

Telos or Brick Wall?

British Nuclear Posture and European Defence Integration

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List of Acronyms Used

AFSOUTHAllied Forces South (NATO)
CBWChemical and Biological Weapons
CESDP	.....Common European Security and Defence Policy
CFSP	.....Common Foreign and Security Policy
CTBT	.....Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
CESDP	.....Common European Security and Defence Policy
EU	.....European Union
FCO	.....Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
HMS	.....Her Majesty's Ship
JOWOG	.....Joint Working Group
KFOR	.....Kosovo Force (NATO and Partnership for Peace members)
MFA	.....Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Finland)
MP	.....Member of Parliament
MoD	.....Ministry of Defence
NATO	.....North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NFU	.....No-First-Use policy
NMD	.....National Missile Defence
NPG	.....Nuclear Planning Group
NPR	.....Nuclear Posture Review
NPT	.....Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty
OSCE	.....Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PDD	.....Presidential Decision Directive
RAF	.....Royal Air Force
RN	.....Royal Navy
SLBM	.....Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile
SSBN	.....Nuclear Powered and Armed Submarine (Sub-Surface, Ballistic, Nuclear)
UK	.....United Kingdom
UN	.....United Nations
US	.....United States of America
USSR	.....Union of Socialist Soviet Republics
WMD	.....Weapons of Mass Destruction

Telos or Brick Wall?

British Nuclear Posture and European Defence Integration

By Toby Archer¹

1. Introduction

Somewhere, at this very moment under one of the world's oceans, there is a Royal Navy 'Vanguard' class nuclear powered and armed submarine (SSBN) on patrol. Before it returns to port, another one of the four Vanguard class boats will head out into the deep ocean, meaning that no matter what occurs, Britain will always have an unreachable nuclear counter-strike facility. That one submarine, always out at sea and submerged, is now Britain's whole nuclear deterrent; all other nuclear weapons that Britain held during the Cold War, both land based and air-launched, have been decommissioned and dismantled over the last decade. The UK has the smallest nuclear arsenal of all the five nuclear-armed permanent members of the UN Security Council (it is even believed that Israel – undeclared as a nuclear power – now actually possesses more warheads than the UK does). The number of warheads quoted by the Ministry of Defence is now “fewer than 200”², and estimated by independent sources as likely to be around 160³.

In comparison to the huge numbers of nuclear weapons held by US and Russia, this small nuclear force that Britain maintains may seem insignificant. But two factors must be remembered; firstly the massive destructive power of those estimated 160 warheads (one

¹ I wish to thank my sister, Chloe Archer, for researching some media sources unavailable to me in Finland, and my mother, Hilary Archer, for proofreading this paper. Any mistakes in the final version remain solely my own responsibility.

² Ministry of Defence “Key Facts: Nuclear Deterrence” (<http://www.mod.uk/aboutus/factfiles/nuclear.htm> accessed 6 June 2002)

³ *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* November/December 2001 Vol. 57, No. 6, pp. 78–79

SSBN carries armed missiles with the equivalent explosive power of 300 Hiroshima size bombs⁴), and secondly, the vast political value of the weapons – both in terms of *realpolitik* considerations and in their identity value, keeping Britain amongst the select group of the ‘Great Powers’, as represented by the permanent members of the UN Security Council. France is in a very similar situation with its nuclear forces, and although this paper will focus more specifically on the UK, France is indeed crucial to much that follows.

Simply put, nuclear weapons make France and the UK special – be that for better or worse. Particularly within the European Union (EU) their nuclear status makes them exceptional. This paper will consider the apparent changes in British nuclear weapons policy; what this means and the technical, strategic and political reasons behind the change. The second purpose of the paper is to then consider how nuclear weapons in general, and British nuclear posture in particular, will have repercussions on the Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP) and possibly the Union more generally, ultimately considering whether a European nuclear force represents the *telos* of the EU – the logical endpoint of the integration process. Or rather could British nuclear weapons represent a ‘brick wall’ into which European integration will inevitably collide?

2. British nuclear weapons: A History of Disingenuousness?

British nuclear weapons have lurked quietly in the background for a decade now; ignored, and allowing discussions to move forward on other matters both within British politics and in European discussions on defence and security. This is because it has been generally believed that British nuclear weapons are there solely as a deterrent - not to be used. De Gaulle argued in the 1960s that France just had to show that it had the capacity to “tear off an arm” to dissuade the Soviet Union from attack⁵, and most have considered

⁴ Pullinger, Stephen (1998) “Britain, *Trident* and Disarmament” *Disarmament Diplomacy* Issue No. 17 (<http://www.acronym.org.uk/dd/dd17/17trid.htm> accessed 6 June 2002)

⁵ Freedman, Lawrence (2001) “Europe and Deterrence” in Schmitt, B. (ed.) *Nuclear Weapons: A New Great Debate* Chaillot Papers 48, Paris: Institute for Security Studies (p.82)

that British nuclear weapons are there for the same purpose. But this is not so and neither has it ever been fully the case. The following section 2.1 will consider the deterrent role, but section 2.2 will go on to look at the comments of the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon MP, who in March 2002 spoke openly about a willingness to use British nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear armed state. This is called a sub-strategic role, and caused some waves in the UK as a change in policy. However section 2.3 will argue that actually the only new thing here is the Defence Secretary's willingness to vocalise what has long been believed by a significant section of the political and military establishment in the UK – that nuclear weapons have a role in fighting wars.

2.1 Deterrence

Deterring the Soviet Union was obviously the central purpose of Trident, and of the Polaris SLBMs that preceded Trident's introduction in the late 1980s. The given justification during the Cold War for British nuclear weapons was that of 'multiple centres of decision' (meaning that Soviet planners could never be certain of a response to their actions)⁶. Not often publicly acknowledged, yet at the back of policy-makers minds, was always that the US had the possibility of abandoning Europe to its fate at the hands of the Soviet Union. French and British nukes ensured that the USSR would think twice about attacking either, even if it was believed that the US would not follow through on its nuclear promises to the NATO members.

Tony Blair's Labour Government that came to power in 1997 quietly accepted the continuance of the policy of nuclear deterrence. There has been no re-run of the savage internal party battles over policy on nuclear weapons that went on within the party in the early 80s and culminated in the 1983 General Election Manifesto that committed Labour to unilateral nuclear disarmament. The manifesto was later described by long-time Labour MP Gerald Kaufman, as the "longest suicide note in history" – referring to Labour's subsequent massive defeat. Secondly, the British electorate has shown no real interest in the issue since the end of the Cold War; so maintaining the status quo is uncontroversial and un-costly in political terms.

⁶ *ibid.*

Thirdly, Britain's big European push under Labour has been on matters of defence integration. Blair's government would not want anything discussed that could compromise this and nuclear weapons, as will be discussed below, stand a very good chance of doing just that. The deterrence position is well known and understood by the UK's partners, and therefore not likely to stir controversy.

2.2 A new policy of nuclear war fighting?

Throughout the Cold War period, NATO never had a nuclear 'no first use' policy. This was because it was believed by the NATO countries, that they might well have to use nuclear weapons in response to what they perceived would be an overwhelming attack by Warsaw Pact conventional forces. Simply put, the Eastern bloc had so many men, tanks and planes, the West might have no choice but to 'go nuclear' in the face of a superior conventional force. Although this time has now passed⁷, the UK has not updated its nuclear doctrine by introducing a 'no first use' policy, as for example India has done. Despite this, in signing the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) the UK committed itself to not using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-capable states unless they were to attack Britain in alliance with another, nuclear-armed state.

Yet in recent months a number of issues have brought nuclear policy back into public debate. Firstly there is the very real concern over the possibility of a nuclear exchange in South Asia. All of Pakistan is vulnerable to an Indian strike, and although the Pakistani missile technology does not mean all of India is within range of its nuclear weapons, huge population centres such as Delhi and Mumbai are. The Pentagon has already released a report suggesting that 12 million people could die on the first day of a nuclear war between the two countries⁸. Britain, as the former imperial power to both states, has complex, and at times difficult but nevertheless close, relations to both India and Pakistan. British Foreign Minister Jack Straw was despatched to the region rapidly as

⁷ indeed the Cold War situation has now been almost reversed, with Russia renouncing the Soviet Union's No-First-Use policy to compensate for its conventional weakness in the face of an expanding NATO, brought about by the collapse of both the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union itself.

⁸ "Nuclear war could kill 12 million, says US estimate" *The Guardian* 28 May 2002

tension mounted, to try and intercede and reach some type of truce. But before he went, Mr Straw faced questions as to why India and Pakistan should listen to the UK when the UK itself has never renounced the first use option? The Foreign Minister's rather lame reply was that the western nuclear powers' likelihood of using weapons was "so distant as not to be worth discussing."⁹

One of the Labour government's slogans for its period in office is "Joined Up Government", meaning better coordination between different government departments. Little evidence of this is apparent between the Foreign Office (FCO) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) because not long before Straw's comments on the preposterousness of the mere idea of Britain using its nuclear weapons, Defence Minister Geoff Hoon had publicly been musing on that very issue. In March 2002 he had broken with all convention, and in connection with discussion on a potential war with Iraq, suggested that Britain would be prepared to use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear state under certain conditions. He later clarified this by saying that an example might be if Britain believed that Iraq *was about* to use chemical or biological weapons against British troops in a potential 'Second Gulf War'¹⁰, and made the point a third time in the House of Commons. Analysts noted that the Defence Ministers' first comment seemed 'off the cuff', not a pre-planned policy statement – but the fact that the minister reasserted the position a number of times subsequently suggests that the Government is satisfied with the policy position.¹¹

Considerable further evidence of this appears in media reports that the MoD is preparing to spend £2 billion on the Aldermaston site, allowing the manufacture of a new generation of nuclear weapons, and maintaining the viability of the current ones. The information came out in a planning application made to the local authority, which alerted

⁹ Quoted by Hugo Young "Hoon's talk of pre-emptive strikes could be catastrophic" *The Guardian* 6 June 2002

¹⁰ The BBC 20 March 2002 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/uk_politics/newsid_1883000/1883258.stm accessed 6 June 2002)

¹¹ Garden, Timothy (2002) "UK Nuclear Strategy" *The Source Public Management Journal* 28 March 2002 (online at: <http://www.sourceuk.net/indexf.html?02417> accessed 6 June 2002)

a local MP, Martin Salter, who tabled a number of parliamentary questions on the matter.¹²

Lewis Moonie, the junior Defence Minister, stated to parliament that Aldermaston would be expanded to allow it to maintain the current warheads that are loaded on Trident missiles, deployed aboard the Vanguard class submarines, and that it would not be developing new small yield nuclear weapons as have been discussed in the context of the US ‘War on Terror’. But sources at Aldermaston told the media that these could be developed at the facility if the government gave the word – particularly nuclear warheads for the UK’s Tomahawk cruise missiles¹³ that unlike the US Tomahawks, do not currently have nuclear warheads made for them.

2.3 The secret history of British nuclear war-fighting strategy

In fact there should be no surprise at Hoon’s comments. Since the beginning of the nuclear age the British military has considered that in certain contexts nuclear weapons have a role to play in wars. As noted above, NATO always argued that it might have to fight a nuclear war against the Warsaw Pact due to the conventional superiority of the Soviet Alliance. This was codified in document MC 14/3 and known as the strategy of flexible response. As part of the NATO forces, the British Army, RAF and RN were all equipped with various types of tactical nuclear weapons. In addition various events during the Cold War were actually dangerously ‘hot’: the Quemoy/Matsu crisis with China in the 50s, the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, the 1973 Yom Kippur war, the Soviets nearly panicking after misinterpreting the 1983 ‘Able Archer’ NATO exercise – all came close to becoming nuclear.¹⁴ Paul Rogers writes: “In nuclear terms, the Cold War was not as cold as it seemed, and people at many levels within the armed forces in the UK would have learnt to live with the possibility of nuclear war. This was coupled with a policy that envisaged fighting a limited nuclear war, accompanied by a complex set of nuclear

¹² “Secret plan for N-Bomb factory” *The Observer* 16 June 2002 and “MoD plans £2bn nuclear expansion” *The Guardian* 18 June 2002

¹³ Cruise missiles, launched from RN submarines, fly at low altitudes to their targets, as opposed to the Trident system which is a submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM) that goes into space before returning down to its target.

¹⁴ Rogers, Paul (1996) *Sub-Strategic Trident: A Slow Burning Fuse* (London Defence Studies 34) Centre for Defence Studies/Brassey’s, London (pp.6-10)

deployments, planning and training which were all based on this policy... The NATO experience is one important part of the evolution of Britain's nuclear policy."¹⁵

Rogers continues that the concept of nuclear war fighting was less attractive in Europe for obvious reasons, than it was in other parts of the world. The RN gave India a nuclear guarantee in the mid-50s against Chinese aggression, and nuclear tactical bombers were deployed to Singapore in 1963 during a time of Indonesian-UK tension.¹⁶ Perhaps even more significant was the role of nuclear weapons in the Falkland War of 1982. So many of the RN's ships rapidly despatched south had tactical nuclear weapons on them, that the Navy organised the off loading of some, in case many ships were sunk by Argentine forces and the weapons lost. It is rumoured that HMS Sheffield had nuclear depth charges aboard when she was sunk by an Argentine Exocet missiles. In the early days of the war, the RAF bombed Port Stanley airport, flying a complex and very long mission from Ascension Island, requiring numerous in-flight re-fuelling procedures. Analysts argue that the mission had little real military value, but rather was a message that all of Argentina was in range of RAF bombers and their nuclear bombs. Perhaps most importantly was the diversion of one of Britain's Polaris SSBNs (the forerunner of Trident) to the South Atlantic, and the selection of a largely uninhabited part of northern Argentina for a 'demonstration shot'. This plan was prepared when there was a very real chance that Argentina would gain air superiority and destroy the Task Force, which would have led rapidly to the fall of the Thatcher government.¹⁷ Professor Rogers concludes: "...the whole affair... has to be seen in the context of the British nuclear establishment's long-term attitude to nuclear weapons. Contrary to popular opinion, nuclear weapons are seen as useable instruments of war, and there is a long-standing belief that they are appropriate for use in crises involving nuclear or non-nuclear states."¹⁸

¹⁵ *ibid.* (p.11)

¹⁶ *ibid* (pp.13-15)

¹⁷ *ibid* (pp.19-27) Rogers notes that the Polaris deployment in particular will have to wait for the 30 year rule to pass to be confirmed one hundred percent, but enough leaks and disclosures from former servicemen, officials and involved politicians from the time now enable us to be reasonably sure that this happened.

¹⁸ *ibid.* (p.27)

More recently, the Government has openly acknowledged that Trident has a “sub-strategic” role in addition to its strategic one.¹⁹ The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists quotes an MoD official as describing a sub-strategic strike as “the limited and highly selective use of nuclear weapons in a manner that fell demonstrably short of a strategic strike, but with a sufficient level of violence to convince an aggressor who had already miscalculated our resolve and attacked us that he should halt his aggression and withdraw or face the prospect of a devastating strategic strike.”²⁰ Trident SLBMs can be armed with a number of nuclear warheads, but in its sub-strategic role it is armed only with one, and this can be of lower explosive power. Rogers notes that four scenarios for sub-strategic use have been identified; 1) in response to nuclear attack on British troops (a Gulf War rerun for example), 2) in response to chemical or biological weapon (CBW) attack, 3) as a ‘demonstration shot’, or 4) in response to a state that has refused to stop a certain action²¹ (it is important to note though, that these situations have been identified by independent analysts and not put forward by any government source). Senior military officials see Trident as eminently suitable for this role because it has an enormous range, around 7400 km, and secondly because the previous probable method of delivering a sub-strategic nuclear strike would have been via an air strike by RAF Tornados. This would not only be difficult and dangerous for the planes, but also there is the question of where a plane would take-off. A former British Admiral has suggested that in the case of the Middle East, the only possible air base for Britain would be RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, and the government of that country is not likely to be happy with a nuclear strike being launched from its territory.²²

¹⁹ see for example *Statement on Defence Estimates* Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Defence May 1996 Chapter 2, paragraph 202 “The United Kingdom's strategic *and sub-strategic* nuclear capability is currently provided by a force of three [Trident] ballistic missile submarines...” (my emphasis)

²⁰ *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* November/December 2001 op.cit.

²¹ Rogers, Paul (1996) op. cit. (p.41)

²² *ibid.* (p.2)

3. The UK – US nuclear link

The so-called “Special Relationship”, the enduring closeness despite times of tension and disagreement, between the United States and the United Kingdom is a central political concept in the UK. A favourite journalistic fallback is the article on the health of the special relationship, and in the post 9-11 world it is back at the top of the news agenda. Early fears that the Blair government’s closeness to the Clinton administration, and also Britain standing with its EU partners against some of the first year unilateralist decisions of the Bush administration would damage the relationship, were quickly silenced in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. Blair’s “shoulder to shoulder” comment, his standing ovation from the US congress and his numerous visits to Washington in the autumn of 2001, have shown that the special relationship is back in rude health. The more Washington feels isolated with regard to policy on Iraq, the more it will rely on support from the UK (and to a lesser degree, Australia).

Churchill noted that you can always rely on America to do the right thing after it has exhausted all other possibilities – and this rather barbed compliment illustrates the ups and down of the US – UK relationship. But no matter how much the politicians are praising or criticising each other across the Atlantic, the level and significance of military cooperation, most notably on nuclear matters, cannot be underestimated. The closeness and levels of trust represented by this military cooperation are perhaps without precedent, only US – Israeli cooperation could be said to be similar.

Nuclear weapons are often seen as illustrative of the most fundamental existential level of the nation state - the symbol that guarantees statehood and therefore independence. Therefore it is remarkable, that Britain does not actually own any of the nuclear-armed missiles that it operates. Although the submarines that the missiles are loaded onto are British, as are the actual nuclear warheads they carry, Britain only owns the right to use Trident II D5 missile bodies, produced and serviced by Lockheed Martin, from a pool of missiles held at the Strategic Weapons facility at Kings Bay Submarine Base, Georgia

USA.²³ Development of the technology is done with the US and test firing of the missile by the RN is done at the US Eastern Test Range off the coast of Florida. UK SSBNs are regular visitors to Kings Bay, Georgia, as are the US Trident subs to Faslane in Scotland, the home base of the British SSBNs²⁴. If anything, the cooperation between the US and UK nuclear establishment has been increasing recently, when judged by the number of visits of nuclear weapons related personal, from both the public and private sectors, visiting their counterparts and colleagues on the other side of the Atlantic. There are also 17 known US-UK JOWOGs, or joint working groups, on matters of warhead and missile technology.²⁵ This cooperation is carried out under the 1958 Mutual Defence Agreement²⁶, and this agreement has led to a closeness between the US and UK that is unprecedented, particularly considering the secrecy, suspicion and hostility that has typified the relations amongst the other declared nuclear powers, and those states' relations with the US and UK.

In many ways, US – UK security relations come far closer to the ideal of the Deutschan 'Security Community' than even the EU has managed; where trust between the two states is so absolute that even something as existentially important as nuclear weapons are de-securitized and in some ways de-nationalised between the two states.

This interpretation is though, only one side of the coin. On the flip side is the UK's almost total dependency on the US on nuclear matters – the partners in the relationship are far from equal. This dependency comes in two forms; the first is simply technical – Britain upgrades its missiles and submarines in the same way as the US does to avoid the "penalties of uniqueness" as the previous Conservative Government put it²⁷. Butler and Bromley argue: "As it shares the US Trident II D5 missile pool, Britain is completely

²³ Butler, Nicola and Bromley, Mark (2001) *Secrecy and Dependency: The UK Trident System in the 21st Century* British American Security Information Council, Research Report 2001.3 (available in PDF format www.basicint.org/Uktrident.pdf) (pp.22-23)

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ see Bromley, M. Grahame, D. Kucia, C. (2002) *Bunker Busters: Washington's Drive for New Nuclear Weapons* British American Security Information Council, Research Report 2002.2 (p. 49) and Butler, Nicola and Bromley, Mark (2001) *op. cit.* (pp.21-22)

²⁶ *ibid.* (p.12)

²⁷ *ibid.* (p.22)

dependent on the United States for its Trident ballistic missile procurement, testing and servicing. If it wishes to retain Trident, the UK Government therefore has little choice but to accept whatever developments the United States decides to pursue for the future of its Trident missile forces.”²⁸

The second form of dependency is doctrinal; UK nuclear forces are designated as NATO forces and therefore follow NATO nuclear doctrine as established by NATO’s NPG (Nuclear Planning Group), of which all NATO states except France are members. With the US being first among equals within NATO and the NPG: “NATO nuclear policy must be in broad agreement with US nuclear policy to avoid internal contradiction with the Pentagon.”²⁹ This has been seen since the end of the Cold War in that NATO policy has followed US policy, in now holding that nuclear weapons have a role in deterring the use of all WMDs (Weapons of Mass Destruction).

Defence Secretary Hoon’s comments seem less remarkable, when viewed in this light. They seem to reflect the change in US policy started by President Clinton with PDD 60 (Presidential Decision Directive) in 1997 which is said to have ordered that nuclear weapons be used to deter the proliferation of WMDs, and has been continued by the Bush administration’s Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) in 2002. Hoon’s comments were both offering political cover and support to the US administration, whilst also suggesting that the UK alone would be willing to deter WMD use by an enemy against British troops, obviously in this case meaning during an attack on Iraq. The issue is rife with problems of a legal, moral and strategic nature. Strategically, one analyst argues that in stating a willingness to use nuclear weapons against a CBW armed state, it opens up “the Commitment Trap”, where the nuclear power might end up self deterring – being unwilling to cross the nuclear-threshold.³⁰ Britain being a signatory to the NPT, and hence giving negative security assurances to non nuclear-armed states, brings in the legal and moral problems. Nevertheless, a close mirroring of US policy is to be expected for

²⁸ *ibid.* (p.23)

²⁹ Bromley, M. Grahame, D. Kucia, C. (2002) *op. cit.* (p.47)

³⁰ Sagan, Scott (2000) “The Commitment Trap: Why the United States Should Not Use Nuclear Threats to Deter Biological and Chemical Weapons Attacks” *International Security* Vol. 24, No. 4 (Spring 2000)

the reasons outlined above, and this is what the Defence Secretary appears to have done. As Butler and Bromley note: “Any serious consideration of a more independent UK stance on a range of key international issues has to take the extent and effect of these [nuclear] interconnections into account.”³¹

The final chapter will consider the implications of Britain’s nuclear posture on the matter of European defence integration, but first we must consider the European Union’s other nuclear power, France: a nuclear weapons state with no dependency on the US and although a member of NATO, France is not a member of NATO’s NPG and therefore does not follow NATO nuclear policy.

4. France

France as the only other nuclear-armed European state is obviously central to the issue of the future of European defence integration and how nuclear weapons will impinge on this. Despite many similarities between the UK and France (very similar in population and economic size, imperial and internationalist history etc.), France has a very different strategic culture, and throughout the Cold War, saw its nuclear weapons in a very different way to the UK; Gaullist nuclear doctrine believing that alliances were impossible in the nuclear age whilst the UK held that they were perfectly possible, especially if the nuclear guarantee was provided by a superpower³². Nevertheless Freedman notes that ultimately UK and French policy were not as far apart as many thought during the cold war, British policy was more nationalist than claimed, and France also saw the prospect of a US pullout from Europe as disastrous³³.

³¹ Butler, Nicola and Bromley, Mark (2001) op. cit. (p.19)

³² Freedman, Lawrence (2001) op. cit. (p.83)

³³ *ibid.* (p.82)

4.1 French nuclear weapons systems and their history

France has maintained more nuclear weapons than the UK, and has a wider range of different types of weapons. It also relies predominantly on SSBNs for its main counter strike capability, but also has nuclear air launched missiles designed to be delivered by France's *Mirage*, *Super-Étendard* and *Rafale* fighter-bomber aircraft. Its ground-based missiles have now been decommissioned.³⁴ France faced worldwide criticism in 1995 when it conducted nuclear tests in the South Pacific, but President Chirac insisted the tests were necessary to update France's weapons and maintain the nation's safety³⁵. The tests were carried out at the time so that France would be able to subsequently sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to avoid France having to cooperate with the US on test dates and being drawn "much like Britain, into a condition of technical dependence on the United States"³⁶.

France left NATO's NPG in the 1960s, after De Gaulle brought France out of the military dimension of NATO, arguing that NPG membership meant strategic subordination to the US, an argument that France still makes³⁷. The British experience of following NATO, and hence US nuclear doctrine, shows that the French position has been somewhat justified. The creation of France's independent deterrent force was ostensibly to deter Soviet aggression, but independence from the US was an important factor, as was France's difficult relationship with Germany. Indeed the offers to 'Europeanize' the French nuclear forces (see below) have been at times influenced by the ardent French desire *not* to see a nuclear-armed Germany.

4.2 Debate on French nuclear strategy

Within France there are different schools of thought on nuclear weapons, David Yost describes them as the "less operational" and "more operational" schools. The "less" school, notably followed by the Socialist Party, argues that nuclear weapons should remain firmly in the background – the classic deterrent pose but nothing else. The "more"

³⁴ for further details see: *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* July/August 2001 Vol. 57, No. 4, (pp.70–71)

³⁵ "Chirac insists on need for tests" *The Times* 11 September 1995 (p.11)

³⁶ Yost, David (1996) "France's Nuclear Dilemmas" *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 75, No. 1, January/February 1996 (p.111)

³⁷ *ibid.* (p.113)

school, often associated with the Gaullists, see deterrent and offensive value in possessing smaller and low yield nuclear weapons in addition to the main counter-strike weapons, and has indeed pointed to ‘The Threats from the South’, particularly states armed with CBWs (see below).³⁸ Unlike the current UK policy, in France the “less” school seems more influential. Indeed President Chirac, who in the early 90s was identified as being of the “more” school, has since stated that it would be impossible for France to develop new low-yield weapons because it intends to respect its commitments under the CTBT, and in any case they are a bad idea as they increase a state’s temptation to use them.³⁹ Chirac, in 1999, also wrote a joint letter with Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder urging the US to ratify the CTBT, and therefore limit their future ability to develop new sub-strategic weapons⁴⁰. France has also expressed much disquiet over the Bush Administration’s plan for National Missile Defence (NMD)

Nevertheless, despite French opposition to the recent changes making US policy more aggressive, it has no plans for nuclear disarmament itself. Importantly there are many in France who see French nuclear weapons as not only guaranteeing French sovereignty but having a role to play in protecting the EU as well.

4.3 The ‘Europeanization’ offers

In the autumn of 1995, France conducted nuclear tests on the Mururoa atoll in the South Pacific. Worldwide outrage was the result, with particularly vehement attacks coming understandably from New Zealand, Australia and other South Pacific states. France found criticism from these states easier to weather (they claimed New Zealand and Australia just wanted France out of the Pacific⁴¹), than from the European Union partners. Sweden, Denmark and Ireland led the attack from within the EU. France’s response was to argue that the French nuclear forces could have a role in defending all of the EU and not just France⁴², and therefore the partners were being really rather ‘bad sports’ criticising the tests that could ultimately benefit them all. Unsurprisingly the offer of

³⁸ Yost, David (1994) “Nuclear Debate in France” *Survival* Vol. 36, No. 4 Winter 1994-95 (pp.114-115)

³⁹ Yost, David (1996) op. cit. (pp.115-116)

⁴⁰ Bromley, M. Grahame, D. Kucia, C. (2002) op. cit. (p.52)

⁴¹ *The Times* 11 September 1995 op. cit.

⁴² “Chirac nuclear plan for the EU” *Financial Times* 1 September 1995 (p.2)

France's nuclear deterrent to the Union was given "short shrift by most member states and polite dismissal by Britain and Germany."⁴³

There was nothing particularly new in this offer; de Gaulle had made such suggestions in the 1960s, Mitterrand in 1992 and both Chirac and Alain Juppé, earlier in 1995. These offers have to be seen within the political situations of the time, de Gaulle's suggestions in the 60s, and Mitterrand's from the early post-Cold War period, and were aimed at assuring Germany that France would assure its defence even in the case of an American pull-out, and hence had no need to seek its own nuclear weapons. Chirac's push was against the background of the French South Pacific tests. Yost notes that the French were grateful that the British and German governments were far more restrained than some other EU partners, even though both felt that the simplest way for France to make its nuclear commitment to its European allies was through joining the NPG. That way, Germany and UK felt that a Euro-deterrent wouldn't lead to a US pullback from its commitment to providing a deterrent for Europe⁴⁴. Britain's nuclear relations with France were already much improved by this point; when Mitterrand had made the similar suggestion in 1992 the British reaction was surprisingly un-hostile. The UK also feared that with the Cold War ending the US might leave Europe to its own devices. They also saw cooperation with France as a way to gain influence in the then European Community (now EU), in a manner not open to Germany. Finally, cooperation with France could have significant budgetary benefits⁴⁵. In 1992 the Franco-British Joint Commission on Nuclear Policy and Doctrine was launched, this was turned into a permanent institution in 1993, showing that the two countries have come much closer on nuclear matters⁴⁶. Freedman reports that UK-French nuclear cooperation is now as intense as is possible without the UK running into difficulties with the US due to its commitments under the

⁴³ "France put in nuclear dock at Euro meeting" *The Times* 11 September 1995 (p.11)

⁴⁴ Yost, David (1996) op. cit. (pp.113)

⁴⁵ Whitney, Nicholas (1994) "British Nuclear policy after the Cold War" *Survival* Vol. 36, no. 4 Winter 1994-95 (p.105-106)

⁴⁶ *ibid.* (p.106)

1958 treaty; for example British and French SSBN patrols are now coordinated, as is missile targeting⁴⁷.

France came quite close to ‘Europeanizing’ its nuclear force in the way favoured by the UK – by joining NATO’s NPG – in the period of 1995 to 1996, but the French got into a purely political argument with the US over whether a European or American should command NATO AFSOUTH in Naples, an argument they were destined to lose, and the warming relations with NATO and the US became colder once again.⁴⁸

Despite the bold suggestions by the politicians for French nuclear guarantees for the EU, the problems inherent in the idea have been well recognised. For example France’s February 1994 Defence White paper stated: “The problem of a European nuclear doctrine is bound to become one of the major questions in the construction of a common European defence. The pertinence of the issue will become more evident as the European Union builds its political identity as well as its security and defence identity. Such a prospect remains distant, but must not be lost from sight. With nuclear capabilities, in fact, Europe’s defence autonomy is possible. Without them, it is out of the question... there will, however, be no European nuclear doctrine or European deterrent until there are European vital interests, considered as such by the Europeans and so understood by others. In the meantime, France does not intend to dilute its means of national defence in such a domain under any pretext.”⁴⁹

5. European Defence Integration and Nuclear Weapons

European Defence Integration is a deliberately vague term, but for this paper it is taken to mean both the EU’s Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP) and its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). In some ways ‘Security Integration’ could

⁴⁷ Freedman, Lawrence (2001) op. cit. (pp.97-98), also Clarke, Michael (2000) “French and British security; mirror images in a globalized world” *International Affairs* Vol. 76 No.4 2000 also notes the coordination of SSBN patrols (p.728) which appears to be something of an open secret.

⁴⁸ Clarke, Michael (2000) op. cit. (p.726)

⁴⁹ quoted by Yost, David (1994) op. cit. (p.126)

be a better description because the idea includes both aspects of military/defence integration as well as external relations/foreign policy integration. The fact that the majority of the EU members are also NATO members, and that those states joining the EU in the near future are also already NATO members (or will probably soon be), is also an important consideration in what ‘European Defence Integration’ means.

So far the issue of nuclear weapons has been kept well off the agenda of the EU except periodic – and quickly rebuffed - French offers to put the Union under their ‘nuclear umbrella’ as analysed above, and in formulating joint European positions on nuclear weapons related issues and treaties – often in regard to anti-proliferation and disarmament. Indeed Lawrence Freedman writes: “The benign neglect of the nuclear issue has been a necessary, though by no means sufficient, condition for progress on European defence cooperation.”⁵⁰

Yet depending on the EU’s intentions for the future of their CFSP and CESDP, the issue may well rise to the surface once more, and if the EU adopts an activist or interventionist policy outside of its borders that includes UK troops, in the light of the British Defence Secretary’s recent comments, the issue is going to have to be faced.

5.1 European Strategic Ambition

The EU seems without doubt to be moving away from the idea of a ‘Civilian Power’, but if it is to become some sort of military power, what will this entity look like? Where will it be willing to project its force and how much force will it be willing to use?

The current legal situation on what actions the EU can take under what still tends to be called “crisis management” is laid down in the Amsterdam Treaty after the inclusion in the Treaty of the so-called Petersberg Tasks. François Heisbourg writes: “On paper, the Petersberg tasks include virtually any military operation not undertaken as a result of a collective-defence commitment, since they embrace peacekeeping, humanitarian intervention and peace-establishment. In retrospect, massive and forceful UN-mandated

⁵⁰ Freedman, Lawrence (2001) op. cit. (p.97)

military intervention to restore peace in the framework of the *status quo ante* – such as the 1950-53 Korean War or the Gulf War – could be deemed to be covered by the peace establishment segment of the Petersberg tasks. Even the humanitarian component of the Petersberg tasks can be significantly more demanding than appears at first sight: a truly effective humanitarian intervention in Bosnia in 1992 would have called for a large-scale expeditionary operation.”⁵¹

Heisbourg also notes that the EU states are now less easy to stereotype on their interventionist sentiments, or lack thereof, than before. Although France and the UK remain the most interventionist globally, Italy has increasingly been willing to commit forces to worldwide missions, and even Ireland, Finland, Sweden and Austria have all made significant contributions to KFOR, which “given its robust rules of engagement, is hardly a traditional peacekeeping force.”⁵²

The discussions that continue within the EU over capability for EU forces include such issues as force projection (and hence heavy lift capability), better communications and intelligence systems, and even spy satellites⁵³. All of this suggests serious intentions of having a force capable of difficult ‘out-of-areas’ military operations.

Of course the speed that which CESDP progresses is far from certain; there remain many misgivings, both on the Euro-sceptic right in countries such as the UK and on the left in non-aligned countries such as Finland. Indeed the Finnish President Tarja Halonen, has said that European Defence Integration remains just a “development vista” that only “could” lead to common defence⁵⁴, and an official within the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has said that Finland signed the Maastricht Treaty when joining the EU without looking for some kind of opt-out on military matters, because a study was carried

⁵¹ Heisbourg, François (2000) “Europe’s Strategic Ambitions: The Limits of Ambiguity” *Survival* vol. 42, no. 2, Summer 2000 (p.6)

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ see the section entitled “Satellite battles” in Grant, Charles (2000) *Intimate relations: Can Britain play a leading role in European defence – and keep its special links to US intelligence?* Centre for European Reform Working Paper (<http://www.cer.org.uk/n5publicatio/cerwp4.pdf>)

⁵⁴ Halonen, Tarja (2000) *At the core of Europe as a non-participant in Military Alliances – Finnish Thoughts and Experiences* Lecture at the University of Stockholm 2.5.2000 (<http://www.tpk.fi/netcomm>)

out by the MFA that concluded that military integration would not truly happen within a number of decades⁵⁵.

Nevertheless pressure remains, particularly from the Franco-British dynamic after the St Malo accords, to have capable and deployable EU forces. The logic behind this might be different for each country, but the momentum is there. For the UK under the Blair Government, a strong CESDP is connected to maintaining relations with the US as well as finding a more central role in Europe. For France, the EU is arguably a “power-multiplier”⁵⁶ increasing the strength and security for France and equally importantly France, like the other southern EU states, now looks to the south for its security concerns and no longer to the East. North Africa and the Middle East are now seen as the most important zone of instability for Europe, and in this sense Finland’s Northern Dimension programme can be seen as something of a rearguard action, trying to draw EU attention away from the security issues of the Mediterranean basin and back to the threats still emerging from Russia. Particularly post 9-11, tension with Russia has lessened even more, whilst North Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Middle East have become central to the “War on Terrorism”. NATO has responded to this with new headquarters for rapid troop mobilisation being set up in Milan, Madrid and Istanbul, and the strengthening of NATO naval HQ in Naples.⁵⁷

5.2 The Threat from the South? A role for Euro-nukes?

Oliver Richmond writes: “On the fringes of the EU are located several ethnic and identity conflicts taking place in failing, often underdeveloped states, involving disputes over autonomy and sovereignty. In these areas traditional state-centric security dilemmas still prevail; ethnic-security dilemmas also exist.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Interview with Kari Möttölä, Special Advisor, Dept. of Political Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 9/10/2001, Helsinki.

⁵⁶ Axel Sauder quoted by Campbell, Edwina (1999) *The Relevance of American Power: The Anglo-American Past and the Euro-Atlantic Future* London Defence Studies 49, The Centre for Defence Studies, London (p.27)

⁵⁷ “NATO shifts focus to threat from south” *The Guardian* 30 May 2002

⁵⁸ Richmond, Oliver (2000) “Emerging Concepts of Security in the European Order: Implications for ‘Zones of Conflict’ at the Fringe of the EU” *European Security* Vol. 9, No.1, Spring 2000 (p.51)

The EU has to face the reality that its 'near-abroad' is unstable to a degree that, for example, the US does not have to face. The EU so far has generally followed policies of engagement with what were previously known as 'rogue states'⁵⁹, as opposed to the US strategy of isolation and containment. Nevertheless France still has fears about Algeria and the UK has had experience of Libyan state-sponsored terrorism, and all the EU is aware of the American accusations that Libya is developing CBWs⁶⁰. The situation in the Middle East also concerns the whole EU.

As the UK has now openly admitted to a willingness to respond to a CBW attack on its troops with nuclear weapons, where does this leave British involvement in any future EU mission where there is a chance of facing a CBW-armed adversary? Would the other EU states be able to even accept a British threat of nuclear use as a deterrent against CBW use? Or would they perhaps quietly be happy to have a nuclear-armed member who could credibly make such a threat? This may seem a somewhat fanciful, or too far off a possibility, but it should be remembered that in early 1996 a member of the Clinton administration went so far as to publicly announce the type of nuclear bomb best suited to destroy the Tarhunah underground complex in Libya, suspected by the US to be a CBW installation.⁶¹ Although current events in Libya make it look far more likely to be a future business partner of the EU than a strategic rival, the situation still suggests that EU forces facing CBW-armed opponents is not an issue that should be ignored in the hope that it might go away. An interesting aside is that if Turkey is ever successful in its quest to join the EU, the Union would then have a border with Iran, Iraq and Syria.

The 'Threat from the South' could be dismissed as military establishments searching for a new justification for their budgets in the post-Cold War era. This is perhaps overly cynical – France has much experience of terrorism that originates in North Africa, (although of course France's history with Algeria puts it in a different position to other EU states) and in the aftermath of 9-11 Spanish, German and Italian police have all made

⁵⁹ The US administration now uses the term 'States of Concern'.

⁶⁰ Only Egyptian inspectors have been to the sites of concern, but said they could find no evidence to support the US claims.

⁶¹ the bomb suggested was a B-61. See Sagan, Scott (2000) op. cit. (p.103)

arrests of people claimed to be part of the al-Qaida network. Yet terrorism, even if it is state sponsored, does not fit into the logic of deterrence (indeed Israeli studies have indicated numerous problems in trying to deter a CBW attack with nuclear weapons⁶²), and although this threat might seem immediate one can construct only the most tenuous of arguments where nuclear weapons, French or British, could have any role in countering it. Indeed, within the EU the plurality of political cultures have led to a situation where ‘crisis management’ is seen as a far wider activity than just military operations. Both Finnish and Swedish leaders have urged that the EU must develop its civilian crisis management capability in line with its military capability, and the EU’s willingness to engage with regimes like Libya and even North Korea shows an alternative path to American military posturing over “States of Concern”. Nevertheless, if EU troops were to come into conflict with the army of a CBW-armed state, according to Defence Secretary Hoon’s logic, the UK would be prepared to use nuclear weapons. This might seem a far-fetched scenario but it cannot be dismissed out of hand.

6. *Telos* or Brick wall?

Having discussed above the history and current rationale of British nuclear posture, how this links the UK to the United States in a unique way, the difference between France and the UK on military issues, and how the EU and nuclear weapons intersect – it is now time to go back to the original question: is the possession of nuclear weapons the logical endpoint of the European integration process? Or alternatively, could nuclear weapons, and the British ones in particular, be the rocks upon which European integration might founder?

6.1 Telos

President Mitterrand, in May 1994, suggested it could take a century, maybe two, to unite Europe to the point where agreement on vital interests and political and strategic

⁶² Freedman, Lawrence (2001) op. cit. (p.89), also see: Sagan, Scott (2000) op. cit.

command would allow a shared nuclear force⁶³. One hopes that within two hundred years mankind overall may have found a better way of resolving its differences, but Mitterrand's point was clear: nuclear weapons would be the European Union's *telos*, the logical endpoint of the integration process. In effect, when the Union is no longer a union of states, but rather a state in itself then it will be able to handle the trappings of a state - pre-eminent among them being nuclear weapons. This is the flip side of the British Eurosceptic argument against CESDP, which was greeted by the British rightwing press as an attempt to form a "Euro-Army", heralding the arrival of a 'super-state' into which Britain would disappear never to be seen again.

Both Mitterrand and the Eurosceptics are wrong, whatever the EU becomes it will not be just another state. The EU will not become a United States of Europe and operate with the singleness of purpose that the USA - as a single sovereign state, demonstrates now. The historical and political cultures of the member-states, and the emergent political culture of the Union overall, will not allow this. The treaty of Westphalia in 1648 marked the beginning of the era of the nation-state. The start of the 21st Century is witnessing the beginnings of some form of post-Westphalian era; whether that is seen in failed states such as Somalia or Afghanistan, non-state actors with more power than states themselves like some multinational corporations, or the 'pooling' of sovereignty into a supra-national institution like the EU - none of these phenomena are easily contained within the Westphalian paradigm. The question posed is will the EU, as whatever type of non-state entity it develops into, have any need for nuclear weapons?

There is an alternative *telos*, that of a non-nuclear European Union. A number of EU states have already committed themselves to phasing out civilian nuclear power in addition to remaining resolutely against nuclear weapons, showing that the anti-nuclear feeling is strong in many Europeans. The giving up of nuclear weapons is not totally unprecedented; with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan all returned their 'inherited' nuclear weapons to Russia, although perhaps

⁶³ Yost, David (1994) op. cit. (pp.126-127)

more interesting a case is that of South Africa, that unilaterally dismantled the weapons that it had produced itself, as the country made the transition from white-minority rule⁶⁴. If nothing else, the South African situation demonstrates that a change in political structure and culture can lead to disarmament. Is this likely in the case of either the UK or France? Most likely not – despite both governments being rhetorically committed to a nuclear free world, as noted above, nuclear weapons make them special: a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, a right to be heard in all international issues, something that fundamentally differentiates the two from the other thirteen EU members. These are matters of identity as much as military strategy⁶⁵, but how the UK and France might come to regard this issue depends on how much they come to value being part of the EU. The EU members have shown already that they are willing to some degree to surrender matters such as border controls, law and order, the ability to sign international treaties and many others – all of which even twenty years ago would have been seen as inalienable features of the sovereign state. Now these have been passed up to the EU level because these states believe that membership of the Union is more important than maintaining those powers. Is it possible to imagine either the UK or France being willing to disarm if their continued membership of the EU came to depend upon it?

6.2 Brick wall

The alternative is the “brick wall hypothesis”, that the control of French and British nuclear forces will be the hard, immovable object that eventually European military integration, and indeed European integration more generally, must crash into. This could happen in two ways; firstly that either of the two EU-nuclear powers insists that if their militaries are involved in a combined EU force, the EU must be willing to use nuclear deterrence of any adversary who is suspected of being armed with weapons of mass destruction - the kind of scenario laid out in Geoff Hoon’s comments. Other members

⁶⁴ for the South African nuclear story see Liberman, Peter (2001) “The Rise and Fall of the South African Bomb” *International Security* Vol. 26, No. 2 (Fall 2001)

⁶⁵ it might be interesting to compare nuclear weapons in the case of the UK, to universal conscription in some other EU states. Although some argue that conscription provides little value in dealing with the security concerns those states face today, it is not given up as it is seen as having a wider political and social role in maintaining a sense of community and nationhood. In the same way the UK maintains its nuclear forces as a symbol of the country’s continued importance in world affairs, compared to, for example, Germany who is quite content to trust US commitments to guarantee its security.

states of the EU, quite possibly centred around the currently non-aligned members, refuse to accept this and as a consequence Britain or France refuse to participate in an EU force leading to a major political crisis within the Union (French and British military power being central to a credible EU capability). A more likely scenario is that in facing a potential conflict in its surrounding neighbourhood, the Union understands that the above type of situation will evolve, so instead of facing the issue, does not intervene in the crisis in order not to alienate the UK or France. The result being the crisis escalates with major repercussions for Europe - again leading to political turmoil within the Union. This situation has a precedent with the EU's total failure to deal with the Yugoslavia situation in the early 1990s – despite the fine words nothing was done, leading to the crisis escalating to a terrible degree, eventually only being contained by the intervention of the US. Fortunately for the EU that conflict only had minimal 'spill-over effects' for the Union itself, mainly in the form of refugees.

The second brick wall hypothesis is the reverse; that the other EU member-states say that the EU's military capability is not complete without a nuclear capability and demand the Europeanization of the French and British nuclear forces, which one or both refuse to do – again leading to a halt in military integration and political crisis within the Union.

At the moment this second scenario may seem ridiculously remote; the idea of the Irish, Swedish or Finnish prime ministers demanding nuclear protection seems almost laughable, but this again depends on the strategic ambition and future development of the EU's military capability. If Swedish, Finnish and Irish troops are part of a major EU expeditionary force to, for example, a war in North Africa that is deemed to be threatening the Union, and one of the factions threatens the European army with chemical attack – in such a situation the publics of these previously neutral countries might find their anti-nuclear feeling rapidly changing when it comes to protecting their own soldiers.

6.3 *The Joker in the Pack*

Although it is tempting to consider UK and French nuclear forces together when thinking about their implications for the EU, this should be resisted because of the distinctiveness of the two states' positions. France has complete control over the future of its nuclear force; if other EU partners felt ten or twenty years from now that the EU needed an independent nuclear capability, the French could, if they chose to, Europeanize their weapons. Alternatively they could disarm if they felt this was the right or necessary course of action. For the UK matters are not so simple.

The nuclear link between the UK and US, adds far more complexity to the situation - this is 'the joker in the pack'. In one respect the link is very important; it demonstrates that nuclear weapons are not always the guarantee of the independence and sovereignty of statehood – but rather when states share common assumptions about the world, in this case fundamentally liberal democracy, then they can cooperate on matters that go to the very heart of what at first seems to makes a state an independent entity. Yet this trust and closeness between the UK and US is a cause of tension within the EU. The UK will not readily give up its link to the US which it sees as vital to its national interests, and whilst the other EU partners need the UK to make the CESDP credible, many believe that the importance of CESDP is its independence, its ability to engage in both different issues and in different ways than the US, or the US-dominated NATO, might. Jolyon Howorth writes: “While the EU will – and must – talk to and listen to NATO, CESDP will have to be something other than the Natoization of the Union, or US hegemony via the back door.”⁶⁶

Currently it is British nuclear posture, with its total dependency on America, that is holding that back door open. The other EU 14 cannot close the door because Britain's conventional forces are central to a viable and credible CESDP; the Blair government knows this, and this is why they have used European military integration to bring them 'closer to Europe'. At the same time CESDP will fail if it slowly slides into NATO and

⁶⁶ Howorth, Jolyon (2001) “European Defence and the Changing Politics of the European Union: Hanging Together or Hanging Separately?” *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol. 39, No. 4, (p.783)

hence under US influence or even control. Its independence and the EU's willingness to do different things in different ways, is what makes it both different and important.

7. Conclusion

The immediate future will probably be a continued policy of "benign neglect" of the nuclear weapons issues within the EU; a member of the EU military committee who wished not to be named has said in 2002 that: "There is no role for UK or French nuclear weapons in EU defence policy, because Austria, Finland, Ireland and Sweden would not allow it." An official from NATO subsequently made a similar statement, confirming this.⁶⁷ The subject will continue to be avoided for as long as possible, so perhaps to our options of 'telos' and 'brick wall' we should add one more – that most EU of substances – 'fudge', but it cannot be fudged indefinitely.

What happens in Iraq may well have a bearing on the issue, if the Iraqi regime was able to inflict major casualties on US (and maybe British) forces by using a CBW, then attitudes in Europe could rapidly become more hawkish on how any EU forces should be protected in the eventuality of the EU facing an adversary with CBWs. Alternatively, if the US invasion of Iraq turns out to be disastrous from either the point of view of destabilising the region, or in bringing great suffering to the Iraqi civilian population, then it would be easy to imagine European opinion going the way of the anti-militarist former-neutral EU members who are reticent over any EU defence cooperation or integration.

In the longer term it is more difficult to say, as there are so many possible scenarios. One major factor will be whether the US heads towards unilateralism and (less likely) isolationism, or whether it looks for multilateral solutions to international problems. If the US becomes isolationist and less interested in Europe, the process may push the EU

⁶⁷ These comments were made in Brussels to Commander Rob Green (Retired, Royal Navy) of the Disarmament and Security Centre, New Zealand who conveyed them to the writer in correspondence.

harder towards gaining the capabilities to assure its own security. Conversely an internationalist US might also have an interest in seeing a capable and independent EU military force to intervene where it does not; thus spreading the burden. Will the US continue to let NATO slide towards a political ‘talking shop’ like the OSCE? Or will NATO be ‘firmed-up’ once more focusing on hard issues such as military interoperability and preparing for a joint defence? Russia is another major variable – will it become a close and trusted partner of the EU, allowing the Union to focus on security threats from the south? Or will it remain unstable and difficult to predict – an aggressive potential-superpower waiting to be reborn? The enlargement of the EU itself will obviously be central. Will the new central and eastern European members be interested in an outward-looking and activist Union? Will the publics of countries with plenty of their own problems (whether we mean the steadily improving, like the Czech Republic, or the impoverished and troubled, like Romania) ever be interested in intervening in somewhere such as Central Africa? If Turkey is ever successful in joining the EU, then the Union will have some very unstable parts of the world on its border. None of these scenarios are certain, so it is even harder to guess at how they might affect European attitudes to nuclear weapons.

Regardless of the difficulties of futurology, the British Defence Secretary has publicly declared, in the House of Commons no less, willingness to use British nuclear weapons – and even more notably against, what even the US still admits is, a non-nuclear armed state. Regardless of the legality of this statement under Britain’s commitments to the CTBT, and indeed to the morality of the concept of sub-strategic nuclear warfare more generally, this statement should not be ignored by an apathetic British public - indifferent to the nuclear issue now it does not seem to have major budgetary implications to conflict with healthcare or education. Neither can it be ignored by politicians and leaders across the wider EU, who seem to be happy to sweep under the carpet for short-term gain the fact that two members of the Union possess the most powerful and destructive weapons that mankind has ever produced, and that a leading politician of one of them has expressed a willingness to use them.