the Blair premiership. There were also efforts to deepen co-ordination with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI). These took tangible form in the establishment of the joint FCO/DFID/MOD Global Conflict Prevention Pool and Africa Conflict Prevention Pool in 2001, the creation of the Africa Conflict and Humanitarian Unit (ACHU) in 2003, the appointment of two Regional Conflict Advisors for the region, who worked for all three Departments, and the establishment in 2004 of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU).[303] It is worth noting that the 'joined up' approach to conflict was not replicated in the sphere of human rights. Robin Cook's initiative to mainstream human rights across the FCO as part of the 'ethical dimension' led, among other things, to the creation of a number of Human Rights Advisor posts around the world, but most had no prior 'buy in' from either DFID or the MOD. This arguably reflected the fact that the latter Departments retained different conceptions of the relevance and value of human rights-based approaches to British policy and action abroad, meaning that a consensus was never really achieved.

Another area where there was a significant effort to promote 'joined up' government was on the extremely sensitive issue of arms transfers. There was great controversy in 1997-

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300 Relations between the two Departments, including the two Secretaries of State, were particularly difficult during the first term of the Blair premiership. Foreign Affairs Committee, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The FCO's Strategic Priorities*, Oral and Written Evidence, 8 November 2006, HC167, Ev 5

301 In a significant number of African countries, the ratio of DFID to FCO staff within the UK's diplomatic mission shifted in favour of the former over the period. One example was the British High Commission in Malawi. Over the period 1997-2007, DFID's budget increased substantially relative to that of the FCO.

302 Clare Short wanted to separate out development from foreign policy, in particular the promotion of trade and arms sales, and to make poverty reduction the central focus of DFID's work. However, some claimed that, in the process, DFID suffered from reduced access to the political expertise of the FCO. By Blair's second term, DFID was seeking to build its own capacity for historical and political analysis – for example, through the 'Drivers of Change' project. See: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/topic-guides/drivers-of-change. In July 2006 DFID published a White Paper entitled, *Eliminating World Poverty: Making Governance work for the Poor.* Available at: http://www.dfid.gov.uk/wp2006/. See also T. Porteous, "British government policy in sub-Saharan Africa under New Labour", *International Affairs*, 81, 2, 2005, pp. 283-6 (expanded and published as a book in May 2008).

303 On the role of the ACHU, see HC Deb 9 January 2007 c515-6W. On the PCRU, which was drawing on staff from five different Government Departments, see HC Deb 20 July 2006 c577-8W

98 over the 'Arms to Africa' affair, in which the FCO was subsequently found to have colluded with a military consultancy group, Sandline International, to send in arms to the Sierra Leone Government in contravention of a UN arms embargo. This affair was viewed by critics as seriously tarnishing the claims of the Government to have injected an 'ethical dimension' into foreign policy. Over the years that followed, there was also controversy over the decisions to go ahead with the sale of Hawk jets to Indonesia (1997-99) and to sell a military air traffic control system to Tanzania (2001). Then came the abandonment in 2006 of the Serious Fraud Office's investigation into the implementation of the 1985 al-Yamamah agreement between the Governments of the UK and Saudi Arabia. Critics claimed that, when it came to making 'tough choices', the Government usually prioritised the interests of the defence industry or considerations of 'national security' over human rights concerns. Defenders of the Government refuted such accusations, pointing to a range of steps that were taken during the Blair Premiership to avoid such an outcome. The first Blair Government set up arrangements for inter-departmental co-operation between the FCO, DFID, MOD and DTI and sought to inject human rights, conflict prevention and sustainable development criteria into decisions about arms sales. It also introduced an Annual Report on Arms Exports soon after taking office. Then, in 2002, the Export Control Act was passed, revising the legal and institutional framework for the regulation of arms transfers, in so doing formalising co-operation between the four Departments concerned.

The introduction of an Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls (soon afterwards, supplemented by Quarterly Reports) was intended to demonstrate the commitment of the first Blair Government not just to 'joined up government' but also to 'open government'. It was one of several steps taken to improve official transparency and accountability. Another was the introduction of an Annual Report on Human Rights. There was a related attempt, particularly during the first term, to strengthen channels of communication and co-operation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) around shared goals and values in the spheres of human rights and conflict prevention. Both of these reports became important elements in the scrutiny work of relevant parliamentary Select Committees.

However, some of the momentum behind these developments dissipated during the second term of the Blair premiership, as security and counter-terrorism rose up the political agenda following 9/11 and as the run-up to the war in Iraq began. While the second term also saw the coming into effect of the 2000 *Freedom of Information Act,* there was considerable debate about whether the FCO's overall performance on transparency and accountability was improving.[304] Some argued – citing controversies over Government attempts to prevent the release of drafts of the February 2003 dossier on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction,[305] or the publication of the full text of the Attorney-General's March 2003 advice on the legality of going to war in Iraq – that the British Government, including the FCO, remained fundamentally secretive and unwilling to submit itself to effective external scrutiny if the results might be politically

[304] Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, HC50, Session 2006-7, paras 203-6

[305] The official title was *Iraq: Its Infrastructure of Concealment, Deception and Intimidation*.

embarrassing or damaging.[306] According to critics, the Government remained largely able to evade effective external scrutiny on foreign policy issues if determined to do so. A former diplomat, Carne Ross, asserted:

> In domestic policy, the mechanisms of accountability are much more developed, in that MPs, the press and courts have a much greater role in scrutinizing, for example, health policy or education policy […] there is a much greater sense of a real dialogue between the governed and the governors. Because the effects of foreign policy are felt much further away, there is not that feedback mechanism – it does not exist.[307]

Ross also argued that the Foreign Affairs Committee lacked the resources to undertake its scrutiny role effectively.[308] In February 2007 the FCO withdrew an offer that it had made in the previous year to provide key management papers to the Foreign Affairs Committee on a more systematic basis.[309] The Government dismissed allegations of a continuing lack of transparency and accountability. On the controversial issue of the war in Iraq, it argued that there had been four public inquiries, many official documents had been published in the context of those inquiries and that, once operations in Iraq were over, there could be an independent inquiry into British policy during the run-up to the invasion and since then.[310]

Some also claimed that FCO agendas for 'joined up' or 'open government' were not assisted by the growing dominance of Tony Blair and the Cabinet Office over foreign policy from his second term onwards.[311] According to critics, he often listened more to senior staff in No. 10, including the Strategy Unit there, than he did to the FCO. As described earlier, it was argued that an increasingly 'presidential' approach, combined with greater informality in decision-making processes ('sofa government'), had produced

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306 See, for example, S. Burall, B. Donnelly and S. Weir, *Not in Our Name. Democracy and Foreign Policy in the UK* (London, 2006). The FCO also displayed concern about criticism from within its own ranks, including those who had recently retired or were about to do so. Following the leak of a number of controversial valedictory statements – that is, final telegrams by retiring Ambassadors – the FCO took a decision in early 2007 to ban them. Furthermore, following the publication in 2005 (with Cabinet Office approval) of his memoirs by Sir Christopher Meyer, Ambassador to the US at the time of the war in Iraq, the FCO reviewed its policy with regard to political memoirs, stating that obligations of confidentiality continued after senior staff had left the service. The FCO has prohibited the publication of the memoirs of Sir Jeremy Greenstock, UK Ambassador to the UN during the run up to the war in Iraq. See: HC Deb 28 November 2005 c164-6W; HC Deb 8 March 2006 c61-2WS: and the report of the Public Administration Committee, *Whitehall Confidential? The Publication of Political Memoirs*, HC 689, Session 2005-6.

307 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The FCO's Strategic Priorities*, Oral and Written Evidence, 8 November 2006, HC167, Ev 16

308 *Ibid*

309 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, HC50, Session 2006-7, paras 195-6

310 A position most recently restated by the current Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, in a debate on the issue in March 2008. See HC Deb 25 March 2008 c39-135. See also Lord Malloch-Brown, Minister of State in the FCO, at HL Deb 24 January 2008 c393. Relatives of British soldiers killed in Iraq are also currently seeking a court ruling that there should be an independent inquiry. The four inquiries are the Hutton Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr David Kelly, the Butler Review of intelligence on weapons of mass destruction, and reports by the Foreign Affairs Committee on the decision to go to war in Iraq and the Intelligence and Security Committee on intelligence and assessments of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

311 For further background, see House of Commons Library Research Paper 05/92, *The Centre of Government – No. 10, The Cabinet Office and HM Treasury*.

a series of grave misjudgments on Iraq. After her resignation, Clare Short declared herself shocked that the Cabinet had never been given the Attorney-General's full legal advice on the legality of going to war in Iraq without a second UN Security Council resolution.[312]

One former FCO official, Lord Hannay, argued against an overly alarmist interpretation of the enhanced role of No. 10:

> Such things can be exaggerated. Moreover, we must not forget that the Prime Minister has a much bigger role […] because Heads of Government are now much more involved in the day-to-day business of diplomacy. That has nothing to do with our country or the way in which our Government is organized; it is about the way in which the world, European Councils, G8 meetings and so on are organized. You may like it or not, but it is there.[313]

However Carne Ross alleged that there had been a "subtle and creeping politicization of the diplomatic service" which meant that civil servants had become less willing to speak 'truth to power' when briefing Ministers. He added: "the Foreign Office has become subsidiary to No. 10."[314] The FCO denied such claims. In November 2006 the FCO published a revised version of the 'Diplomatic Service Code of Ethics', in which the importance of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality were reaffirmed.[315]

Some might argue that the publication by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit in April 2007 of *Britain in the World*, which was part of a broader 'Pathways to the Future' policy review, confirmed that No. 10 drove foreign policy during the last years of the Blair premiership.[316] *Britain in the World* was described as an examination of how Britain could be more effective in achieving its international objectives in the future. It came just over a year after the publication of a White Paper on Britain's international priorities (see Part IIIA.2 below). Although Margaret Beckett stated, shortly after the report had been published, that the FCO had "contributed significantly to the Britain in the World exercise", little was heard of it after Blair stood down.[317] It can be viewed as a last effort by the outgoing Prime Minister to shape foreign policy after he departed.

There is another level at which assessments can be made of attempts during the Blair premiership to promote 'joined up' and 'open government' in foreign policy. This is in the

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312 See HC Deb 11 June 2007 c563

313 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The FCO's Strategic Priorities*, Oral and Written Evidence, 8 November 2006, HC167, Session 2006-7, Ev 4

314 *Ibid*., Ev 13

315 The 'Code of Ethics' is Regulation 1 of the *Diplomatic Service Regulations*. It was revised in the context of the publication of the new Civil Service Code. There was controversy during 2004-5 about the appointment of two non-civil service figures to Ambassadorial level posts in the Diplomatic Service: the High Commissioners to Australia (2004, Helen Liddell) and South Africa (2005, Paul Boateng). However, such 'political appointments' were not unprecedented.

316 For the full text, see:
http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/policy_review/documents/bop_britainintheworld.pdf
This was not the Strategy Unit's first publication on foreign policy-related issues. In February 2005 the then Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, announced in the House of Commons the publication of the Strategy Unit's report, *Investing in Prevention: An International Strategy to Manage Risks of Instability and Improve Crisis Response*. See: HC Deb 21 February 2005 c1WS

317 HC Deb 1 May 2007 c1640W

context of government efforts over the period to develop strategies, targets and other means of measurement against which the performance of Departments, including the FCO, could be evaluated and improved. It is to these that the Paper now turns.

2. Strategies, targets and measuring performance

When the Labour Party came to power in 1997 there was no formal statement of Britain's foreign policy vision, objectives or priorities. Nor did specific targets or methods of measuring performance exist. Such an approach had tended to be viewed in the past within the FCO as either alien to British traditions of pragmatism or as impossible to produce. For example, in 1944 a FCO official, when presented with a suggestion that the FCO should produce biannual policy statements, to be updated on a rolling basis, reportedly said: "That way lies bedlam".[318] The official would certainly have struggled to cope with developments in the formulation and monitoring of British foreign policy after 1997.

a. Public Service Agreements

During the Blair premiership, new arrangements were introduced to improve government performance. Linked to a periodic Treasury-led Spending Review (SR) process, Government Departments were required to sign up to Public Service Agreements (PSAs) which involved the identification of specific targets against which performance could be measured.[319]

During the Blair premiership, the FCO signed up to four PSAs. The first covered the period 1999-2000 (SR98). The second covered the period 2001-04 (SR00). The third covered the period 2003-06 (SR02). The fourth covered the period 2005-08 (SR04). Under the first PSA, a large number of targets were set. In the three subsequent PSAs, the number of targets reduced as it was acknowledged that too many targets could mean that everything and nothing could be considered a priority. By the fourth PSA of the Blair premiership, the number of PSA targets had come to down single figures – nine in total. They are set out below:

> **PSA 1** To deter, check and roll back programmes for the development of WMD and related delivery systems in countries of concern, and to reduce the supply of, and demand for, such weapons worldwide.
> **PSA 2** To reduce the risk from international terrorism so that UK citizens can go about their business freely and with confidence.
> **PSA 3** By 2008, deliver improved effectiveness of UK and international support for conflict prevention by addressing long-term structural causes of conflict, managing regional and national tension and violence, and supporting post-conflict reconstruction, where the UK can make a significant contribution, in particular

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[318] J. Coles, Making Foreign Policy. A Certain Idea of Britain (London, 2000), pp. 44, 53. Coles, himself a former FCO official, contrasted the FCO with the MOD, where there had been a series of White Papers focused on strategic issues over the past 50 years (see p. 51). Since 2001 three versions of Strategic Trends have also been commissioned by the MOD. For the latest version, which covers the period 2007-36, see: http://www.dcdc-strategictrends.org.uk/viewdoc.aspx?doc=1

[319] For further background, see House of Commons Research Paper RP 03/49, *Whither the Civil Service?* And Standard Note SN/PC/3826, *Public Service Agreements* (7 December 2005).

Africa, Asia, Balkans and the Middle East. (Joint with the Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development)
PSA 4 A reformed and effective (post-enlargement) EU, as measured by progress towards achieving UK policy priorities, including a robust and effective Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) which complements NATO.
PSA 5 Play a leading role in the development of the European Security Agenda, and enhance capabilities to undertake timely and effective security operations, by successfully encouraging a more efficient and effective NATO, a more coherent and effective European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) operating in strategic partnership with NATO, and enhanced European defence capabilities. (Joint with the Ministry of Defence)
PSA 6 By 2008, deliver a measurable improvement in the business performance of UK Trade and Investment's international trade customers, with an emphasis on new to export firms; and maintain the UK as the prime location in the EU for foreign direct investment. (Joint with the Department of Trade and Industry)
PSA 7 To increase understanding of, and engagement with, Islamic countries and communities and to work with them to promote peaceful political, economic and social reform.
PSA 8 To promote sustainable development, underpinned by democracy, good governance and human rights, particularly through effective delivery of programmes in these and related fields.
PSA 9 Effective and efficient consular and entry clearance services, as measured by specific underlying targets.

By the third PSA , covering the period 2003-6, some of the FCO's targets had become joint ones with other Government Departments, namely DFID, the MOD and the DTI. As can be seen above, this remained the case under the fourth PSA of the Blair premiership. The agreement and publication of these PSAs can be seen as the institutional deepening of the twin principles of 'joined up' and 'open government'. The FCO began to evaluate its own performance against its PSA targets in its annual Departmental Report and, in between, in an *Autumn Performance Report* covering the period April-September inclusive of each financial year. In turn, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee began tracking FCO performance against these targets.[320]

b. White Papers and Strategic Priorities

In addition to its PSA targets, the FCO also set out to agree a mission statement and establish specific objectives and/or priorities for its work. Its mission statement by the end of the Blair premiership was: "The purpose of the FCO is to work for UK interests in a safe, just and prosperous world". However, in December 2003, once again reflecting the twin principles of 'joined up' and 'open government', the FCO published a set of eight "Strategic international policy priorities for the UK", to apply over the following five to ten years. These were set out in a White Paper, *UK International Priorities. A Strategy for*

[320] Cross-departmental co-operation led over time to increasingly complex financial arrangements, under which the FCO and the other Departments could charge each other for services and/or activities undertaken. This sometimes led to disputes over whose responsibility it was to pay for a particular service or activity.

the FCO.[321] Speaking at the launch of the White Paper, the then Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, said:

> This is the first time we or any previous Government have published a document like this. And it is the first time we have explicitly agreed a set of international priorities for the UK across Government as a whole, and described how the FCO will work to lead many, and help achieve all these priorities.[322]

In March 2006 the FCO, still under Jack Straw, published another White Paper, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World. The UK's International Priorities*.[323] This set out nine SPs for the following ten years. They were:

1 making the world safer from global terrorism and weapons of mass destruction
2 reducing the harm to the UK from international crime, including drug trafficking, people smuggling and money laundering
3 preventing and resolving conflict through a strong international system
4 building an effective and globally competitive EU in a secure neighbourhood
5 supporting the UK economy and business through an open and expanding global economy, science and innovation and secure energy supplies
6 promoting sustainable development and poverty reduction underpinned by human rights, democracy, good governance and protection of the environment
7 managing migration and combating illegal immigration
8 delivering high-quality support for British nationals abroad, in normal times and in crises
9 ensuring the security and good governance of the UK's Overseas Territories

In the introduction to the White Paper, it was presented as a review and updating of the 2003 White Paper:

> We committed to reviewing that paper every two years to ensure it remained relevant. Developments over the past two years have confirmed that the issues, judgements and priorities set out in 2003 were robust, but that we must constantly adapt to change.[324]

New elements were the integration of energy issues with economic priorities, and the introduction of migration/illegal immigration and consular services as priorities.[325]

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[321] Available at: http://www.sovereignty.org.uk/siteinfo/newsround/FCOStrategyFullFinal.pdf. In 2003 the FCO established the Global Opportunities Fund, which supported programmes and projects framed in the context of the new SPs. In 2008 its name was changed to the Strategic Programme Fund.

[322] "A new strategy for a new era", speech by Jack Straw at the FCO, 2 December 2003. Prior to the publication of the White Paper, the FCO engaged in a consultation exercise with 'external stakeholders'.

[323] See: http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/fullintpriorities2006.pdf

[324] *Ibid.,* p. 7. As it did prior to the 2003 White Paper, the FCO undertook consultations with external stakeholders. For example, see Indepen and Accent, *FCO Stakeholder Survey*, 29 June 2006, mgp06/1694

[325] See: http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/fullintpriorities2006.pdf

In June 2006, after succeeding Jack Straw as Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett added a further SP, bringing the total to ten:

> In recognition of the increasing importance of the FCO network in delivering our climate change goals, I have looked again at our strategic international priorities, set out in the Government White Paper "Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: the UK's International Priorities", published in March. Climate change was covered in the White Paper and implicit in strategic priorities five and six. I believe that we need to emphasise its central importance to our international agenda by creating a new Strategic Priority. This will be: "Achieving climate security by promoting a faster transition to a sustainable, low carbon global economy."
>
> This wording is designed to draw attention to the outcome that the effort on climate change needs to achieve; and to underline the reality, which is not yet fully reflected in the priorities of foreign ministries worldwide, that climate change has become a core foreign policy challenge. I am also announcing today the appointment of John Ashton as my Special Representative for Climate Change. His primary focus will be to build a stronger political foundation for international action on climate change, working to build consensus among key governmental and non-governmental actors in priority countries. DEFRA will continue to lead our international work on climate change. But the new Strategic Priority and John Ashton's appointment will strengthen significantly the contribution the FCO can make.[326]

As was the case with its PSA targets, the FCO began to evaluate its own performance against the SPs in its annual Departmental Report. The Foreign Affairs Select Committee began tracking FCO performance against the SPs.

c. Assessing the new regime

While the new regime of PSAs and SPs that evolved during the Blair premiership was praised by its supporters for delivering improved coherence across government and greater transparency and accountability, it also had its critics. A common criticism was that the regime was too complex and bureaucratic. According to the Treasury, Departmental SPs were supposed to be broadly aligned with PSA targets. However, the Foreign Affairs Committee questioned how far this had been the case with regard to the FCO.[327] Speaking before the Committee in June 2006, Sir Michael Jay, then Permanent Secretary at the FCO, said:

> You have hit upon an issue which has been quite a difficult one for us, certainly for the time I have been in this job, which is the need to get the PSA targets and the strategic priorities in sync with each other, and that has not been straightforward. At the moment we do have PSA targets which were a result of

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326 HC Deb 8 June 2006 c37-8WS

327 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, HC50, Session 2007-8, para. 65. According to the Treasury, a Department's involvement in a PSA is supposed to lead to the development of linked Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSO's), otherwise known as Strategic Priorities.

> SR 2004 and agreed there, which we are charged with fulfilling, but not all of the PSA targets agreed as part of SR 2004 do reflect the new strategic priorities.[328]

The Foreign Affairs Committee noted that, during 2005-6, the FCO was reporting simultaneously against two overlapping set of PSA targets – those from SR02 and SR04.[329]

The Foreign Affairs Committee also pointed out the difficulties of objectively measuring the performance of the FCO against PSA targets and SPs. It questioned whether some of the assessments made by the FCO were unduly optimistic.[330] For some observers, the entire edifice was extremely problematic. A former Ambassador who had been critical of FCO management in his valedictory telegram, Sir Ivor Roberts, commented:

> Mr Horam: […] is there not a role for a clear statement of the UK Government's overall strategy on their outlook on the world?
>
> Sir Ivor Roberts: Yes […] However, the present obsession is with objectives and the measurement of objectives, and some things cannot be measured – diplomacy is not that sort of thing […] Simply to see it all in terms of PSAs and SPs and all the rest of it is to reduce diplomacy to a mathematical science, which it does not begin to approximate to […] You need some general anchors, but they should be in very broad terms […][331]

Another criticism made was that establishing PSA targets and SPs that applied for long time periods ignored the way in which circumstances could rapidly change. Lord Hannay, responding to Margaret Beckett's decision to add an SP on climate change just months after the 2006 White Paper had been published, stated:

> I think it reflects the fact that you cannot make foreign policy by blueprint. No single country, not even the US, can say foreign policy is to be thus, thus and thus. It is made by a lot of tiresome foreigners out there who have different ideas about what their priorities are, and you have to respond to them. It reflects the fact that documents like this will always be outdated fairly quickly, because events will come along that will drive you to find responses that are not laid down in such documents. [332]

Others were even more critical of the 2006 White Paper and the SPs contained within it, arguing that it covered up unpalatable realities about British foreign policy. Carne Ross argued:

> My views on the paper are pretty clear from my evidence. I do not think that it is helpful. I think that it is a kind of smokescreen in front of the reality of British

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328 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2005-6*, HC1371, Session 2005-6, para. 60

329 *Ibid*., para 58

330 *Ibid*., paras 62-8. See also Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7,* paras 27-34.

331 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, Ev 176. Q239-40

332 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The FCO's Strategic Priorities*, Oral and Written Evidence, 8 November 2006, HC167, Ev 2

> foreign policy. It talks in such general terms about that foreign policy that it is not actually provocative of a useful or constructive debate. It does not even refer in detail, for instance, to the fact that Britain is in military occupation of two foreign countries right now.[333]

Other critics argued that there was too little 'buy in' from other Departments to the FCO's White Papers in 2003 and 2006. Alex Evans and David Steven, both close to the Labour Government, claimed that government in Britain remained

> neither joined up *within* global issues, nor *across* them. Delivery remains, for the most part, reactive rather than proactive. We also face a disconnect between the security and non-security agendas in a world where it makes little sense to erect barriers between the exercise of hard and soft power.[334]

They called on Blair's successor to extend cross-departmental working much further than it had been so far, with the FCO leading a change towards the development of a "global issues strategy."[335] The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee claimed that there was a "lack of cross-referencing" between the government-wide Sustainable Development Strategy and the 2006 FCO White Paper.[336] A writer from the think-tank Demos called on the Cabinet Office to lead in developing a National Security Strategy that would inevitably involve the FCO.[337] Charlie Edwards concluded:

> The message is clear: Whitehall may believe that its joined up approach to policy is the envy of the world but more often than not it is a reputation built on sand.[338]

d. Efficiency and effectiveness agendas

The system of public sector management introduced during the Blair premiership, as reflected in the regime of PSA targets and SPs taken on by the FCO, inevitably had major ramifications in terms of the availability and management of resources. Over the period, the Treasury and the Cabinet Office put growing pressure on Departments to maximise their efficiency and effectiveness in pursuit of external objectives.[339]

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333 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The FCO's Strategic Priorities*, Oral and Written Evidence, 8 November 2006, HC167, Ev 12

334 A. Evans and D. Steven, "Memorandum to Gordon Brown re fixing the UK's foreign policy apparatus", May 2007. Available at: http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/alex_evans_and_david_steven/2007/05/how_to_fix_the_foreign_office.html. Evans was special advisor to former Secretary of State for International Development Hilary Benn.

335 *Ibid*

336 Environmental Audit Committee, *Trade, Development and Environment: The Role of the FCO*, HC 289, Session 2006-7, 23 May 2007, para. 10. However, the report did note approvingly that the FCO had established a Sustainable Development Action Plan.

337 A number of different Government Departments produced strategy documents on security issues post-9/11. See, for example, DFID's *Fighting Poverty to Build a Safer World: A Strategy for Security and Development*, published in 2005 and the FCO's *Countering International Terrorism: The UK's Strategy*, published in 2006. The idea of an over-arching, government-wide, National Security Strategy was much discussed following 7/7 but not pursued during the Blair premiership. However, it has been taken up by Gordon Brown, his successor. See Part IIIB.3 of this Paper.

338 See C. Edwards, "Coordination is key", *Guardian Online*, 10 May 2007 Available at: http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/charlie_edwards/2007/05/coordination_is_key.html

339 For further background, see House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/PC/2588, *The Lyons and Gershon Reviews and Variations in Civil Service Conditions* (26 January 2006)

The FCO's budget under SR02 and SR04 grew more slowly than the budgets of other Departments. This contrasted strongly with DFID, which under SR04 received an annual growth rate of real terms spending of 9.2 per cent, compared with 1.4 per cent for the FCO.[340]

With strong encouragement from the Treasury and the Cabinet Office, the FCO engaged upon a range of initiatives to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. By the later years of the Blair premiership, the FCO had launched a risk management framework, was subject for the first time to a 'Civil Service Capability Review', led by the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, had produced its first Business Strategy and had created an Executive Agency, FCO Services, through which a series of functions that were previously completely 'in-house' would be provided on a better 'value for money' basis.[341] It had also published a plan as part of its contribution to the Government's wider 'Better Regulation' agenda.[342] However, its involvement in the Private Finance Initiative has been minimal.[343]

This Paper does not cover all dimensions of the FCO's efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness during the decade when Tony Blair was Prime Minister, but focuses briefly on two key operational issues arising from these efforts, both of which were surrounded at points by controversy: changes to the overseas network – that is, the people and missions representing the British Government around the world; and the questions that arose about the calibre of the management and leadership of the FCO.

The overseas network

In terms of the overseas network, concern was expressed about the closure of Embassies and High Commissions between 1997 and 2007.[344] In February 2007, the then Minister of State in the FCO, Geoff Hoon, stated:

> The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has closed eight embassies, five high commissions, and 18 consulates since May 1997. Operations were also suspended at our embassy in Abidjan in April 2005 owing to the security situation there. During the same period, the FCO opened seven embassies, four embassy offices, one office and six consulates. Three consulates were also upgraded to embassies. The FCO continuously reviews the deployment of its resources and

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340 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, para. 18

341 'Value for money' considerations could lead to decisions to outsource functions to private sector providers. For example, in 2006 it was decided to close down the language teaching services provided by FCO Services and recruit a private sector provider to replace them. This decision subsequently caused some controversy in terms of whether this might affect the performance of the FCO. See: HC Deb 10 December 2008 c160W

342 The Risk Management Framework was launched in 2003. The Business Strategy, which was also mainly concerned with moving from 'strategy to delivery', was published in November 2006. FCO Services was established in April 2006. The FCO's 'Better Regulation' plan came out in late-2006. The FCO's Capability Review report was published in March 2007.

343 See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/documents/public_private_partnerships/ppp_pfi_stats.cfm

344 High Commissions are the equivalent of Embassies in Commonwealth countries.

> aligns them flexibly in line with UK interests to the benefit of the British taxpayer.[345]

Most of the openings took place between 1997 and 2003.[346]

Following a round of closures during 2005-6, in which six Embassies/High Commissions were shut down, the FCO stated that it had no plans for further closures of 'sovereign posts' – that is, Embassies, High Commissions or missions to international organisations.[347] Any future closures would focus on 'subordinate posts' – that is, Consulates/trade missions, including a 'zero-based review' of European posts. The Foreign Affairs Committee periodically questioned whether the FCO's approach to the overseas network reflected pressure to cut costs (and raise revenue through overseas estate sales) rather than a coherent strategy.[348] The FCO argued that "service quality has not suffered as a result of the efficiencies."[349]

It is possible to identify some patterns in the closure of Embassies and High Commissions over the period 1997-2007. In the early years, there was a particular focus on Latin American posts. During 2005-6, in addition to Latin America, the emphasis was on sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. Overall, the Embassies and High Commissions closed tended to be in small states and/or states which were deemed to be of relatively low strategic importance to the UK. Responsibility for overseeing British interests in these countries was given to another Embassy or High Commission in the same neighbourhood. For example, the British High Commission in South Africa took on responsibility for the former High Commissions in Lesotho and Swaziland in a 'hub and spoke' arrangement. According to the FCO, the overall number of UK Government posts increased from 242 in 1997 to 261 in 2007.[350]

The Foreign Affairs Committee also expressed periodic concern about reductions in the number of UK-based staff in some Embassies and High Commissions. In a small number of cases – sometimes missions which were subsequently closed, such as St Lucia and Antigua and Barbuda – the number fell to as low as one. The Committee questioned whether this was compatible with effective representation.[351] However, according to official figures, the number of UK-based staff employed at overseas posts between 1997 and 2007 increased from 2,350 in 1997 to 2,807 in 2007. In terms of

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345 HC Deb 6 February 2007 c823-4W. For a full list, see Appendix 3. The closure of a significant number of High Commissions was taken by some commentators to reflect a relative downgrading of the importance of the Commonwealth to British foreign policy after the first term of Blair's premiership, when then Foreign Secretary Robin Cook had made it one of his priorities.

346 HC Deb 7 January 2008 c91W; 24 January 2008 c2198-9W. For a full list of closures and openings during the period since May 1997, see Appendix 2

347 With the exception of East Timor, whose closure had been announced in 2004.

348 For example, Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2005-6*, HC1371, Session 2005-6, , paras 84-5

349 FCO, *Departmental Annual Report for 2006-7*, Cm 7099, p. 127

350 HC Deb 8 January 2008 c137W

351 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2005-6*, para. 90

locally-engaged staff, the number employed also increased – from 8,795 in 2001 (the earliest date for which figures are provided) to 10,730 in 2007. [352]

In terms of new Embassies opened, Afghanistan (2002) and Iraq (2003) were by far the largest and most important. They rapidly became large and well staffed operations. More widely, there was a shift of staff towards key Posts outside Europe such as Afghanistan, Iraq, China, India and Pakistan.[353] No new High Commissions were opened between 1997 and June 2007.[354]

The calibre of management and leadership

Questions about the overall calibre of the management and leadership of the FCO emerged following the publication in January 2005 of a report by the consultancy Collinson Grant, which had been commissioned by the FCO in the context of the Government's wider 'efficiency agenda'. The report concluded:

> The leaders of the FCO focus primarily on their diplomatic and political duties, rarely on the efficient management of the organisation. There is a clear vision of Strategic Priorities, but the need for robust management to allow core duties to be conducted effectively is neither accepted nor properly understood. People are frustrated and impeded in the execution of critical tasks by the weaknesses of the organisation, yet are unwilling to tackle the root causes that are entrenched in and reinforced by the established culture. The entire organisation needs to be challenged and reformed, but the leadership lacks the skills needed and the will to upset the status quo.[355]

The FCO rejected some of these conclusions but, faced by calls from the Foreign Affairs Committee for it to "catch up with the rest of Whitehall by recruiting professionally qualified, experienced people to the top roles in finance, human resources and estate management", it acknowledged that there were problems with the quality and performance of senior management in key areas. A number of steps were set in motion during 2005-6, including the establishment of a biannual Senior Leadership Forum, enhanced training and coaching for senior management and greater readiness to recruit externally for key leadership posts – although not the post of Human Resources Director. A programme of redundancies for senior officials deemed to be surplus to requirements was also set in train.[356]

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[352] HC Deb 22 May 2007 c1219W. If UK-based staff working in London is included, the total number of UK-based staff was 5,971 in 1997-8 and 6,364 in 2006-7. See HC Deb 25 January 2008 c2309W. During the Blair premiership, there were also efforts to diversify the composition of the staff of the FCO, so that a more representative number of women, black and ethnic minority, and disabled staff were employed, including at senior levels. Progress was greatest with regard to women but across all categories of under-represented groups, the FCO acknowledged that much work remained to be done.

[353] Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, para. 154

[354] Another way of assessing which countries became less important to the UK during the period is to look at the list of those Head of Mission posts which were downgraded in seniority. For a list of those that were downgraded between 2002 and July 2007, see HC Deb 26 July 2007 c1467W

[355] Collinson Grant, *Efficiency, Effectiveness and the Control of Costs in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Phase 2 – Analysis and the Development of Opportunities for Change*, 14 January 2005, p. 8

[356] Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2005-6*, Session 2005-6, paras 26-38

Despite these steps, the pressure on the FCO to address alleged weaknesses in management and leadership identified in the Collinson Grant report remained considerable during the final year of the Blair premiership. The pressure was increased by the fact that the Treasury was asking the FCO to find efficiencies worth 5 per cent of administrative costs, with a 3 per cent overall efficiency target, in the context of the next Spending Review.[357] The March 2007 Capability Review report on the FCO, whose main aim was to assess the FCO on leadership, strategy and delivery and propose improvements, argued that there was still some way to go, identifying four key areas for action:

- articulating clearly (for staff, stakeholders and the rest of government) the Department's distinctive contribution to delivering the UK's objectives overseas and the implications for its future role, shape and business model;
- strengthening change management capability and communications, for example, bringing change programmes into a coordinated and integrated programme monitored by the Board;
- strengthening the strategic management of HR and knowledge to support the future role and shape of the Department, in particular developing a HR strategy with a workforce plan; and
- strengthening business planning processes and disciplines to underpin more effective performance measures and resource allocation.[358]

Reporting to the Foreign Affairs Committee in mid 2007 about what it had done in response to the Capability Review, the FCO stated that it had, *inter alia*, established a strengthened Policy Planning Staff, created a new Communications Directorate, set up a 'Future Role of the FCO' project, created the post of Director General of Delivery and Change and a Change Unit, appointed an externally-recruited Director General of Finance, and remodelled its business planning process around Strategic Priority Processes and Country Business Plans. The Foreign Affairs Committee welcomed these moves.[359]

As the Blair premiership drew to an end, it was clear that there would continue to be reforms of the organisation and management of the FCO under his successor. But not everybody associated with the FCO was entirely convinced about the purpose or value of the 'change agenda'. The recently retired Sir Ivor Roberts, saw many of these reforms as a case of *plus ça change*:

> Collinson Grant was a bad joke. I do not know who dreamt up that scheme, but in management terms Collinson Grant seemed to reverse most of the proposals for the organisation of the Foreign Office that had been introduced 15 years ago. I said it only jokingly, but someone might actually believe it: I said that you would think that these sets of management consultants were in collusion, and that one would say, 'I'll tell you what. One year you propose that we double the number of human resources people, and then we'll come along five years later and say that they should halve the number. We'll each get a handsome fee for it, and the

[357] Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, Ev 174, Q223
[358] Quoted in Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, para. 98
[359] Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, paras 100-105

> Foreign Office will be left in the same position as it was at the start'. It seemed like that, it was so absurd.[360]

3. Public diplomacy

Another innovation in foreign policy during the Blair premiership was the development of a new strategic and institutional framework for public diplomacy. The concept of 'public diplomacy' has become closely associated with Joseph Nye's broader concept of 'soft power', which he has defined as: "The ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes you want […] without the tangible threats or payoffs" involved in the exercise of 'hard power'.[361] For Nye, 'soft power' will often be exercised more effectively by and through non-governmental agencies, rather than by or with the financial support of the state. Nevertheless, he accepts that public diplomacy can be a useful component of 'soft power'.

> While public diplomacy was predominantly associated with re-branding Britain as a 'young' and 'cool' country during the early years of the Blair premiership, the objectives underpinning it changed significantly following 9/11. The FCO commissioned a review of Britain's public diplomacy activities by Lord Wilton, which reported in 2002.

The Review was mandated to cover the FCO, British Council and BBC World Service. Other government-funded programmes which also fell under the rubric of public diplomacy included the Chevening Scholarship and Fellowship programme, administered by the British Council for the FCO, which enables foreign students to study in the UK, and Wilton Park, which organises UK-based conferences on foreign policy issues, bringing together government officials from around the world, academics, activists and journalists.[362]

The Wilton Review defined public diplomacy as:

> Work which aims at influencing in a positive way the perceptions of individuals and organizations overseas about the UK and their engagement with the UK.[363]

The Wilton Review concluded that there was poor co-ordination of public diplomacy activities. It recommended the development of a 'public diplomacy strategy' and the creation of a means of monitoring the effectiveness of efforts in this sphere. Following the Review, a Public Diplomacy Strategy Board (PDSB) involving a wide range of stakeholders was established to play this role. In 2003 the FCO established a Public Diplomacy Campaign Fund (for major initiatives) and a Public Diplomacy Challenge Fund (for initiatives at post-level). It also set up the Global Opportunities Fund (GOF), which was designed to dovetail not just with the new SPs set out in the White Paper (see above) but also with this strengthened approach to public diplomacy. For example, one

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[360] *Ibid*., Ev 172, Q217
[361] J. Nye, *Soft Power*: *The Means to Success in World Politics* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 2-3
[362] For more information about the Chevening programme, see: http://www.chevening.com/about/reports/
[363] FCO, *Changing Perceptions. Review of Public Diplomacy* (2002). The Executive Summary of the report is available via: http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/pdf10/fco_wiltonreviewpubdipmay02

programme established under the auspices of the GOF was 'Engaging with the Islamic World.'

However, within two years it was felt that the institutional framework for public diplomacy required an overhaul. The PDSB was viewed as failing to provide the leadership and oversight required. A further review was conducted by Lord Carter. In his 2005 report, he argued that the public diplomacy strategy had not been adequately integrated with wider strategic priorities and recommended that a smaller but stronger Public Diplomacy Strategy and Performance Management Board be established comprising the core stakeholders – that is, the FCO (including at Ministerial level), British Council and BBC World Service (attending as an observer only in order to preserve its editorial independence) and two independent members. A new Public Diplomacy Board was subsequently established to oversee the implementation of a three-to-five year public diplomacy strategy.[364] Wider stakeholders were now given places on a new Public Diplomacy Partners Group. Echoing broader changes under way across the public sector, Carter also called for the development of reliable ways of measuring the impact of public diplomacy work in order to ensure that 'value for money' was achieved.

He also proposed a revised definition of public diplomacy:

> Work aiming to inform and engage individuals and organisations overseas, in order to improve understanding of and influence for the United Kingdom in a manner consistent with governmental medium and long term goals.[365]

There was considerable debate during the second term of the Blair premiership about whether the FCO's new approach to public diplomacy was a good one or not. For some strong supporters of the value of public diplomacy, the trajectory of British policy in the Middle East, including Iraq, undermined it. Leonard and Smewing, writing for the Foreign Policy Centre, a think-tank established with the support of Robin Cook when he was Foreign Secretary, wrote in 2003:

> How can you talk about a 'public diplomacy strategy for the middle east' when carrier battle groups are sailing, troops are assembling and soon the bombs will begin to fly?[366]

Those who took this position generally believed that Britain's future lay in the exercise of 'soft', rather than 'hard power'.

The decision of the British Government to bring its public diplomacy strategy and its wider strategic priorities into closer alignment was viewed by some as potentially undermining the effectiveness of the former. The move certainly caused a degree of unease amongst staff working for the British Council, where the more usual tendency was to emphasize the body's distance from government, rather than its proximity. This tendency was accentuated in the wake of the war in Iraq. A 2005 report that involved Counterpoint, the British Council's in-house think-tank on cultural relations, stated:

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[364] For the Board's terms of reference, see: http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/TORs,0.pdf
[365] Lord Carter, *Public Diplomacy Review*, December 2005. See its Executive Summary.
[366] M. Leonard and C. Smewing, *Public Diplomacy and the Middle East* (London, 2003), p. 3

> an independent cultural agency earns trust precisely *because* it is not the government […] Today, with the negative views of British government policy that permeate much of the Middle East after the invasion of Iraq, it is very important that the British Council is seen as being British, but not governmental. And this is true in many countries outside the Middle East, too […] Recent research in the Middle East suggests clearly, for instance, that the British Council can play a strong role by representing not just government policy (probably best de-emphasised, in an explicit sense, at present) but the other, non-governmental, voices of Britain. 'Why can't the British Council give us the Britain that put a million anti-war marchers on the streets on London in February 2003?' as one Arab respondent asked recently. This is, after all, the democracy we speak of implanting in the Middle East.[367]

As for the BBC World Service, there was great concern that the new approach to public diplomacy could severely damage its reputation around the world for independence and impartiality. This view was expressed by the House of Lords Select Committee on Review of the BBC Charter.[368]

The British Council, following the publication by Carter of a new definition of public diplomacy and its endorsement by the FCO, did not change its own mission statement to mirror that definition. It kept the same mission statement that it has had since 1934:

> To build mutually beneficial relationships between people in the UK and other countries and to increase appreciation of the UK's creative ideas and achievements.[369]

The Foreign Affairs Committee, following its inquiry into public diplomacy in 2005-6, came to conclusions that were broadly sympathetic to the Government's post-Carter initiatives. It endorsed efforts to more closely align the public diplomacy strategy with wider government priorities. It expressed confidence that arrangements to safeguard the operational and editorial independence of the British Council and the BBC World Service remained strong. It urged that future governance proposals should do nothing to weaken those safeguards.[370] However, the report was not entirely uncritical. While welcoming an announcement that the BBC World Service intended to open an Arabic satellite TV news channel in 2007, the Committee was unhappy about the decision to close down a significant number of vernacular services, including in East and Central Europe, and called for an independent review of the British Council's work in the context of the next Spending Review.[371] The Government subsequently rejected the idea of an independent review.[372]

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[367] M. Leonard, A. Small, with M. Rose, Public Diplomacy in the 'Age of Schisms' (Foreign Policy Centre and Counterpoint, London, 2005), p. 50

[368] *Further Issues for BBC Charter Review*, HL 128, Session 2005-6, paras 59, 62

[369] Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, para. 249

[370] Foreign Affairs Committee, *Public Diplomacy*, HC903, Session 2005-6, paras 18, 31-34, 45-51

[371] *Ibid*., paras 72, 126. The Arabic news channel eventually opened in March 2008.

[372] *Government Response to the Foreign Affairs Committee Report on Public Diplomacy*, Cm 6840, June 2006, para 16

In its subsequent report on the FCO's *Departmental Report 2006-7*, the Foreign Affairs Committee reported that the new institutional arrangements were working adequately overall. The BBC World Service had no concerns. However, the British Council had stated in June 2007 that it wanted the Public Diplomacy Board "to focus more on the broader strategy and less on the detail of operations."[373] The Committee also welcomed a Public Diplomacy Board initiative to test an approach to public diplomacy in which three Strategic Priorities (SPs) were prioritised: SP5 – supporting UK business, SP6 – climate security and SP7 – sustainable development. The pilots were due to run for two years in three countries each.[374] It also welcomed a 2006 review of the Chevening programme while awaiting notification of its outcome.[375] The Committee was critical of some service closures in Russia by the BBC World Service but welcomed an announcement that it planned to establish a Farsi satellite TV news channel in 2008.[376]

4. European dimensions

a. The 'Step Change' Programme

Successive EU Treaty changes introduced more decision-making by Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) and enhanced European Parliament powers via the co-decision procedure. These, it is argued, have contributed to an increasing 'Europeanisation' of national policies, as national vetoes have been reduced. The Blair Government responded to these changes by establishing structures within government to help it to better project its concerns in the EU decision-making institutions and processes.

In September 1998 the Blair Government announced a 'Step Change' in Britain's relations with Europe.[377] The aim of the initiative, which was co-ordinated by the FCO, was to enhance Britain's influence in the EU, to build alliances and promote UK interests at both national level and, after devolution, at sub-national level; to emphasise a new, positive approach to the EU. The Step Change programme was a ten-year project, but it aimed to achieve by 2002 a change in the UK's position on Europe with a more committed, pro-active approach, projecting Britain's national and regional interests in EU decision-making and changing other Member States' perception of the UK. It gave rise to intensified EU contacts by Government Departments, the Cabinet, by ministers and officials with their counterparts in the EU and applicant States.

The work of the Cabinet Office European Secretariat was integrated with that of the Prime Minister's Office. From August 2000 the Secretariat was given more resources and senior staff,[378] and was further enhanced with the appointment of a head at

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373 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, paras 209-215

374 *Ibid*., paras 219-222

375 *Ibid.,* paras 226-229

376 *Ibid*., paras 298-301, 322. The BBC also announced plans to set up a new FM radio station with a Russian partner. The Committee expressed concern that this might jeopardize the editorial independence of the World Service.

377 FCO, *Departmental Annual Report 1998-1999*, "Objective 5: A strong UK role in a strong Europe - The Step Change initiative"
Available at: http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/part7europe.pdf

378 The Secretariat personnel increased from 9 senior officials to 16, with four senior staff and 12 desk officers.

Permanent Secretary level, an office at Number 10 and the title of Prime Minister's Adviser on Europe.[379] The Secretariat was more closely involved with the Prime Minister's Policy Unit (PMPU). The Step Change programme was overseen by the Ministerial group for European Co-ordination (MINECOR), chaired by the Minister for Europe, then Keith Vaz. According to the FCO's *Departmental Annual Report 1999-2000*:

> The FCO has worked closely with all Government Departments to promote the UK's policy priorities at the EU level. […] Step-Change has helped deliver significant results in 1999. The UK retained its budget abatement (worth about £2 billion a year) and secured its best ever regional funding deal at the Agenda 2000 negotiations in March 1999.
> The UK showed itself to be a leading European player in the area of justice and home affairs at the Tampere Special Summit in October 1999, with joint initiatives with Germany and France on migration and asylum issues, and with Denmark and Sweden on crime prevention and youth crime. At the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 key decisions on defence, enlargement and institutional reform fully reflected FCO policy priorities. And at the Lisbon Special Summit in March 2000, the UK secured agreement on a far-reaching agenda to modernise Europe's economic and social structures to meet the challenges of the 21st century.[380]

The changes were in part a response to the increasing involvement of heads of government in EU policy-making via the European Council, but the Blair Government was significantly more active than previous governments in intergovernmental liaison, bilateral meetings at head of state level, coalition and alliance building. Tony Blair held regular meetings with the French and German leaders, then Gerhard Schröder and Jacques Chirac, often the 'motors' in EU policy initiatives, and also sought allies in Spain and Belgium. One commentator described as "promiscuous bilateralism" Blair's strategy of working with whichever country or countries had interests that coincided with the UK's on a particular issue.[381]

To improve contacts between UK officials and their EU counterparts, the Bilateral Department of the EU Division in the FCO was set up and was responsible for embassies and diplomatic posts in the Member States (formerly in the West European Department of the FCO). Thus, all EU-related matters were brought into one management structure, which was further enhanced in 2002 and 2004, when the FCO organised itself into theme-based, rather than country-based, Directorates. The Bilateral Department was then closed and its work distributed to relevant parts of the EU Directorate. The Minister for Europe assumed a greater profile, particularly in MINECOR, which brought together the departmental ministers responsible for Europe, including the Europe ministers in the devolved administrations. Certain Government Departments, such as the Home Office, DTI and DEFRA, became much more aware of EU matters, as Treaty amendments in the Amsterdam and Nice Treaties brought about a

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379 Sir Stephen Wall, who was succeeded in 2004 by Kim Darroch

380 FCO, *Departmental Annual Report 1999-2000*, "Objective 5: A strong UK role in a strong Europe" Available at: http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/part6europe.pdf

381 J. Smith, "A missed opportunity? New Labour's European policy 1997–2005", *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 4, July 2005

further transfer of intergovernmental matters to the first pillar. The Home Office above all had to engage with the EU more, as Europe took on a greater role in immigration, asylum, the combating of organised crime and, since 9/11, anti-terrorism measures. The FCO's *Departmental Annual Report 1999-2000* noted: "Now in its third year, this FCO-led initiative is delivering substantial benefits by promoting UK interests in the EU, and helping us to shape the EU agenda".[382]

In June 2003 a Cabinet Committee on European Strategy (EUS) to be convened and chaired by the Prime Minister was established. It was supposed to meet on an annual basis. Its remit was to oversee the Government's European strategy, including preparations for UK entry into EMU, progress on the IGC on the future of Europe and the presentation of the Government's European policy. If this Committee was an attempt to separate the euro issue from the control of the Treasury, many would argue that it did not really succeed. Simon Bulmer and Martin Burch commented on the institutional constraints on the Government's Europe policy:

> A particular feature of the organization of Whitehall since 1997 is the way that executive authority is split between the prime minister and his staff, on the one hand, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Treasury, on the other. This fault line is one of the central features of the Blair government (Naughtie 2001; Scott 2004) and it has had consequences for the economic aspects of European policy. The Treasury still has a constraining effect on European initiatives and this has expenditure implications […] But it is in relation to monetary issues that the Treasury has had an impact on the adaptation of the UK to EU pressures through the development and evaluation of the five economic tests required before the government can recommend joining the Euro-zone. As under the Major government, the Treasury has kept charge of the development of policy in relation to the European currency. This factor reflects an important division of authority within UK government. It serves as a continuing constraint on the pace and content of policy development and institutional adaptation.[383]

The authors thought, however, that under Blair 'Europeanisation' had increased:

> under Labour the existing gradual and cumulative pattern of Europeanization has been accelerated and encouraged by a steady push from No. 10 […]The Labour Government has sought to work with the grain of Europeanization rather than against it. Thus, our evidence shows that since 1997 institutional opportunities have been seized and cultural changes have been promoted in a way that contrasts with the earlier passive and defensive adaptation, with its emphasis on reception rather than projection.[384]

Blair's more executive style of leadership enabled him to be more authoritative about the EU in most Government Departments, with the notable exception of the Treasury. Bulmer and Burch thought the position of the Treasury during the early Step Change period had remained significantly detached:

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[382] FCO, *Departmental Annual Report 1999-2000*, "Objective 5: A strong UK role in a strong Europe"

[383] S. Bulmer and M. Burch, "The Europeanization of UK Government: From Quiet Revolution to Explicit Step-Change?", *Public Administration*, 83 (4), 2005

[384] *Ibid*

> Chancellor Gordon Brown has been notably less warm on European policy than Blair. Organizationally, the Treasury itself has embraced European integration less than have other key departments. Arguably, the Treasury made greater strides towards 'mainstreaming' EU business under Conservative Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke. Outside a small group of European specialists, it still tends neither to think European nor to engage very much with Europe. This situation is partly a matter of Brown's political preferences – and Blair's writ does not extend to the Treasury – partly an organizational matter, and partly a prioritization given to global economic institutions (and staff postings to them) within the department.

They ask whether Step Change resulted in a more successful UK engagement with the EU, concluding that

> … measuring the effects of diplomacy and enhanced networking is a notoriously difficult thing to do. The government's policy on the Iraq war hampered the building of alliances with key EU partners, namely France and Germany, owing to their different responses. Similarly, Gordon Brown's decision in June 2003 that the five economic tests had not been met, maintained the UK's absence from the Euro-zone. The re-emergence of a budgetary row in June 2005, especially with President Chirac, had echoes of the disputes with partners during the early years of Mrs Thatcher's government. It fell to Blair, as incoming President of the European Council, to try to restore harmony.
> Thus, while the UK has managed to make an impact on the EU's work, notably in defence and the Lisbon Process of enhancing Europe's economic competitiveness, thereby placing a firmer British imprint upon the EU, the picture remains mixed.
>
> So, has all this amounted to a step change? In procedures – yes. In endurance – not yet clear. In outcome – mixed.[385]

b. Reform of parliamentary scrutiny of the EU

In 2004-5 the Commons Modernisation Committee looked into the impact of the EU on the UK Parliament, with a view to changing the way Parliament dealt with European matters, enhancing parliamentary involvement in the scrutiny of EU legislation and better informing Members about EU business in general.[386] The then leader of the House, Peter Hain, and the European Scrutiny Committee (ESC) put forward proposals and the Modernisation Committee took evidence from the ESC, MPs, MEPs and others in 2004.

The Committee reported on 22 March 2005. Its main recommendations were:

- a new parliamentary forum for discussing EU business: a European Committee including MPs, Peers and MEPs four times a year to debate major EU issues and to question EU Commissioners on significant policy issues.
- Scrutiny of EU legislation should begin earlier, with the Government giving advance notice to ESC of Commission consultation exercises.

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[385] S. Bulmer and M. Burch, "The Europeanization of UK Government: From Quiet Revolution to Explicit Step-Change?", *Public Administration*, 83 (4), 2005

[386] Commons Modernisation Committee, *Scrutiny of European Business*, HC 465, Session 2004-05. Available at: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmmodern/465/46502.htm

- A greater role for Departmental Select Committees (DSCs) in scrutiny; and ESC should pass to them some matters for further inquiry.
- Five standing committees instead of three, to allow greater specialisation, with permanent Chairmen and greater powers to shape motions the Government subsequently puts to the House.
- The Scrutiny Committee should be able to meet in public when it is considering which EU documents to refer for further debate.[387]

Some of the recommendations took account of new requirements contained in the EU Constitution, although there were questions as to what reforms would be implemented in the UK following the suspension of the Constitution ratification process. However, scrutiny reform then fell off the Government's agenda for another two years (see Part IIIB.3 below).

B. Developments under Brown

This section of the Paper briefly reviews what has happened so far in terms of changes to the strategic and institutional frameworks for the formulation and delivery of British foreign policy since Gordon Brown became Prime Minister in June 2007.

Sir Rodric Braithwaite, a recently retired senior FCO official, described the FCO at the time of Blair's departure as a "demoralised cipher". Sir Jeremy Greenstock, also recently retired, somewhat more circumspectly referred to there being a "touch of demoralisation about it".[388] Without accepting such gloomy assessments, David Miliband, appointed by Gordon Brown as Foreign Secretary, appeared to accept that the FCO had not always been at the heart of British foreign policy under Tony Blair. In his first interview in the job, he said:

> I'm struck that there is a real sense of purpose about the organisation. People are here because they want to make a difference. The caricature that this is an institution that does process, not outcomes, is not right […] I know the previous prime minister was a huge admirer of the talent of the Foreign Office. But I don't think he would think he got the most out of it. I think part of my job is to make sure that Gordon Brown gets the most out of it.[389]

However, this has not led to moves to reverse the major reforms introduced to the strategic and institutional frameworks for the formulation and delivery of British foreign policy during the Blair premiership. Indeed, the reforms have continued to be entrenched and deepened.

During 2008 the FCO is completing its evaluation of how it performed during 2004/5-2007/8 in meeting its Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets under Spending Review 2004 (SR04). Its own assessment can be found in the FCO *Departmental Report 2007-*

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[387] For further information on the reform proposals, see House of Commons Library Research Paper RP 05/85, *The UK Parliament and European Business*

[388] Foreign Affairs Committee, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The FCO's Strategic Priorities*, Oral and Written Evidence, 8 November 2006, HC167, Session 2006-7, Ev 3

[389] "Miliband sees nation as a 'global hub'", *Financial Times*, 9 July 2007

8.[390] This self-assessment will in turn be reviewed by (amongst others) the Foreign Affairs Committee. However, at the same time, the publication of new PSAs under Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR 07) and the agreement of new Strategic Priorities (SPs) for the FCO has created a revised strategic and institutional framework for British foreign policy for the period 2008-11. The main aims, responding to criticisms that the previous frameworks were too broad and all-encompassing, have been to simplify and sharpen the PSAs and SPs, so that genuine priorities are established, and to ensure that the two are more closely aligned. CSR 07 has also created new efficiency targets. While these are 'new developments', they largely reflect a reconfiguration of processes set in motion during the Blair premiership, when Gordon Brown played a crucial role in the public expenditure planning process as Chancellor of the Exchequer. However, proposals in the *Governance of Britain* Green Paper published in July 2007 – for example, on the Royal Prerogative – could have some implications for the future conduct of foreign policy.

In a speech to Ambassadors in London in March 2008, Miliband provided his most detailed vision yet of how he views the future roles and functions of the FCO itself:

> The traditional roles of the Foreign Office are still needed. Political reporting, sound analysis, and close contact with foreign governments will remain at the core of our work. We will continue to provide the platform overseas for other government departments, to be the hub for UK government activities in foreign countries […] But we need to adapt to external changes. Given the spread of global media and communications, we need to think how best to use political reporting. In an age when, as the Prime Minister puts it, "over there is over here", where every department is developing a foreign perspective, and where interaction with foreign governments can often be direct between ministers rather than via the diplomatic machinery, we must be clearer about our added value. I believe our added value comes in three core competencies. First we should understand foreign countries interests, power structures and culture better than anyone else. Second, we should have unparalleled networks that enable us to influence a country's position from the bottom up as well as the top down. Third, while other departments focus on a single issue and have a single policy tool, the Foreign Office should have the overview of how to prosecute cross-departmental priorities. We should develop a global reputation for being the generator of new ideas to global problems. We should see ourselves as a central department, using our global network to interface between other countries.[391]

There were some critics of the Foreign Secretary's vision for the FCO. Following his March 2008 speech, one commentator described him as "like the leader of the most ebullient think-tank in town" and expressed concern that the "torrents of concepts become dislocated from the business of government".[392]

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[390] The FCO's self-assessment will not be discussed in any depth in this Paper. For this, see: FCO, *Departmental Report 2007-8*, Cm 7398, May 2008, pp. 141-73

[391] See: http://www.britischebotschaft.de/en/news/items/080304b.htm

[392] Bronwen Maddox, in "A whiff of the think-tank as Miliband gets high on concept at Foreign Office", *Times*, 5 March 2008

1. New Public Service Agreements and Strategic Priorities

a. Public Service Agreements under CSR 07

The level of coverage of the FCO by the new PSAs established for 2008-11 under CSR 07 has been reduced. Published in October 2007, this reduction had been expected for some time.[393]

The PSA targets under CSR 07 have been set across Government as a whole, rather than on a Department by Department basis as in the past. This is designed to reflect a further move towards 'joined up government'. However, those Departments or Agencies with a role in delivery are specifically named in each PSA. Each PSA is underpinned by a Delivery Agreement, in which indicators are provided by which success can be measured.[394]

There are now eight PSA's under which the FCO is specifically named. However, its importance in meeting them varies considerably. There are five PSA's where the FCO has a prominent role:

PSA 3 ***Ensure controlled, fair migration that protects the public and contributes to economic growth***
(Home Office lead, with FCO a delivery partner)[395]

PSA 26 ***Reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from international terrorism***
(Note: full text not published on grounds of national security, but the FCO has the lead on the "development of strategy for the Government's work overseas and co-ordinates its implementation.")[396]

PSA 27 ***Lead the global effort to avoid dangerous climate change***
(DEFRA lead, with FCO a delivery partner)[397]

PSA 29 ***Reduce poverty in poorer countries through quicker progress towards the MDGs[398]***
(DFID lead, with FCO a delivery partner)[399]

PSA 30 ***Reduce the impact of conflict through enhanced UK and international efforts***

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393 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, para. 56 and Ev 95.
394 For access to all PSA Delivery Agreements, see: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pbr_csr/psa/pbr_csr07_psaindex.cfm
395 See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/6/4/pbr_csr07_psa3.pdf
396 See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/B/9/pbr_csr07_psa26.pdf and FCO, *Departmental Report 2007-8*, Cm 7398, May 2008, p. 55
397 See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/9/2/pbr_csr07_psa27.pdf
398 Millennium Development Goals
399 See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/E/4/pbr_csr07_psa29.pdf

(FCO lead: it is a "principal actor", jointly with DFID, MOD and the Stabilisation Unit)[400]

With the exception of PSAs 26 and 30, extracts explicitly referring to the role and responsibilities of the FCO from each of the eight PSAs under which it is named can be found in Appendix 2 of this Paper. It should be noted that it has not been feasible to lift extracts from PSA 30 because the roles and responsibilities of the FCO are covered by the entire text.

The reduction in the number of PSAs under which the FCO has a prominent role to five under CSR 07, as compared with nine under SR04 and twelve under SR02, reflects an intention to create a genuine set of priorities for Government Departments, rather than 'wish lists'. Indeed, the number of PSAs across the Government as a whole has been reduced from over 100 to 30. However, the reduction also reflects changes in the role of the FCO. Government Departments that in the past might have been viewed as 'domestic' are now heavily engaged internationally, sometimes without much recourse to the services or expertise offered by the FCO.

b. Strategic Priorities

Within weeks of becoming Foreign Secretary, David Miliband indicated that he would like to see a reduction in the number of SPs.

During a speech at Chatham House on 19 July 2007, he said:

> Where should the UK concentrate its global effort: where are we most needed and where can we most effect change? The FCO currently has ten "strategic priorities". All are important. But can any organisation really have ten priorities? [...] policy priorities need rigour and clarity.[401]

The Foreign Affairs Committee later concurred with this view.[402]

Only a month before the new Foreign Secretary's speech, the Permanent Secretary, Sir Peter Ricketts, had indicated that there was unlikely to be much change in terms of the number of SPs. However, the Foreign Secretary's comments appear to have overturned such expectations.[403]

Then, on 8 January 2008, he stated that during the year ahead

> the Foreign Office will focus its policy work on four matters: countering terrorism and weapons proliferation; promoting a low carbon, high growth global economy; preventing and resolving conflict; and developing effective international institutions – most critically, the United Nations and the European Union.[404]

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400 See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/C/5/pbr_csr07_psa30.pdf
401 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, para. 65
402 *Ibid*, para. 69
403 *Ibid*., Ev 95, Q30-31
404 HC Deb 8 January 2008 c150

On 23 January, in a Written Statement, David Miliband set out a new 'Strategic Framework' to guide the future work of the FCO:

> Since taking office in June, my ministerial team has been working with Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff, other Whitehall Departments and other stakeholders to bring a sharper and more strategic focus to the work of the FCO. I should like to inform the House of the outcome.
> We considered the wider context in which the FCO, and the UK, are now operating: the changes driven by globalisation; the interdependence of foreign and domestic policy; the growing diversity of international actors; and hence the need for a modern Foreign Ministry to be constantly reassessing where and how it can make the most valuable contribution.
> Based on this assessment, I have approved a new Strategic Framework to guide the work of the FCO in future. This has three elements, reflecting the three main roles of the FCO:
> i) *Providing a flexible global network serving the Government as a whole.*
> In addition to delivering our new policy goals and essential services, our posts abroad will continue to support the rest of Whitehall in delivering Home Departments' own international priorities.
> ii) *Delivering essential services to the British public and business:*
> Our worldwide consular operation which provides assistance to UK citizens living, working or travelling abroad; UK Trade and Investment, which works to help UK businesses and exporters and attract inward investment to the UK; and our worldwide visa operation, currently carried out by UKvisas, which will be incorporated into the new UK Border Agency later this year.
> iii) *Shaping and delivering HMG's foreign policy.*
> We have identified four new policy priorities on which the FCO will focus, on which I briefed the House on 8 January: countering terrorism and proliferation; reducing and preventing conflict; promoting a low carbon, high growth global economy; and developing effective international institutions, especially the UN and EU. [405]

He continued by discussing some of the resource implications of the new Strategic Framework:

> I intend to put more of the FCO's overall resources into these new priorities: a closer alignment of resources and priorities will enable the FCO to deliver better for Britain and HMG.
> So we will be increasing substantially the overall level of resources the FCO puts into counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation; climate change; Afghanistan and other conflict regions; and key international institutions. All these areas will receive additional staff and money.
> We have also decided that we should adapt the FCO's overseas network of posts to align it more closely with our own priorities and those of HMG as a whole. So we will be shifting a proportion of our diplomatic staff from Europe and the Americas to Asia, the Middle East and other parts of the world, while continuing to sustain our global flexibility and reach.
> As I told the House on 8 January, we will continue to manage the FCO's overseas network to reflect changing demands and challenges. We will ensure

[405] HC Deb 23 January 2008 c52-3WS

> that our resources are aligned with our priorities and that the UK has a cost-effective and flexible network of overseas representation around the world.
> In order to put more resources into these new priority areas and to sharpen our strategic focus, it is necessary to reduce the resources the FCO puts into certain other issues, notably where other Whitehall Departments in London are better placed to direct HMG's international priorities, in particular in the areas of sustainable development, science and innovation, and crime and drugs.
> Our ambassadors will however remain heavily engaged on all these issues in those countries where they are of particular importance to Britain: for example, the fight against drugs in Colombia and against crime in Jamaica. Our posts overseas will continue to operate as a base for all Whitehall Departments on which they can put their own staff and resources to deliver their own priorities in the countries concerned. Our ambassadors will continue to offer advice to Departments and their local representatives, and act locally on their behalf wherever needed.[406]

Miliband concluded:

> This new Strategic Framework will replace the FCO's ten existing Strategic Priorities. This is in line with the view expressed by the Foreign Affairs Committee in their response to our 2006-07 departmental White Paper that "ten strategic priorities is too many" and that they should be "simplified and reduced in number". We will be taking forward the detailed planning and implementation over the next few months, inside the FCO and with other Government Departments.
> I believe that every organisation, including every Government Department, should regularly reassess its own aims and priorities. Successful organisations stay focused on the biggest issues on which they can make the biggest difference, and they regularly readjust that focus as circumstances and priorities change. That is what we have sought to do for the FCO through this new Strategic Framework.[407]

In February 2008 a leaflet was circulated to members of both Houses, which summarised the new Strategic Framework. It also confirmed that the FCO had simplified its mission statement to 'Better World, Better Britain'.

Speaking to Ambassadors in London in March 2008 David Miliband argued that efforts to improve the FCO's ability to strategise effectively would continue:

> We must start by getting better at strategy. By this, I mean prioritising based on where our interests lie, and where we have the knowledge and leverage to achieve change. Setting ambitious but realistic goals. Understanding the different scenarios facing us, and ensuring we have a viable Plan B. Calibrating whether our solutions are proportionate to the scale of the problem. Testing our policy areas against the evidence base from comparable situations. Creating red-teams that challenge our assumptions.[408]

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[406] HC Deb 23 January 2008 c52-3WS
[407] *Ibid*
[408] See: http://www.britischebotschaft.de/en/news/items/080304b.htm

In March 2008 there were further clarifications provided regarding the outcome of this 'strategy refresh'. It became clear that the new Strategic Framework would come into effect from 1 April 2008. The FCO also published a list of eight Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs), reflecting the new Strategic Framework, for the period 2008-11, which had been agreed with the Treasury:

> DSO 1 - A flexible **Global Network** serving the whole of the British Government.
> Three **Essential Services** that:
> DSO 2 - Support the **British Economy**
> DSO 3 - Support **British nationals** abroad
> DSO 4 - Support managed **Migration** for Britain
> Four new **Policy Goals** to:
> DSO 5 - **Counter Terrorism**, weapons proliferation and their causes
> DSO 6 - Prevent and Resolve **Conflict**
> DSO 7 - Promote a **low carbon**, high growth, global economy
> DSO 8 - Develop effective international institutions, above all the UN and EU[409]

It described the purpose of these DSOs as to:

> set out a picture of what the department as a whole aims to achieve over the CSR period, and provide an overarching framework for Ministers and FCO Management Board to hold DSO Owners (generally FCO Policy / Service Directors) accountable for delivery.[410]

According the FCO's *Departmental Report 2007-8*, published in May 2008, these 'DSO Owners' have now produced delivery plans and have also commissioned 'Country Business Plans from relevant missions where the DSOs will apply during 2008-11. The FCO Board will be reviewing these plans every six months.[411]

There was some initial uncertainty about whether the FCO would be publishing a new White Paper to accompany the new Strategic Framework. However, it emerged that it did not intend to do so.[412]

c. PSA-SP alignment

One of the major concerns expressed about the regime of targets applying to the FCO under SR04 was that they were poorly aligned with its Strategic Priorities. Despite the fact there were nine PSA targets and (eventually) ten SPs, suggesting a potentially close correspondence, a more detailed inspection confirmed otherwise (see Part IIIA.2).

The question arises as to whether there is improved alignment between PSA targets involving the FCO under CSR O7 and the new SPs announced by the Foreign Secretary in January 2008. As outlined earlier, there are now eight PSA targets that involve the FCO, with five of them giving it a prominent role. There are now four SPs. If we restrict

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[409] See: http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/DSO%20publication.pdf (however, not available at 23 June 2008. At the time of writing, the FCO's new website was functioning poorly).
[410] *Ibid*
[411] FCO, *Departmental Report 2007-8*, Cm 7398, May 2008, p. 85
[412] See HC Deb 26 March 2008 c151-2W; HC Deb 27 March 2008 c406-7W

ourselves to the PSA targets that prominently feature the FCO, a five-to-four ratio again suggests there might be a close correspondence.

PSA Targets under CSR 07	SPs for 2008-11
3 Controlled, Fair Migration	1 Terrorism and Weapons Proliferation
26 International Terrorism	2 Low Carbon, High Growth Economy
27 Climate Change	3 Effective International Institutions
29 Poverty Reduction	4 Conflict Prevention and Resolution
30 Conflict Resolution and Prevention	

The table above demonstrates a straightforward alignment between PSA 30 and SP4. With regard to the four other PSA targets, each can be partially aligned with one or more of the four SPs. However, exactly how they are aligned is not always immediately obvious.

It may be that, because PSA targets are no longer 'owned' by particular Government Departments, any requirement that they align with a Department's SPs has been downgraded, if not abandoned. The FCO's *Departmental Report 2007-8* only discusses how the New Strategic Framework "relates" to the PSAs.[413] If this is the case, then this sometimes arcane debate may have reached its end. But for now, the picture on alignment remains unclear.

2. The CSR 07 settlement and related issues

The FCO received a settlement of £1.7 billion by 2010-11. This sum included the British Council and the BBC World Service. The Foreign Affairs Committee has calculated that the change in budget as an average real reduction is 5.1 per cent per annum.[414]

The FCO is also covered by the Treasury's 3 per cent efficiency target for Government Departments and 5 per cent administrative efficiencies in the CSR 07 period. According to the Treasury, these savings will be achieved by increased co-location with DFID, realising net cash releasing savings, working more flexibly and effectively in Europe and through the disposal of assets that are part of the overseas estate. The amount of savings required during 2008-11 is £144 million, compared to £80 million under SR04.[415] In February 2008 the FCO also announced changes to the Departmental Expenditure Limit for 2007-8 which included a significant reduction in the administration budget.[416]

In the negotiations leading up to the final settlement of CSR 07, the FCO challenged the decision of the Treasury to consider frontline services such as the cost of Ambassadors as 'administration costs'. It also questioned whether it was reasonable to expect the FCO to achieve a 3 per cent efficiency target when such a high proportion of its budget was staffing. It complained that the Treasury was unwilling to recognise the impact of the rapidly increasing costs of the UK's contributions to UN and NATO. Finally, it was

413 FCO, *Departmental Report 2007-8*, pp. 84-5
414 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, para. 23
415 *Ibid*
416 HC Deb 19 February 2008 c18WS

unhappy about what it was being offered towards the cost of ensuring the security of the overseas network.[417]

The Foreign Affairs Committee has expressed concern about the settlement:

> […] the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR07) settlement for the FCO, one of the tightest in Whitehall, risks jeopardising the FCO's important work.[418]

Inter alia, the Committee worried that the overseas estate security programme might be disrupted. It also echoed other issues raised by the FCO in its negotiations with the Treasury, indicating that the FCO's concerns had not been met satisfactorily.[419] In a Lords debate in March 2008, Lord Wallace of Saltaire, a longstanding observer of British foreign policy, added his voice to those expressing concern, saying:

> There comes a point at which a succession of cutbacks becomes a step-change: in the character of an organisation, in its ability to deliver the tasks demanded of it, an in the objectives it is able to serve. I want to pose the question of whether we are now facing such a step-change in the position and capabilities of the FCO, both at home and abroad, and to ask how we should adjust aspirations and objectives to match the more modest resources that the Government have provided.[420]

In this context, the FCO has established a CSR 07 Value for Money Programme.[421] Given the tight financial settlement, the increased resources slated for the four SPs identified by the Foreign Secretary inevitably means reduced resources for areas of activity that are no longer SPs. This was confirmed in early February 2008:

> In order to increase in some areas, we have to reduce resources in others. In the areas of sustainable development, science and innovation and drugs and crime – previously labelled as 'strategic priorities' – we will be discussing the DEFRA, DIUS, Home Office and OGDs and agencies how Government can best co-ordinate in London, and deliver and fund abroad, its international work.[422]

In the context of this settlement, and given that certain new expenditure is already committed, such as the building of a new Embassy in Afghanistan, some have wondered whether the period 2008-11 could see further Embassy and High Commission closures. It had already been announced that two High Commissions would close during financial year 2007-8: Antigua and Barbuda and Grenada. However, these decisions were taken in the context of SR04.[423]

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417 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7,* para. 23
418 *Ibid.*, paras 20-21
419 *Ibid*., paras 14-19, 26
420 HL Deb 13 March 2008 c1617
421 FCO, *Departmental Report 2007-8*, p. 117. See also: http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/CSR07%20VfM%20Delivery%20Agreement.pdf
422 HC Deb 7 February 2008 c1403W
423 HC Deb 10 December 2007 c158W

Europe is set to be a particular target for savings under CSR 07. One observer has written:

> The Foreign Office review envisages a twenty-five per cent reduction in its resources devoted to European posts and issues – not as a signal of semi-detachment in European diplomacy, but a recognition that much European business is transacted in Brussels, or direct between responsible officials in relevant ministries, and that limited resources should be more usefully deployed to the rising economic powers of South and East Asia.[424]

This 25 per cent reduction was largely completed by January 2008. In addition to South and East Asia, staffing levels in the Middle East are set to increase.[425] In March 2008, David Miliband said:

> The FCO's future footprint is likely to be heavier in the developing world and in some of the most far-flung, difficult and important places.[426]

The Permanent Secretary at the FCO, Sir Peter Ricketts, stated in the *Departmental Report 2007-8*: "we will not be closing posts as part of this exercise: we are determined to maintain global reach."[427] Moves towards more flexible approaches to meeting Britain's diplomatic goals can also be expected. For example, an 'unclassified embassy project' was established in November 2007 to explore how unclassified IT systems could be used as part of the FCO's work in future. An 'unEmbassy' was also created at short notice in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, that comprised a single staff member working from a hotel room.[428]

The FCO is continuing to make efforts to reduce its overall staff numbers. One area of priority is reducing the number of senior posts.[429] More broadly, David Miliband, the Foreign Secretary, has argued against an attitude to post closures or staff reductions that equates them with reduced UK influence, citing Africa as an example: "By no stretch of the imagination is it possible to argue that the UK's influence in Africa is lower today than it was 10 years ago. In fact, it is massively enhanced."[430]

An indicator of the FCO's tightened financial circumstances is the decision to withdraw FCO funding for the UK Defence Attaché network. The issue was under review during the final year of the Blair premiership and negotiations over future arrangements have still not been completed. However, it has been made clear that the MOD will be charged "full economic costs" from April 2009.[431] The Foreign Affairs Committee has criticised the

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424 W. Wallace, "Foreign Office futures", *The World Today*, February 2008, p. 24

425 HC Deb 8 January 2008 c137-8W. See also HC Deb 22 January 2008 c1853-4W for a list of the ten posts which are set to receive additional staff.

426 See: http://www.britischebotschaft.de/en/news/items/080304b.htm

427 FCO, *Departmental Report 2007-8*, p. 9

428 *Ibid*., p. 28

429 Wallace, "Foreign Office futures", p. 24

430 HC Deb 8 January 2008 c138W. For a recent MOD statement, in which it announced an increase in funding for the network for the next four years but the closure of some defence sections, see HC Deb 5 June 2008 c71WS

431 HC Deb 21 January 2008 c1613W

FCO for "simply taking a unilateral decision" on the matter.[432] Another organisational change that has flowed quite rapidly from the agreement of the new Strategic Framework was the decision to close down the Sustainable Development and Business Group at the end of March 2008.[433] Moves towards developing 'shared services' with other Departments, most notably DFID, which began under SR04, are set to accelerate during 2008-11.[434]

One area where spending is set to increase significantly under CSR 07 is equality and diversity. For the first time, there is a dedicated budget for these issues for 2007-8. The projected expenditure for 2007-8 is £277,816, compared with £47,090 in 2006-7.[435] There are now senior, FCO Board-level, 'champions' on diversity issues.[436]

The FCO will also be keen to generate income in any way that it can over the coming three financial years. It could be assisted in this by the establishment of FCO Services as a Trading Arm, took place in April 2008. This enables FCO Services to generate income from non-FCO customers. The Foreign Affairs Committee has expressed concern that the service provided to the FCO could decline once FCO Services has this new status. However, the FCO has stated that FCO Services will remain "an integral part of the FCO."[437] It should be noted that this was also a decision taken 'in principle' before Gordon Brown took over as Prime Minister.[438]

Measures set in train during the last year of the Blair premiership to improve the calibre of leadership and management within the FCO have continued to be implemented under Brown. For example, steps have been taken to improve the management of change programmes. In October 2007 the FCO Board met the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Gus O'Donnell, and the Capability Review Team to review progress since the FCO's Capability Review was published in March 2007. The overall prognosis was positive, although it was agreed that further effort was needed to improve its performance in developing human resources. To this end, in December 2007, the FCO produced its first strategic workforce plan. The FCO has also introduced an awards scheme for 'future leaders'.[439]

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[432] Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, paras 167-172. For annual figures on how many defence attachés and advisers were based at each UK diplomatic post between 1997 and January 2008, see HC Deb 21 January 2008 c1595-602

[433] HC Deb 3 March 2008 c2141-2W

[434] FCO, *Departmental Report 2007-8*, Cm 7398, p. 108-9. The FCO and DFID first agreed a shared service delivery plan in November 2006.

[435] HC Deb 21 January 2008

[436] FCO, *Departmental Report 2007-8*, p. 94. For the latest figures on the number of disabled FCO staff and staff from an ethnic minority, see: HC Deb 12 June 2008 c434-5W

[437] Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, paras137-139. For FCO Services' performance targets, see HC Deb 18 March 2008. For its April 2008 *Framework Document*, see: http://www.parliament.uk/deposits/depositedpapers/2008/DEP2008-0955.pdf

[438] As discussed in Part ID, there continues to be controversy about the decision by FCO Services to outsource language training to a private provider. The Foreign Affairs Committee asked the FCO to reconsider the decision, but the FCO has gone ahead. Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, paras 140-145

[439] FCO, *Departmental Report 2007-8*, pp. 94, 100-2

3. Accountability, transparency and co-ordination issues

a. Accountability and transparency

Within a few days of Gordon Brown becoming Prime Minister, the Government published *The Governance of Britain* Green Paper. The Green Paper included a broad package of proposals for constitutional reform and stated that the Government wanted to shift power from the Executive to Parliament and the public, make the Executive more accountable, and reinvigorate democracy.[440] The Green Paper included several proposals that, if implemented, would have significant ramifications for the future conduct of foreign policy. Two of these proposals, on war making powers and the ratification of treaties, involved reform of the Royal Prerogative, an issue which has been subject to two major Select Committee inquiries in recent years.[441]

The Government proposed reform of its traditional power under the Royal Prerogative to declare war and deploy armed forces to conflicts abroad without the backing or consent of Parliament. In future, the Executive would be required to obtain parliamentary approval for "significant, non-routine deployment of the Armed Forces into armed conflict to the greatest extent possible."[442] The Green Paper set in motion a period of consultation over how best to do this.

The Green Paper also raised the possibility that the 'Ponsonby Rule', a convention which involves Treaties being published as Command Papers, laid before Parliament for 21 days before ratification, and a Government undertaking to provide time for debate if one is requested, could be placed on a statutory footing. The Government also signalled that it was willing to allow greater involvement of select committees should either House desire it.[443]

In October 2007 the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defence and the FCO published a consultation paper, *The Governance of Britain: War Powers and Treaties: Limiting Executive Powers*.[444] The consultation period ended in January 2008. The Foreign Affairs Committee did not take a formal part in the consultation process.

A White Paper was published in March 2008.[445] It included a Draft Constitutional Reform Bill. Part 4, on the ratification of treaties, would simply place the 'Ponsonby Rule' on a statutory footing.[446] With regard to war powers, the White Paper proposed creating a

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[440] For a detailed discussion of the Green Paper, see House of Commons Library Research Paper 07/72, 26 October 2007, *The Governance of Britain Green Paper*

[441] See for example: Public Administration Select Committee, *Taming the Prerogative: Strengthening Ministerial Accountability to Parliament,* 16 March 2004, HC 422 2003-04 and House of Lords Constitution Committee, *Waging War: Parliament's Role and Responsibility,* 27 July 2006, HL 236 2005-06

[442] Ministry of Justice, *The Governance of Britain*, Cm 7170, July 2007, para. 26. See also House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/4335, *Parliamentary Approval for Deployment of the Armed Forces: An Introduction to the Issues* (23 November 2007).

[443] For a more detailed discussion of current practice, see House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/4693, *Parliamentary Scrutiny of Treaties* (10 April 2008).

[444] Cm 7239, 25 October 2007. Available at: http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/cp2607.htm

[445] Ministry of Justice, *The Governance of Britain. Constitutional Renewal,* Cm 7342 (3 parts), March 2008

[446] *Ibid*., Cm 7342-II, p. 9

requirement that Government's must seek prior approval of the House of Commons. However, it is now envisaged that this requirement will be established by a resolution of the House but without the Government relinquishing the Royal Prerogative. As such, there are no provisions on war powers in the draft Constitutional Renewal Bill.[447] Given that such a resolution was permitted in 2003 on the eve of the war in Iraq and the Government had stated that the intention was to move towards this becoming the norm, some have argued that relatively little change is in practice now being proposed.

A Joint Committee has been established to consider the White Paper and Draft Bill. They have taken evidence from a wide range of experts and interested parties.[448] The Committee is due to report on 22 July 2008.[449] Other Parliamentary Committees are also undertaking scrutiny of aspects of the Draft Bill. The Public Administration Select Committee has held two evidence sessions on matters relating to the Civil Service and reform of the Royal Prerogative. Its report was published on 4 June 2008.[450] The Lords Constitution Committee has submitted a memorandum to the Joint Committee on the Draft Bill.[451]

The Green Paper had also proposed an extension and deepening of forms of consultation with the public in order to strengthen the relationship between state and citizen. This was followed in September 2007 by a speech by the Prime Minister in which he announced that there would be a 'Citizens' Summit' on the proposed British Statement of Values. [452] He also announced a series of citizens' juries which were to take place around the country on issues including crime and the future of the National Health Service. In a speech in September 2007 Ed Miliband, the Cabinet Office Minister, argued in favour of involving people to a greater extent, not just in policy-making, but also in decision-making.[453] David Miliband has not commented on the possible implications for British foreign policy of these ideas. The need for greater engagement with publics both at home and abroad on British foreign policy has been a theme of a number of publications by former FCO officials and NGOs in recent years. In relation to publics abroad, the FCO has already taken up this agenda through its programme on public diplomacy (see Part IIIA.3). It is not clear how far it has done so to the same extent with regard to the British public.[454] Neither the White Paper nor the Green Paper contained specific proposals in this regard.

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447 For further details, see the statement in the House of the Minister of Justice, Jack Straw. HC Deb 25 March 2008 c22

448 For example, see: Joint Committee on the Draft Constitutional Renewal Bill, Uncorrected Oral Evidence, HC551-ii, Session 2007-8

449 HC Deb 3 June 2008 c890

450 Public Administration Select Committee, *Constitutional Renewal: Draft Bill and White Paper,* HC 499, Session 2007-08

451 Joint Committee on the Draft Constitutional Renewal Bill, HC551, Session 2007-8

452 Gordon Brown, *Speech to the National Council of Voluntary Organisations,* 3 September 2007, http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page13008.asp

453 Ed Miliband, "Speech to Fabian conference on democracy", 8 September 2007

454 See: S. Riordan, *The New Diplomacy* (Cambridge, 2003); C. Ross, *Independent Diplomat* (London, 2007), D. Held and D. Mepham (eds), *Progressive Foreign Policy. New Directions for the UK* (Cambridge, 2007). Parliamentary requests for information specifically about 'departmental public participation' often produce the answer that such information could only be provided at "disproportionate cost". For example, see HC Deb 22 May 2008 c515W

Issues of accountability and transparency have also arisen that do not have a constitutional dimension. Responding to opposition calls for an independent inquiry into the war in Iraq, the Brown Government has argued that it would be premature while British forces are still engaged in operations there. However, it has accepted that there should be such an inquiry once this is no longer the case.[455] Soon after David Miliband became Foreign Secretary, the FCO renewed the offer, made under Jack Straw but withdrawn under Margaret Beckett, to supply the Foreign Affairs Committee with key management papers on a more systematic basis (see Part IIIA.1). The Committee welcomed this move. However, in August 2007 it was disappointed when its request to see a copy, in confidence, of the FCO's Top Risks Register was refused. A copy had been provided in 2006.[456] In February 2008 the FCO, having refused for years to do so, was ordered by the Information Tribunal to make public the 'John Williams draft' of the September 2002 dossier on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. There remained concerns about the fact that certain comments on the draft were still censored.[457] The Government has also appealed against a ruling by the Information Commissioner in February 2008 that it should release the confidential minutes of two March 2003 Cabinet discussions on Iraq.[458] Finally, the prospective appointment of the former First Minister of the Scottish Executive, Jack McConnell, as the High Commissioner to Malawi, has been criticised by those opposed to 'political appointments'.[459]

Long-awaited EU scrutiny reform was finally introduced in the early months of the Brown Government. In October 2007, on a motion to renew the method of appointment of European Standing Committees, the Government undertook to return to the House with proposals for reform of EU scrutiny within three months of the start of the following session.[460] On 4 February 2008 the Deputy Leader of the House, Helen Goodman, announced improvements to the way EU Standing Committee members were selected, drawing in part on the European Scrutiny Committee (ESC) and Departmental Select Committees, and to the proceedings in those Committees and for a more effective style of questioning of Ministers. In addition, the Government proposed:

> the alerting of the Scrutiny Committee by the Government at an early stage to consultation exercises on important EU proposals; and
> improved opportunities for Members to receive directly EU documents in areas in which they have expressed a particular interest.[461]

The amendments were debated on 7 February and new Standing Orders were published in March, which included a Conservative amendment that the ESC and its Sub-Committees "shall sit in public unless it determines otherwise in relation to a particular meeting or part thereof". This commenced with immediate effect. Opening up the ESC

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455 See also footnote 54.
456 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, paras 197-8
457 HC Deb 18 February 2008 c1-2WS; HC Deb 19 February 2008 c150-151; "How Labour used the law to keep criticism of Israel secret" and "Iraq dossier: The FO's case to the Info Tribunal", *Guardian*, 21 February 2008
458 "British army joins battle to control Basra", *Observer*, 30 March 2008
459 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Proposed Appointment of Jack McConnell MSP as High Commissioner to Malawi*, HC507, Session 2007-8
460 HC Deb 25 October 2007 c 504
461 HC Deb 4 February 2008 c 52-3WS

to public scrutiny represented a major change and one which, although supported by the ESC and the Modernisation Committees in their earlier recommendations, had not been among the Government's original proposals. Helen Goodman also told the House on 26 February 2008 that Parliament would decide on how Parliament would be involved in the operation of the *Treaty of Lisbon*'s orange and yellow card systems contained in the *Protocol on the Application of the Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality*, adding that the Government would work with both Houses "to ensure that there is an effective mechanism" and also "an opportunity for a decision before the Lisbon Treaty comes into force".[462]

There has been disagreement in Britain over whether or not important provisions of *Treaty of Lisbon* involved major changes to the institutional framework for UK foreign policy. These provisions were discussed in Part IIC.2 of this Paper and so are not addressed again here. Following the negative referendum on the Treaty in Ireland in June 2008, the British Government insisted that the UK parliamentary process would be completed. The European Union (Amendment) Bill was duly given Royal Assent on 19 June 2008.[463] However, at the time of writing it remains unclear which, if any, of the provisions of the *Treaty of Lisbon* will ever now come into effect, and on what basis.[464]

b. Co-ordination

Aside from the implications for co-ordination, or 'joined up government', of the CSR 07 process and the subsequent formulation by the FCO of new SPs (see above), there have been several other developments on co-ordination issues since Gordon Brown took office that warrant brief discussion. Speaking at a meeting of Ambassadors in London in March 2008, David Miliband reaffirmed the importance of "better integration", adding:

> […] we need to think more radically about joining up at all levels: from co-located staff at post to single cross-departmental country plans. To grow a different approach to strategic collaboration between departments, we are strengthening the policy planning staff into a foreign policy strategy unit that will draw in outside expertise and methods.[465]

In December 2007 the joint FCO/MOD/DFID Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit was renamed the Stabilisation Unit. It is an important agency for the delivery of PSA 30 on reducing the impact of conflict. According to the Delivery Agreement:

> The Unit will continue to be responsible for providing the civilian teams to support the design and delivery of UK civilian activities, including quick impact projects, in insecure environments often alongside UK military forces, and filling critical capability gaps in UK and international operations (eg rule of law, governance and policing advisers). The Stabilisation Unit will facilitate cross-Government assessment and planning to stabilise countries emerging from conflict, and will

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462 HC Deb 26 February 2008 c 977

463 Bill 48 of 2007-8. See also House of Commons Library Research Paper RP 08/03, *European Union (Amendment) Bill*

464 See: House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/4758, *The Lisbon Treaty: The referendum in Ireland* (18 June 2008)

465 See: http://www.britischebotschaft.de/en/news/items/080304b.htm

> identify and integrate lessons from UK interventions into future stabilisation activities.[466]

In April 2008 the Africa and Global Conflict Prevention Pools were merged into a single Conflict Prevention Pool.[467] There have been signs of a possible shift in the relationship between the FCO and DFID over British policy towards sub-Saharan Africa, where DFID became increasingly influential during the Blair premiership. The political crisis in Kenya, which erupted following a disputed presidential election in late December 2007, is reported to have caused reflection about why DFID failed to anticipate the crisis. Lord Malloch-Brown, Minister responsible for Africa at the FCO, has called on Britain to have not only a development policy for Africa, but also a foreign policy.[468] In March 2008 Lord Wallace of Saltaire repeated longstanding claims that relations between DFID and FCO staff in British missions abroad "are not always easy" and asserted that there remains "room for much more careful integration of strategic planning and policy-making between these two departments to make sure that political and development objectives are successfully reconciled."[469]

After taking office, Gordon Brown reversed the Government's longstanding rejection of the idea of developing and implementing a cross-departmental 'National Security Strategy'. The think-tank Demos has been amongst those calling for such a strategy. In December 2007 it published a report, *National Security for the 21st Century*.[470] Its author argued:

> Successive British governments have rarely taken a strategic approach to national security. Decisions remain focused on short-term initiatives. Worryingly, the overall approach is becoming less – not more – coherent. Governments lurch from one crisis to the next, neither protecting people nor empowering them. The forthcoming national security strategy is a step in the right direction but its aim must be to transform our outdated and compartmentalised national security architecture. Unless we have joined-up government on national security, we will be vulnerable through the cracks.[471]

The front page of the report stated:

> Current notions of defence, foreign affairs, intelligence and development are redundant in the new security environment…

It went on to call for a genuinely "inclusive, open and holistic" approach to national security, geared towards achieving three-to-five strategic priorities. This would involve

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466 See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/C/5/pbr_csr07_psa30.pdf

467 See: http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/what-we-do/funding-programmes/conflict-prevention-pools

468 "Mark Malloch-Brown: From the UN to Whitehall, with a will to change our view of Africa", *Guardian*, 10 May 2008

469 HL Deb 13 March 2008 c1620. Lord Anderson (c1623) of Swansea raised the same issue in the debate.

470 For the full report, see: http://83.223.102.49/files/National%20Security%20web.pdf

471 "Government 'lacks a clear and coherent view' of security risks to UK", DEMOS Press Release, 10 December 2007. Available at: http://groups.demos.co.uk/media/pressreleases/governmente28098lacksaclearandcoherentviewe28099ofsecurityriskstouk. See also his article, "Winning on wicked issues", *The World Today*, February 2008

going beyond the "muddling through" and "tinkering with the machinery" which has allegedly characterised the approach of the Government in the past.[472] The Cabinet Office provided financial support for the Demos report.

The Government eventually published its National Security Strategy in March 2008. Instead of creating a National Security Council, as some had called for, the Government gave the co-ordinating role to a recently established cross-government National Security Committee. An advisory National Security Forum comprising external experts and stakeholders will also be created. It also announced an enhanced public and scrutiny role for the parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee and additional resources for the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, with which the FCO is involved.[473] The Strategy met with a somewhat lukewarm public reaction.[474] The *Daily Telegraph* said: "Short on vision, managerial rather than thought-provoking, it simply pulls together many existing policy strands. We are promised annual updates on the security strategy. For now, the report card reads: must do better next year."[475]

It is reasonable to expect that the National Security Strategy will have significant implications for the future roles and responsibilities of the FCO. However, it is not as yet entirely clear how the FCO's new Strategic Framework relates to it. The FCO's *Annual Departmental Report 2007-8* does not discuss the implications of the National Security Strategy in any depth.[476]

4. Public diplomacy

Shortly before Gordon Brown took office, the FCO's public diplomacy work was incorporated into a unified Communications Directorate.[477] Since he became Prime Minister, there have been a number of other significant developments in the sphere of public diplomacy.

David Miliband, speaking in March 2008, gave a clear indication that he views public diplomacy as a very important tool of foreign policy and that there could be further changes to its role in future:

> […] we need to rethink the role of public diplomacy. In a world where power is more dispersed, between media, business and NGOs, and leaders are more fettered by external influence, we need to look outwards. Our global network, and London, need to focus not just on government relations but business, media and citizen relations. Sometimes we need to use public diplomacy to shape a debate and build consensus. At other times it may have a more disruptive role

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472 Demos, *National Security for the 21st Century*, pp. 11-17. The Institute for Public Policy Research and the Royal United Services Institute published reports on the issue in February 2008.

473 Cabinet Office, *The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom. Security in an Interdependent World*, Cm 7291, March 2008. See also HC Deb 19 March 2008 c925-936. Reform of the Intelligence and Security Committee was also included in *The Governance of Britain* White Paper.

474 For a detailed analysis, see D. Korski, "National Security is not enough", Guardian Online, 20 March 2008. Available at: http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/daniel_korski/2008/03/national_security_is_not_enoug.html

475 "Seeking security in a dangerous world", *Daily Telegraph*, 20 March 2008

476 See: FCO, *Departmental Report 2007-8*, Cm 7398, pp. 54 and 63

477 *Ibid.*, p. 96

> challenging conventional relations – witness the Stern Review on climate change.[478]

Gordon Brown has also spoken strongly in favour of the importance of cultural diplomacy more broadly. In his Kennedy Memorial Lecture in April 2008 he proposed "a new cultural effort on the scale of the cultural Cold War in the '40s, '50s and '60s".[479] Overall, the debate over the purpose and value of 'soft power' continues. In March 2008 Lord Parekh, describing Britain as a "minor major power", claimed that the country could "rely only on our soft power" to build trust around the world in British foreign policy which events in Iraq and Afghanistan had deeply eroded.[480]

Concerns have been expressed that the ongoing dispute with the Russian Government over the activities of the British Council might have implications for public diplomacy work in future.[481] The dispute with the Russian Government, which reached a head between October 2007 and January 2008, had been brewing since 2004. In the context of its response to the Litvinenko affair, the Russian Government has viewed the British Council as an arm of the British Government which can be targeted for harassment.[482] The British Government described Russian actions as a violation of the Vienna Conventions on Consular Relations and a 1994 bilateral agreement.[483] That agreement describes the British Council as the "designated agent of the British Government."

As may be recalled, the 2005 Carter Report described public diplomacy as:

> Work aiming to inform and engage individuals and organisations overseas, in order to improve understanding of and influence for the United Kingdom in a manner consistent with governmental medium and long term goals.[484]

In June 2007, before the latest turn in the dispute, a British Council official had told the Foreign Affairs Committee that the British Council was examining its status in all countries to ensure it matched "both the range of activity that we undertake and the shifts and changes in the nature of cultural relations around the world." [485] He added that many of its offices were finding this

> curious, if not slightly uncomfortable, because many of them are actually very happy with the arrangements that we have at present, but, clearly, we come from an environment where we have moved towards much greater clarity than is normal.[486]

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[478] See: http://www.britischebotschaft.de/en/news/items/080304b.htm
[479] See: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page15303.asp.
[480] HL Deb 13 March 2008 c1637
[481] For further background, see House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/IA/4394, *Russian Foreign Policy and the State of Anglo-Russian Relations* (20 July 2007).
[482] Alexander Litvinenko, a Russian exile, was murdered in the UK in 2006. The British Government is seeking the extradition of a Russian citizen, Andrei Lugavoi, in connection with the murder. Russia has refused. The two countries have no extradition agreement.
[483] HC Deb 15 January 2008 c27WS; HC Deb 17 January 2008 c1095-7
[484] Lord Carter, *Public Diplomacy Review*, December 2005. See its Executive Summary.
[485] Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, paras 268-273
[486] *Ibid*., Ev 137, Q123

Shortly before the presidential election in Russia in early March 2008, the presumed successor to Vladimir Putin, Dimitri Medvedev, appeared to dash hopes of a rapid resolution of the crisis by accusing the British Council of espionage.[487] Now that Medvedev has become president, there are hopes that efforts to resolve the dispute can be renewed, but Putin, who is now Prime Minister, will inevitably have a big say in whether this happens. It is not clear whether the dispute with the Russian Government over the British Council has had any 'knock-on effects' for the BBC World Service's plan to establish a new FM radio station jointly with a Russian partner station (see Part IIIA.3)

In terms of changes to the strategic framework for public diplomacy, there has been an ongoing pilot initiative to focus on three of the Strategic Priorities (SPs) set out in the 2006 White Paper: SP5 – supporting UK business, SP6 – climate security and SP7 – sustainable development. The pilots are due to run for two years in three countries each until later in 2008.[488] However, while these pilots are clearly consistent with the wider trend towards reducing and sharpening strategic priorities across government, it is not yet entirely clear what the implications of the new Strategic Framework announced in January 2008 by David Miliband will be for them. It also remains to be seen how the British Council's own strategic objectives, which were recently redefined to focus on climate change, creative economy and intercultural dialogue, will mesh with the Strategic Framework.[489]

The full text of a 2006 review of the Chevening Scholarships and Fellowships programme was placed in the public domain in March 2008.[490] The review was in part aimed at aligning the programme more closely with the Government's foreign policy priorities. In February 2008 the Government published a list of the 20 countries where Chevening scholarships are primarily to be targeted in future. China and India were at the top of the list. Iraq and Afghanistan also featured.[491] In March 2008 David Miliband announced plans for the future of scholarships and fellowships funding more broadly, placing these plans explicitly in the context of the new Strategic Framework. These included an end to FCO funding for the Commonwealth scholarships and fellowships programme. Savings of some £10 million per year are to be directed towards new priority programmes, particularly on climate change.[492] There has been criticism of this decision.[493]

Shortly after taking office, Gordon Brown confirmed funding for BBC World Service-run Arabic and Farsi language satellite TV stations, which were due to open in 2007 and 2008 respectively.[494] The Arabic station opened in March 2008.

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487 "British Council accused of spying on Russia", *Daily Telegraph*, 18 February 2008
488 Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, paras 219-222
489 FCO, *Departmental Report 2007-8*, pp. 98-99
490 See: House of Commons Deposited Paper 2008-0889, 26 March 2008
491 HC Deb 28 February 2008 c1813W
492 HC Deb 13 March 2008 c22-24WS
493 HC Deb 20 March 2008 c1100; HC Deb 3 April 2008 c1218W; "Commonwealth cuts are not just academic", *Guardian*, 20 May 2008
494 HC Deb 24 July 2007 c845

IV Conclusion: From Blair and Brown – more continuity than change

Although there has been some recalibration in terms of the three key motifs discussed in this Paper, so far there has been more continuity than change in British foreign policy between the Blair era and that of his successor, Gordon Brown. This is hardly surprising. After all, Brown was Chancellor of the Exchequer for as long as Blair was Prime Minister. Brown is living with a legacy of which he was one of the most important architects.

The Brown Government has sought to re-legitimise interventionism by linking it more closely to conflict prevention and humanitarian agendas. It has not entirely repudiated the exercise of military power. It could hardly do so while British troops remain in Afghanistan and Iraq. But it appears committed to ensuring that military action in future really is the 'last resort'. In this regard, Iran could be the biggest test on the horizon. But many doubt whether the British Government has either the appetite or capability for significant new military operations in the foreseeable future.

After a brief period when it appeared slightly to distance itself from the Bush administration, the Brown Government has more recently initiated a *rapprochement*. However, it seems likely that the main goal is to create more permissive conditions for a revival of the 'special relationship' around a shared and more multilateral global agenda when the next President takes over in the White House in January 2009.

As for Europe, the Brown Government has so far acted much as a Blair Government is likely to have done had its term of office continued. Its main preoccupation to date has been to navigate the treacherous political waters of the *Treaty of Lisbon*. If this can be achieved, the Government hopes that the EU will turn to more 'outward looking' agendas such as enlargement and strengthening the EU's capability to project power and influence around the world. For as long as Gordon Brown is Prime Minister, it is difficult to envisage dramatic changes in Britain's generally cautious posture towards the euro.

Finally, with regard to the strategic and institutional frameworks for British foreign policy, the reforms in which Gordon Brown had a major hand when Chancellor continue to work their way through the system now that he is Prime Minister. The Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, has sought to create a new Strategic Framework for foreign policy that, while broadly consistent with those elaborated during the Blair premiership, is smarter and leaner. More 'joined-up government' is still a priority, although it has not advanced as quickly as many of its supporters would like. As for the FCO, it has continued to face tight financial settlements. It is increasingly viewed as the 'hub' of British foreign policy, rather than its sole operator. Efficiency and effectiveness agendas have remained a central focus. All this has ongoing implications for the overseas network. The debate over how far these agendas are in reality dictating the direction of strategy and policy has continued.

The fact that the story so far is mainly one of continuity between the Blair and Brown premierships certainly does not mean that British foreign policy will not change much in future. It is not simply that there may be a change of leader or government in the years ahead. Indeed, the advent of either could lead to less wholesale change than might be expected. For example, just as there was considerable convergence between the Labour

Government during the Blair era and the foreign policy of the main opposition party, the Conservatives, around an assertive, proactive interventionism, so there is once again between Gordon Brown and David Cameron, albeit based on somewhat greater caution. The biggest difference between the two parties is likely to remain their policies towards the EU.

In the short- to medium-term, a moment may come when there will be a 'tough choice' to be made about whether to sanction a significant new deployment of British forces. In the medium- to long-term, the main impulse towards bigger changes in British foreign policy would be a transformation of the wider political and economic context. Some observers argue that such shifts can already be detected. For example, although it may not yet have altered its fundamental character, the rise of China and India is already affecting British foreign policy.[495] Another possible shift, as David Miliband himself recently acknowledged, would be a reversal of trends towards economic and political globalisation.[496] The previous epoch of globalisation (1890-1914) collapsed and was followed by a period of war, revolution and protectionism.[497]

There are a host of other factors, including in the spheres of the environment and energy, that could trigger transformations in Britain's foreign policy. There may also be further 'Europeanisation' of that policy – a development which some hope for but others fear. Of course, making predictions is always a risky business. Despite the emergence over the past decade of a growing array of technologies of strategy, planning and risk assessment in foreign policy, it may also be wise to bear in mind the old adage: 'expect the unexpected'.

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[495] For example, see Martin Jacques' analysis in "Northern Rock's rescue is part of a geopolitical sea change ", *The Guardian*, 18 February 2008. For further background, see House of Commons Library Research Papers: 06/36, *A Political and Economic Introduction to China*; 07/40, *An Economic Introduction to India*; and 07/41, *A Political Introduction to India*.

[496] Miliband acknowledged in a March 2008 speech that the latest phase could indeed be reversed: "Globalisation is not an irresistible force. Like all human history, it is made and unmade by the actions of people." See: http://www.britischebotschaft.de/en/news/items/080304b.htm

[497] For useful discussions of globalisation, see D. Held and A. McGrew, *Globalization/Anti-Globalization* (Cambridge, 2002) and K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origins of our Time* (Boston, Mass., 2001).

Appendix 1 PSA targets involving the FCO under CSR07

Note: With the exception of Public Service Agreement (PSA) 30, where there is no alternative but to read the entire agreement by clicking the link provided, the extracts below constitute the full text of the references made to the FCO under each PSA.

PSA 3

Ensure controlled, fair migration that protects the public and contributes to economic growth

(Home Office lead, with FCO a delivery partner)[489]

3.7 UKvisas is a government directorate, jointly managed by the Home Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), responsible for the overseas arm of the UK's entry clearance operation. Through the FCO overseas posts UKvisas will contribute to a more secure border by maintaining robust control of the UK overseas entry clearance service through the use of biometrics in identity management, and the development of sophisticated risk assessment and forgery identification techniques. These will be used to underpin decisions on who is issued a visa and who is not. Through contact with foreign national governments at a political level, the FCO also helps to facilitate UKvisas' operating environment and the UK migration agenda more widely.

3.8 Posts overseas also promote compliance with the UK immigration system through information campaigns on how to visit the UK legally and highlighting the dangers of doing so illegally. Country expertise helps inform operational decisions on whether to review visa regimes or suspend migration routes in response to changing risks to the entry clearance service.

3.9 Additionally, the FCO Migration Fund supports the delivery of the Government's migration objectives in priority source and transit countries, and FCO's Departmental Strategic Objective (Managing Migration and Combating Illegal Immigration) directly reflects the BIA's strategic objectives, ensuring reporting of performance aligns with PSA outcomes.

3.10 Risk assessment will be at the heart of effective border control in the future and UKvisas is developing its capability to identify high-risk migrants, enabling resources to be deployed accordingly. UKvisas will embed risk assessment to all categories of visa application through Structured Decision-Making. This is an end-to-end decisionmaking process for all non-points based system (PBS) applications, ensuring that all applications are assessed against watchlist checks (for example biometrics), risk assessment profiles (applicants are rated high/medium/low risk), and the immigration rules.

489 See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/6/4/pbr_csr07_psa3.pdf

3.11 Identity management is essential in the management of migration and the fight against terrorism, organised crime and mass fraud. UKvisas is clamping down on the use of false documentation to support visa applications through the use of enhanced forgery detection capability at high-risk posts. As a deterrent, arrest programme initiatives are being rolled out at targeted posts to work closely with local police to arrest those submitting forged documentation where circumstances allow.

3.12 Secure, unique IDs will be required for non-EEA nationals who do not require a visa to enter the UK and do not already have a secure, unique ID recorded by the BIA. Measures will be introduced to ensure that arriving passengers will be fingerprinted and have their photograph captured to create a new, robust biographical record, secured by the individual's biometric data. This will be further supported through other initiatives including, the issuance of Biometric Immigration Documents to foreign nationals resident in the UK for more than three months as part of the National Identity Scheme.

3.18 FCO country expertise also improves fast-track decision-making for genuine refugees, providing timely and informed contributions to the Country of Origin Information Reports. These are used to make decisions on asylum claims and the designation of countries for the purpose of Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA), where individuals can be returned to their country of origin and lodge any appeal from there.

3.36 The MoJ, FCO and UKvisas are represented internal Agency governance structures including on the Asylum and Immigration Ministerial Strategy Board, the Agency Board, the Joint Approvals Committee and on various Management Boards and Tasking Groups.

PSA 4

Promote world-class science and innovation in the UK

(Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills lead)[490]

3.8 The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) maintains a Science and Innovation network of attaches as a resource to promote UK science and innovation, to facilitate collaboration and the flow of both scientific knowledge and investment into

the UK, and disseminate best practice in science and innovation policy. The FCO network also works with UK Trade and Investment in promoting the advantages of locating R&D investment in the UK.

3.13 Through its network of science and innovation attaches, the FCO will continue to help attract new collaborative research funding from other countries and facilitate UK researchers' access to world leading facilities and researchers. DIUS will also continue to provide support through the national contact point facility for UK researchers and businesses seeking to engage with the European Framework Programme. It will also negotiate the shape of future Framework programmes.

[490] See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/F/D/pbr_csr07_psa4.pdf

PSA 23

Make communities safer

(lead National Crime Reduction Board, chaired by Home Secretary)[491]

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is the lead department on international policy governing the disruption of international organised crime – it provides an overseas support structure for SOCA; and funds practical activity via the Global Opportunities Fund Drugs & Crime Programme.[492]

PSA 25

Reduce the harm caused by alcohol and drugs

(Home Office lead with the FCO a delivery partner)[493]

3.23 In addition, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) will work with other governments through its network of diplomatic posts to generate a policy and legal framework that will support our counter-narcotic activity. It will work to build the capacity of priority states, such as Afghanistan, Columbia, Venezuela and Jamaica, to implement their own strategies to target the production and trafficking of drugs and,
together with the Department for International Development (DfID), will provide support to strengthen and diversify legal rural livelihoods in drug-producing states.
3.25 The main delivery levers for tackling supply are:
• the PSA indicator to reduce the percentage of the public who perceive drug use or dealing to be a problem in their area;
• improved knowledge so as to be able to mount the most appropriate and effective enforcement interventions;
• performance management of individual police forces by the Home Office;
• effective use of the FCO Drugs and Crime Fund and the Afghan Interdepartmental Drugs Unit's cross-departmental allocations (in particular to enhance other Governments' capacity);

491 See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/3/D/pbr_csr07_psa23.pdf
492 It should be noted that in April 2008 the name of the Global Opportunities Fund was changed to the Strategic Programme Fund.
See: http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/publications/publications/annual-reports/strat-prog-fund
493 See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/A/4/pbr_csr07_psa25.pdf

PSA 26

Reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from international terrorism

a. Note: text not published on grounds of national security, but the FCO has the lead on the "development of strategy for the Government's work overseas and co-ordinates its implementation.")[494]

PSA 27

Lead the global effort to avoid dangerous climate change

(DEFRA lead, with FCO a delivery partner)[495]

3.7 The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) will continue to play a key role in building the necessary social, economic and political conditions and mobilising key constituencies to influence the major emitters. The FCO will continue to act as the international delivery arm for the cross-Whitehall effort on climate change, as well as providing the well-informed international context to assist the formulation of policy in London, and providing intelligence and lobbying to develop negotiating strategies within the EU and United Nations (UN).

PSA 29

Reduce poverty in poorer countries through quicker progress towards the MDGs

(DFID lead, with FCO a delivery partner)[496]

3.44 The FCO will:

- help build support for UK development objectives through engagement with host governments, international institutions, the private sector and civil society;
- strengthen policy (including country governance analysis) and delivery through political analysis using its overseas and domestic network;
- lead on work to promote human rights and democratic values and principles that DFID recognises as an important component to the promotion of poverty reduction;

494 See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/B/9/pbr_csr07_psa26.pdf
495 See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/9/2/pbr_csr07_psa27.pdf
496 See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/E/4/pbr_csr07_psa29.pdf

PSA 30

Reduce the impact of conflict through enhanced UK and international efforts

b. (FCO lead: It is a "principal actor", jointly with DFID, MOD and the Stabilisation Unit)[497]

[497] See: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/C/5/pbr_csr07_psa30.pdf

Appendix 2 Changes to the overseas network since 1997

On 6 February 2007, the Government provided the following information on changes to the overseas network since May 1997:

> **Member Tabling Question**: Tobias Ellwood
> **Question**: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many UK (a) embassies and (b) consulates have closed since May 1997. Answering Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office
> **Member Answering Question**: Geoff Hoon
> **Answer**: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has closed eight embassies, five high commissions, and 18 consulates since May 1997. Operations were also suspended at our embassy in Abidjan in April 2005 owing to the security situation there. During the same period, the FCO opened seven embassies, four embassy offices, one office and six consulates. Three consulates were also upgraded to embassies. The FCO continuously reviews the deployment of its resources and aligns them flexibly in line with UK interests to the benefit of the British taxpayer [HC Deb 6 February 2007 c821-824].

Details of missions closed since 1997-98

April to March	*Country*	*Post name*	*Status*	*Closed*	*Temp closed*
1997-98	Colombia	Barranquilla	BC	1	—
1997-98	Switzerland	Zurich	BCG	1	—
1998-99	Malaysia	Kuching	BC	1	—
1998-99	Thailand	Chiang Mai	BC	1	—
1999-2000	USA	Cleveland	BC	1	—
2000-01	Spain	Seville	BC	1	—
2003-04	Mali	Bamako[1]	Embassy	1	—
2003-04	El Salvador	San Salvador	Embassy	1	—
2003-04	Honduras	Tegucigalpa	Embassy	1	—
2003-04	Nicaragua	Managua	Embassy	1	—
2004-05	Cameroon	Douala	BC	1	—
2004-05	Portugal	Oporto	BC	1	—
2005-06	Lesotho	Maseru	BHC	1	—
2005-06	Madagascar	Antananarivo	Embassy	1	—
2005-06	Swaziland	Mbabane	BHC	1	—
2005-06	Cote d'Ivoire	Abidjan	Embassy	1	—
2005-06	Bahamas	Nassau	BHC	1	—
2005-06	Paraguay	Asuncion	Embassy	1	—
2005-06	USA	Dallas	BC	1	—
2005-06	USA	San Juan (Puerto Rico)	BC	1	—
2005-06	Japan	Fukuoka	BC	1	—
2005-06	Vanuatu	Port Vila	BHC	1	—
2005-06	Germany	Frankfurt	BCG	1	—
2005-06	Germany	Stuttgart	BCG	1	—
2005-06	Yemen	Aden	BCG	1	—

2005-06	Cote d'Ivoire	Abidjan	Embassy	—	1
2005-06	Tonga	Nuku' alofa	BHC	1	—
2006-07	Australia	Adelaide	BC	1	—
2006-07	East Timor	Dili[1]	Embassy	1	—
2006-07	Germany	Hamburg	BCG	1	—
2006-07	Sweden	Gothenberg	BCG	1	—
2006-07	USA	Seattle	BC	1	—
Total				**31**	**1**

Details of missions opened since 1997-98

April to March	*Country*	*Post name*	*Status*	*Opened*
1997-98	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Banja Luka	BEO	1
1999-2000	China	Chongqing	BCG	1
1999-2000	Sweden	Gothenburg	BCG	1
2000-01	Guinea	Conakry	BC	1
2000-01	Mali	Bamako[1]	BC	1
2000-01	Haiti	Port-au-Prince	BC	1
2000-01	USA	Denver	BC	1
2000-01	Serbia and Montenegro	Pristina	BO	1
2000-01	Libya	Tripoli	Embassy	1
2001-02	Afghanistan	Kabul	Embassy	1
2001-02	Korea DPR	Pyongyang	Embassy	1
2001-02	Tajikistan	Dushanbe	Embassy	1
2002-03	Moldova	Chisinau	Embassy	1
2002-03	East Timor	Dili[1]	Embassy	1
2004-05	Iraq	Baghdad	Embassy	1
2004-05	Iraq	Basra	BCG	1
2004-05	Iraq	Kirkuk	BEO	1
2006-07	Kazakhstan	Almaty[2]	BEO	1
Total				**18**

[1] Posts opened and closed during this period.
[2] Office left in place after embassy relocation to Astana.

Key to abbreviations:
BE British Embassy
BCG British Consulate General
BHC British High Commission
BEO British Embassy Office
BO—British Office

Note: There have been several further closures since February 2007. The British High Commission in St Vincent and the Grenadines closed in March 2007.[498] Two other High Commissions in the Caribbean – Antigua and Barbuda and Grenada – closed during financial year 2007-8.[499]

[498] Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report 2006-7*, paras 150-156
[499] HC Deb 10 December 2007 c158W