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Strategic Adaptation or Identity Change?

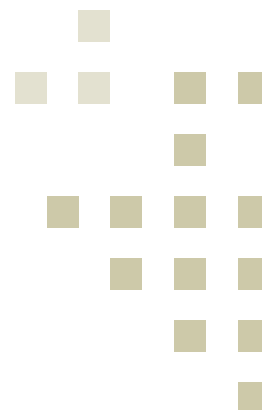
An analysis of Britain's Approach to the
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Strategic Adaptation or Identity Change?

An analysis of Britain's Approach to the ESDP 1998-2004

Kristin Marie Haugevik

[Summary] In this working paper, Kristin Marie Haugevik seeks to analyse the nature of the changes in Britain's approach to the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) after 1998. Ever since the beginning of the European integration process in 1951, Britain's approach to European security and defence cooperation has been characterized by anti-federalism and transatlanticism. Hence, it was unexpected when Tony Blair, together with Jacques Chirac, took the initiative to frame a common security and defence policy for the EU in Saint Malo in 1998. This paper discusses to what extent Britain's new approach to the ESDP after 1998 can be explained as the result of a strategic adaptation, and to what extent it can be seen as a result of more profound changes in the British identity and security interests. These two accounts are tested by analysing Britain's approach to some of the most important ESDP documents since 1998: the Saint Malo declaration, the Laeken declaration, the Nice Treaty, the European Security Strategy, and the Constitution Treaty

1. Introduction

*We have our own dream and our own task.
We are with Europe, but not of it.
We are linked, but not combined.
We are interested and associated, but not absorbed.*

Sir Winston Churchill, 15 February 1930.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the changes in Britain's approach to the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) between 1998 and 2004.¹ Ever since the beginning of the European integration process in 1951, Britain has been described as an 'awkward partner' and a 'reluctant European', less willing to fully take part in the European project than many of the countries in continental Europe. This has particularly been the case for issues related to foreign, security, and defence policy. It was therefore unexpected when Britain, together with France, took the initiative to frame a common security and defence policy for the EU in Saint Malo in 1998. The Saint Malo declaration has by many been referred to as a turning point in Britain's relationship with European security and defence.

This paper discusses whether the changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP after 1998 can best be explained as the result of a *strategic adaptation* or *identity change*. Whereas the former would imply that Britain has simply adjusted its behaviour to external and internal factors, the latter would imply that the British identity and security interests have gone through more profound changes. These two accounts are tested by analysing the nature of Britain's approach to five key ESDP documents since 1998: the Saint Malo declaration (1998), the Laeken declaration, the Nice Treaty (2001), the European Security Strategy (2003), and the Constitution Treaty (2004).²

1.1 Research Questions

It is evident that Britain after 1998 has been far more accommodating with regard to developing a common security and defence policy within the EU. The purpose of this paper is therefore not to establish whether such changes have occurred, but rather to determine the *nature* of these changes. This leaves us with two research questions:

i) To what extent can the changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP be seen as a strategic adaptation to external and internal factors?

ii) To what extent can the changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP be seen as the result of more profound changes in the British identity and security interests, due to external and internal factors?

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¹The official name of the country is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. However, most academic literature refers to it simply as 'Britain' or 'the UK'. Throughout this paper, the term 'Britain' will be used, as this is the norm in the Blair government's official speeches and statements.

² The Constitution Treaty was signed by all the EU members' Heads of State in June 2004. However, the final ratification in Britain depends upon the outcome of a national referendum, which is scheduled in 2006.

Strategic adaptation is defined here as a state's adjustment to external and internal changes, but without its identity and security interests being affected. Identity change, in contrast, is defined as a process where a state's identity and security interests are gradually being modified, as a result of influence from external and internal factors. It should be noted that strategic adaptation and identity change are not necessarily contradictory processes. It has for instance been argued that a process of socialisation may start out as strategic adaptation, and then gradually develop into identity change (Risse and Sikkink 1999). This is discussed in more detail in chapter two.

1.2 Key Concepts

Before giving a brief overview of the theoretical framework, it is necessary to provide a definition of some key variables. First, the *explanandum* – what needs to be explained – is the changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP between 1998 and 2004. A brief definition of the ESDP is therefore necessary. Second, the *explanans* – factors that can illuminate the explanandum – include British identity, security interests and preferences.³ These concepts are sometimes difficult to distinguish from one another, and it is therefore important to make clear the differences between them.

1.2.1 The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)

The term ESDP was launched for the first time by the European Council at a meeting in Helsinki in 1999, but its origins are often traced back to the French-British summit in Saint Malo in 1998, when Britain and France declared that the EU should be able to respond autonomously to international crises. The initial purpose of the ESDP was threefold: it should give the EU 'a limited but real military capability', clarify EU-NATO relations, and last, but not least, make Britain an integrated part of the EU's foreign and security policy (Hill 2004:156). In 1999, the Helsinki European Council established a headline goal for the ESDP, stating that the EU should be able to deploy its forces within sixty days, sustain them for at least one year, and provide up to 60.000 military personnel capable of action (Smith 2003a:46). In 2001, the Laeken declaration on the future of Europe declared the ESDP operative. At the same time, the ESDP was organised under the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the Maastricht Treaty's second pillar. This organisational structure implies that the ESDP is largely intergovernmental, offering the intergovernmental Council of Ministers decisive powers and leaving the supranational European Commission and European Parliament with limited powers.

1.2.2 British Identity and Security Interests

State identity can be defined as the sum of the basic characteristics that constitute a state and distinguish it from other states. Identity, then, refers as much to the state's perception of itself and what it wants to be, as it refers to how it is viewed by other actors in the international society (Cooper 2003:128). The British state identity has often been connected with its geographical position separate from the European continent, and with its empirical past. Moreover, the idea of British exceptionalism – that Britain because of these factors is different from the rest of the countries in Europe – has traditionally constituted an important part of the British identity (Ash 2001:2).

The term national interests is closely linked with that of national identity, and is commonly used in the meaning of more or less stable goals that states seek to obtain (Milner 1997:15). Moreover, national security interests have traditionally been interpreted in very different ways within the various theoretical traditions. Kenneth Waltz (1979:126) has argued that security is 'the highest end' in an international anarchy, because survival of the state is the only way to obtain other national interests such as power. In contrast, Barry Buzan et al. (1998:21-22) have pointed out that national security interests are no longer limited to defending one's national territory, and that political, economic,

³ For a discussion of the use of explanans and explanandum in social science, see Hovi and Rasch (1996), ch.3.

social, and environmental factors have been added to the traditional definition of security. Rationalists and Social Constructivists disagree when it comes to how identities and interests are formed. Whereas Rationalists see identities and interests as exogenously given,⁴ Social Constructivists see them as endogenously given – as a product of environmental changes and interaction between actors (Rosamond 2004:117).

1.2.3 British Preferences: Anti-Federalism and Transatlanticism

Preferences refer to specific policy choices that states believe will maximise their welfare and promote their national interests. In other words: preferences are what states bring to the table when negotiating with other states (Milner 1997:15; Legro and Moravcsik 1999:13). Consequently, preferences can be seen as the expression of a state's identity and security interests. Britain's approach to the EU's security and defence policy has traditionally been characterized by two dominant features: *anti-federalism* and *transatlanticism* (Moravcsik 1998:27). These two concepts are further discussed in chapter three, and will form an important basis for the analysis in this paper. British anti-federalism is here defined as reluctance to strengthen the EU level of governance at the expense of national sovereignty (Burgess 2003:66).⁵ British transatlanticism is defined as Britain's traditional prioritising of the United States and NATO over other partners in security and defence issues. If the empirical evidence shows that British anti-federalism and transatlanticism have remained intact, changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP must be seen merely as a strategic adaptation. If, on the other hand, the empirical evidence shows that British anti-federalism and transatlanticism have been modified, this strengthens the assumption that the British identity and security interests have gone through more profound changes.

1.3 Theoretical Framework, Methodology, and Sources

The theoretical framework is based on a combination of Rationalist and Constructivist perspectives. The Rationalist presentation draws on Classical Realism, Neo-Liberalism, and Liberal Intergovernmentalism, whereas the Constructivist presentation is limited to Social Constructivism.

Rationalists argue that states are the main actors in international politics; that national security interests are motivated by material forces, and that decisions are made on the basis of rationalist calculations. Moravcsik (1998) explains that only a state's strategies are likely to change as a result of influence from external and internal factors, whereas its national identity, interests, and preferences remain unaffected. Hence, Rationalists would argue that changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP do not represent a breach from traditional British identity and security interests, but are the result of strategic adaptation only. From this perspective, Britain is expected to support ESDP developments only as long as they are in accordance with the traditional British anti-federalist and transatlantic preferences. This assumption conforms to Karen Smith's (2003a:1) observation that the EU's foreign policy is 'inconsequential and weak', because it is always based on compromises that the most reluctant member state is willing to accept.

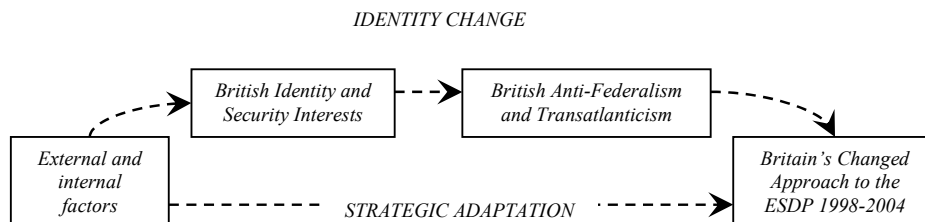
Social Constructivists, in contrast, view national security interests as the reflection of national identity, which in turn is constituted by external and internal factors (Jefferson et al. 1996:53). This means that when the external or internal environment changes, so do the national identity and security interests of the state (Risse and Sikkink 1999:11; Wendt 1999:170). Britain is thus expected to have

⁴ Although Rationalists have not traditionally been concerned with the issue of identity, we can, based on the Rationalist assumptions of change, deduce that Rationalists view national identity as something static and unchanging.

⁵ It is important to note that the word 'federalism' has different connotations in different countries. In countries like Germany, Italy, and Spain, a federation is commonly seen as 'a decentralised polity where power is dispersed among the constituent member states' (Burgess 2003:66). In this paper, however, the traditional British understanding of the term will form the basis for the discussion. Federalism is thus seen as 'centralising tendencies that have the effect of strengthening the European level at the expense of national interests' (*ibid.*).

become a more integrated part of the ESDP because British anti-federalism and transatlanticism have been modified. The difference between strategic adaptation and identity change is illustrated in fig.1:

Fig. 1: Explaining Britain's Approach to the ESDP after 1998



The lower arrow suggests that external and internal factors have influenced Britain's approach to the ESDP directly, through a process of strategic adaptation.⁶ The upper arrows suggest that the same external and internal factors have led to more profound changes in the British identity and security interests, and thus resulted in a changed approach to the ESDP.

1.3.1 Methodological Approach: Qualitative Case Study and Soft Discourse Analysis

Processes of strategic adaptation and identity change are hard to measure, and due to their complex nature they can arguably best be observed through non-numerical methods. A qualitative case study is therefore the most suitable research design for this study. Qualitative research covers a wide range of approaches, but in principle, none of them rely on numerical measurements as does quantitative research. Instead, qualitative researchers have traditionally focused on few units, and emphasised depth rather than width in their analysis (King et al. 1994:122). As 'Britain's approach to the ESDP' is the only unit to be analysed in this paper, and the data material consists of various textual sources, it is clear that we are dealing with a qualitative, single case study.

According to Ole Wæver (1996b), discourse analysis is an adequate tool for studying states' foreign policy, as is the purpose of this paper. The stated aim of discourse analysis is to study the use of language in order to understand how words are closely linked together with actions. It concerns itself with public texts rather than with thoughts, motives, and hidden intentions, and can be utilised in the study of all types of spoken interaction and written texts. This is undoubtedly an advantage in the study of foreign policy where a large amount of information remains inaccessible (Mathisen 1997:1-5; Wæver 1996b). By clarifying 'in a systematic way patterns of thought in a specific country' it contributes to increased understanding of that country's foreign policy (Wæver 1996b). In her study of the security identities of the Nordic states, Pernille Rieker argues that

The dominant security discourse expressed by a nation-state's political leadership [can be] seen as an expression of the security identity of that country (Rieker 2004:25).

Rieker makes use of a soft version of discourse analysis, arguing that intersubjective meaning can be apprehended in or by itself. This makes her approach different from that of scholars such as Iver B. Neumann (2001), and Henrik Larsen (1997) (Rieker 2004:35). This paper will largely draw on Rieker's definition of a soft discourse analysis. The British security discourse is seen as an expression of the British identity and security interests. By analysing the language used in official documents, speeches, and statements by the Blair government, I hope to identify a pattern in Britain's approach to the ESDP in the period between 1998 and 2004. This pattern will be seen as the dominant discourse. By comparing the Blair government's dominant discourse to that of former British governments –

⁶ The external and internal factors are discussed in more detail in chapter two.

most notably those of Margaret Thatcher and John Major – one can determine whether the traditional British anti-federalist and transatlantic preferences have remained intact, or whether they have been modified. The analysis will be limited to the governmental level of analysis, meaning that the process of national preference formation is omitted from the discussion. This is in accordance with what has traditionally been the norm within Realist and Neo-Realist studies, and with Alexander Wendt's observation that it is possible to study processes of identity change without studying identity- and interest formation at the national level (Wendt 1999:170).

1.3.2 A Note on the Sources

The data material consists of both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are official documents, speeches, and statements from the British government. In addition, various ESDP documents, as well as statements from United States officials, NATO officials, and state leaders from other EU countries are relevant for the discussion. Secondary sources include newspaper articles, books, and articles from periodicals. Two interviews with British experts on Britain–EU relations have also been conducted: Richard Gowan at the Foreign Policy Centre in London, and Matthew Findlay at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office. These interviews have primarily been used as background material, and will not be quoted as direct sources in the text.

There are both advantages and drawbacks connected to the use of the various sources mentioned above. Both British and EU documents can be biased and formal in language, and official speeches and statements are likely to be coloured both by the environment and the time period in which they are being put forward. I am also aware of potential inaccuracies regarding accessing material through secondary sources such as newspapers, books, articles, and websites, as these may be both biased and insufficient. Due to this, I have taken precautions throughout the process of collecting data. The primary sources utilised in this paper are, with a few exceptions, accessed at acknowledged websites such as the EU's official homepage, and the official homepage of the British government, the British Ministry of Defence, and the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Other useful sources have included the official homepages of NATO and the US government. In cases when the required material has been lacking on these websites, I have relied on what I consider reliable secondary sources, citing this material. Furthermore, I have based my analysis on newspapers, periodicals, and on other researchers that are well respected within the study of the EU and British foreign policy. In the cases where I have been uncertain with regard to the accurateness of a source, I have consulted more than one source.

This way of making use of different kinds of sources is often referred to as method triangulation. According to Sigmund Grønmo (1996:98), such triangulation secures a more balanced and complex evaluation of the sources. Furthermore, it makes it easier to test the validity and reliability of the data material. Validity refers to the relevance of the various sources vis-à-vis the research question. That is, to what extent the data material can reveal something relevant about the research question (Hellevik 1991:103). Here, I consider the validity to be satisfactory, since the British government's official documents, speeches, and statements are expected to reflect the core of Britain's approach to ESDP. Reliability, on the other hand, refers to the accurateness of the data material, and the extent to which one can expect to receive the same results if the analysis is repeated (ibid.). Method triangulation largely contributes to strengthening the reliability of the analysis. It is important to note that soft discourse analysis to some extent is a matter of interpretation, and thus there is always a risk that researchers will interpret the same sources differently. However, the fact that I base my analysis on a wide selection of both primary and secondary sources reduces the risk of reaching unfounded conclusions.

1.4 Organisation of the Paper

The next chapter presents the theoretical framework and the analytical model that will be used in the analysis of Britain's approach to the ESDP 1998-2004. This presentation discusses the merits of

Rationalist and Social Constructivist perspectives, and their respective explanations of policy change. Chapter three provides a brief overview of Britain's approach to European security and defence policy, from the EU's origins in 1951 until the seminal Saint Malo meeting in 1998. Particularly under the governments of Thatcher and Major, the British identity and security interests came to expression as anti-federalism and transatlanticism. Hence, the adaptation to European security and defence during this period must be seen as merely strategic.

Chapters four to six discuss important ESDP developments and Britain's approach to them. Chapter four deals with the 1998 Saint Malo declaration, which is commonly seen as a breakthrough in Britain's approach to the ESDP. At this point, the ESDP integration process gained momentum. The Kosovo crisis had revealed a need for a more united and efficient EU in security and defence, and the newly elected Blair government announced that it would promote a new approach to Europe. As a result, Britain moved closer to the ESDP, and the traditional British anti-federalist and transatlantic preferences were challenged.

Chapter five explores how the ESDP in 2001 was operationalised in the Laeken declaration, and further institutionalised in the Nice Treaty. At this point, Britain's relationship with the ESDP was at a crossroads. September 11, the Afghanistan campaign, and the re-election of the Blair government affected Britain's approach to the ESDP. During this period, British anti-federalism and transatlanticism were gradually modified.

Chapter six discusses Britain's approach to the ESDP in relation to the European Security Strategy of 2003 and the EU Constitution Treaty of 2004. Britain's relationship with the ESDP was influenced by the Iraq war and the international divergences following in its wake. Furthermore, the EU enlargement from 15 to 25 member states strengthened the transatlantic camp in the EU. To what extent did the British adaptation to the ESDP develop into identity change during this period?

Finally, chapter seven summarises the empirical findings. These findings suggest that although the British approach to the ESDP between 1998 and 2004 may have started out as a strategic adaptation, there are indications that the British identity and security interests over time have gone through more profound changes.

2. Theorising Britain and the ESDP

The purpose of a nation's foreign policy should be power, strength and influence in furtherance of its interests and beliefs. That purpose never changes. But the context in which it is pursued does.

Tony Blair, 13 November 2000.

This chapter establishes a theoretical framework that can be used to explain the changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP after 1998. The most important distinction will be made between on the one hand those who would argue that Britain's changed approach to the ESDP is the result of strategic adaptation, while the British identity and security interests have remained stable and, on the other hand, those who would argue that this new approach is the result of deeper changes in the British identity and security interests.

The first argument is based on a Rationalist way of thinking, and finds support in Realism, Neo-Liberalism, and Liberal Intergovernmentalism. A key assumption within the Realist school is that states are self-interested actors who seek to secure stable national interests and power positions in an international anarchy where cooperation is unlikely to occur (Morgenthau 1948; Waltz 1979). Similarly, Neo-Liberalists like Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1989), and Helen Milner (1997) argue that states' main concern is to pursue their own national goals, but in contrast with Realists they view international institutions like the EU as frameworks in which states cooperate in order to obtain these goals. Elements from both Realism and Neo-Liberalism are incorporated into the Liberal Intergovernmentalism perspective, developed by Andrew Moravcsik (1993, 1998). The stated purpose of Liberal Intergovernmentalism is to analyse the process of European integration 'as a result of strategies pursued by rational governments acting on the basis of their preferences and power' (Moravcsik 1993:225).

The second argument is based on a theoretical perspective that questions the Rationalist idea of national interests as exogenously given. Peter Katzenstein (1996:3) argues that states' interests are not permanent, but are in fact constituted and shaped by external and internal factors. According to Katzenstein, it is not only strategies that change over time – identities and interests are in constant change as well, as they respond to internal and external factors in their environment (ibid.). Similarly, Martha Finnemore (1996:11) asserts that states suffer from *bounded rationality* – meaning that their ability to make completely rational decisions can be affected both by internationally shared norms and values, and by the actions of other actors.⁷ This perspective is commonly referred to as Social Constructivism.⁸

2.1 From Realism and Neo-Liberalism to Liberal Intergovernmentalism

In his landmark study, *Politics Among Nations*, first published in 1948, Hans J. Morgenthau presents what he calls 'a realistic theory of international politics'. Morgenthau's Classical Realism is primarily concerned with the nature of human beings, and the idea that 'politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature' (Morgenthau 1948:4). The political

⁷ Bounded rationality can be defined as 'rational actors operating in environments of uncertainty [who] frequently look for solutions to their problems in the solutions tried by other, apparently successful actors' (Finnemore 1996:11).

⁸ It should be noted that the Social Constructivist approach to the EU is closely related to that of *Sociological Institutionalism*. See Rosamond (2003) pp. 116-117.

world is an anarchy where national interests are defined in terms of power, and where states continuously seek to gain more power at the cost of rival states (relative gains). National interests are considered to be stable and 'unaffected by the circumstances of time and place', and it is assumed that these interests always dominate the policy choices of state leaders (ibid., 11-13). Furthermore, state leaders are expected to respond in the same way when repeatedly put in the same political situation. Their policy choices will be made after having considered all foreseeable consequences of the policy alternatives, and they will always choose the alternative which they believe will maximise their welfare and power vis-à-vis other states. According to this logic, one should be able to predict policy outcomes by simply finding out what the most beneficial outcome for the decision maker is.

For Realists, international politics is far more important than domestic politics when it comes to understanding states' foreign policy. In *Theory of International Politics* (1979), Kenneth Waltz argues that states' actions can always be explained by looking at their position in the international political system. Waltz is commonly considered to be the founder of the Neo-Realist tradition, often also referred to as Structural Realism. Waltz' argument is that states seek to secure their positions in the international system rather than to maximise their relative powers (Waltz 1979:126). Moreover, he claims that international institutions have little or no independent effect on states' actions because such institutions are shaped and limited by the states themselves (Waltz 2000:18). However, since Waltz' theory is concerned with international structures rather than with states' foreign policy, and since it is largely founded on the bipolar order of the Cold War, it is considered less relevant for the analysis of Britain's approach to the ESDP.

The viewpoints of Morgenthau and Waltz were heavily criticised in *Power and Interdependence*, written by the Neo-Liberalist scholars Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in 1989. Keohane and Nye argue that interdependence and cooperation are becoming increasingly important factors in world politics, and that the Neo-Realist idea of self-interested non-cooperative states thus has become outdated. Similarly, Keohane states in his article 'Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond' (1988) that although Realism remains the basis for research in international relations, it does not contain the necessary accounts for change. This is an important distinction. Keohane acknowledges the importance of national interests, but unlike Waltz he believes that states will increasingly turn to international institutions in order to secure these interests. His argument is that although national interests remain stable, the ways in which states pursue these interests may vary.

Keohane's observations are confirmed by Helen Milner's argument in *Interests, Institutions, and Information* (1997). Milner claims that state leaders and governments are constantly involved in 'two-level games', where they play simultaneously at the domestic and the international level of politics. At the domestic level, governments participate in intra-state bargaining with domestic institutions and organisations. At the international level they bargain with international and transnational actors, as well as with other nation states (Milner 1997:4-5; Putnam 1988:156). The definition of national *interests* is essential in two-level games because interests are considered the underlying driving forces of the government in the bargaining process. Milner differentiates between national interests and *preferences*, arguing that the former refers to states' fundamental, stable goals whereas the latter refers to specific policy choices that the states believe will maximise their welfare (Milner 1997:15).

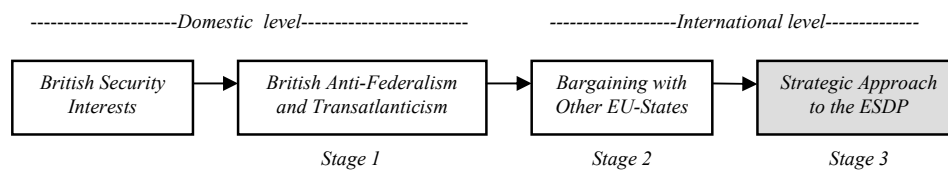
Similarly, Andrew Moravcsik points out the distinction between preferences and *strategies*. According to him, states' preferences are independent of other actors in the international society, and exist prior to processes of interstate bargaining. Strategies, in contrast, are policy options that may be changed and redefined in order to protect national interests (Moravcsik 1997:519). Moravcsik's Liberal Intergovernmentalism incorporates both Realist and Neo-Liberalist elements. The theory acknowledges the Realist emphasis on states' interests and preferences in bargaining processes with other states, but at the same time it also focuses on domestic politics. Moravcsik argues that there is no contradiction between securing national interests on the one hand, and being part of the European integration project on the other. On the contrary, he points out that integration and cooperation always take place in accordance with national preferences and the will of political decision makers. 'European integration,' Moravcsik observes, 'can best be explained as a series of rational choices made by state leaders' (Moravcsik 1998:18-21). To illustrate this, he presents three stages through which states pass when defining their relationship with the EU. In the first stage, state leaders formulate 'a consistent set

of national preferences' in order to calculate which outcome will be the most beneficial for their own state. These preferences have their basis in permanent national interests. In the second stage, the states develop strategies according to these preferences. The strategies determine the states' ability to meet both domestic and international demands and pressures (ibid.). Finally, in the third stage, the states choose whether they wish to lock their agreements into institutional frameworks. If a voting procedure other than consensus is chosen, such as Qualified Majority Voting (QMV),⁹ it is called *pooled sovereignty*. When pooling their sovereignty, states relinquish their right to veto decisions they do not favour. According to Moravcsik, states will only pool their sovereignty when they are convinced that their national preferences can be better pursued through cooperation than through unilateralism (ibid., 20, 67). Hence, institutions are assumed to have a constraining rather than a constitutive effect, meaning that they do not have the capability of changing states' interests and preferences. Moreover, it is more likely that pooling of sovereignty will take place within areas of 'low politics' such as economy and trade than within 'high politics' such as security and defence. According to Stanley Hoffmann, the reason for this is that high politics to a larger extent touches upon the issues of national sovereignty and national identity (cited in Cini 2003:98).

2.1.1 A Rationalist Approach to Britain and the ESDP

Based on the Rationalist perspectives presented above, we can now move on to making some preliminary assumptions regarding changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP after 1998. In chapter one, we established that Britain's preferences vis-à-vis the ESDP traditionally have been anti-federalism and transatlanticism. Since Rationalists would argue that these preferences have remained stable throughout the process of European integration, changes in the British approach to the ESDP are likely to have been the result of strategic adaptation only:

Figure 2: Strategic Adaptation to the ESDP



(Based on Moravcsik 1998)

Britain's security interests are here seen as exogenously given. In stage one, preference formation takes place on the basis of these interests. In stage two, the British government participates in interstate bargaining with other EU-states. The result is a strategic approach to the ESDP, as seen in stage three.

2.2 The Impact of External and Internal Factors

Rationalists assume that security interests and preferences remain stable throughout the international bargaining processes. Therefore, strategic adaptation must be expected to result from changing external and internal factors. Four such factors will be included in the further analysis. The most important external ones are considered to be: changes in the United States' foreign policy, regional

⁹ QMV is a voting system used in the Council of Ministers. Each state is offered a number of votes roughly proportional to their size and population. A majority of these votes is needed in order for legislation to be agreed upon. In practice, this means that the states give up their veto, since they must accept the outcome even if they voted against it (Cini 2003:422).

conflicts and new threats, and the widening and deepening of the European integration process. The key internal one is changes in the British government.

First, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union put an end to the bipolar world order that had been the norm since the late 1940s. The world was left with a single superpower: the United States. Although the United States committed itself to the defence of Europe through the North Atlantic Treaty (1949), it has become increasingly clear that its capacity as a 'world policeman' is by no means unlimited. Moreover, since the threat from the Soviet Union has vanished, Europe is, arguably, now strategically less important for the United States. Consequently, throughout the 1990s, the United States began to encourage the Europeans to take responsibility for their own regional security. Considering the transatlantic alliance's traditionally dominant position in British security policy, it is likely that changes in the United States' foreign policy will influence Britain's approach to the ESDP.

Second, regional conflicts and new threats have led to an increased need for cooperation, both internationally and regionally. The wars in Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (2001), and Iraq (2003) are particularly considered to have had a particularly strong influence on Britain's approach to the European security and defence. Furthermore, threats such as international terrorism and weapons of mass destruction became more prevalent during this period. The large threat posed by international terrorism was irrevocably demonstrated on September 11 2001, when the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C. changed global politics forever. Such events have significantly contributed to putting the EU's role as a security and defence actor on the agenda.

Third, both the vertical and horizontal process of European integration proceeded with increased velocity in the 1990s.¹⁰ With the Maastricht Treaty, the EU strengthened its institutional framework for a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and with that also its potential as a global actor. In accordance with a theory of path dependency,¹¹ one could argue that once the path of strengthening the ESDP had been chosen, it was difficult for Britain to reverse or break out of the process (Cini 2003:102). Moreover, the EU had proved, through the Schengen agreement and the fulfilment of the Economic Monetary Union (EMU), that the integration process would continue with or without the participation of Britain. Thus, the argument that it is better to be involved and have a say, than to be on the outside without influence, may have been important for Britain's decision to become part of the ESDP plans. In addition, the horizontal integration process with enlargement from 15 to 25 EU member states in 2004 increased the number of countries with a transatlantic orientation in the EU, arguably making it easier for Britain to become a more integrated part of Europe.

Finally, the role of the Blair government in transforming British politics should not be overlooked. Richard Heffernan (2001:180) notes that the Blair government is the most pro-European British administration since that of Edward Heath. Similarly, Anne Deighton (2001:309) points out that Old Labour in the 1980s was actually in favour of leaving the European Community (EC), which is in great contrast with the pro-European position that the Blair government has been actively promoting. Blair has by many been personally credited for the Saint Malo meeting, often simply referred to as 'the Blair initiative'.

2.3 An Alternative Explanation of Policy Change

The Rationalist perspective is undoubtedly useful in the analysis of changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP. There are, however, some shortcomings with the Rationalist model that need to be discussed. First of all, the model does not open for changes in national security interests and preferences, making it static rather than dynamic. Second, it is based on a traditional understanding of

¹⁰ *Vertical* integration refers to the process of integration on an increasing number of policy areas, e.g. from economic to political cooperation. *Horizontal* integration refers to integration of an increasing number of states, e.g. the enlargement process in the EU.

¹¹ 'Path dependency' is a term that is commonly associated with the Neo-Institutionalist approach within European integration studies. The idea is that once a specific path in the integration process has been chosen, the times and resources invested makes it disadvantageous to reverse the process (Cini 2003:102).

the security concept, focusing on material rather than societal values. Finally, the concept national identity is not included in the model. This is mainly because Rationalists traditionally have ignored the idea of identity as anything but an exogenously given unit. For the purpose of the further analysis, it is therefore useful to introduce a second approach – Social Constructivism – which allows for these factors.

Whereas Realism, Neo-Liberalism and Liberal Intergovernmentalism are often characterised as Rationalist theories, Social Constructivism is in itself not a theory but rather a paradigm containing a fundamental view of the world (Wæver 1996a:159). Rationalism and Constructivism share many ideas and are not necessarily contradictory. Researchers like James Fearon and Alexander Wendt (2002) have for instance pointed out substantial agreements between the two, and argued that the differences between them are complementary rather than competing. Similarly, Risse and Sikkink (1999) have developed a ‘spiral-model’ of socialisation in five phases, combining the Rationalist and Constructivist approaches. This model has a Rationalist starting point where states act according to their own interest and preferences, but in the third and fourth phase it suggests, in accordance with a Social Constructivist perspective, that these interests and preferences can be modified as they are influenced by external and internal factors. In other words: at a certain point in the process, strategic adaptation develops into identity change (Risse and Sikkink 1999:10). In her study of the security identities of the Nordic states, Rieker elaborates on the spiral model. Like Risse and Sikkink, Rieker sees phase four as a turning point in the socialisation process. At this point, she observes that states’ approach to the EU’s security policy changes from instrumental adaptation to institutionalisation (Rieker 2004:96-98).

The emphasis on strategic adaptation and identity change respectively is a key difference between Rationalist and Social Constructivist scholars. Whereas Morgenthau, Keohane, and Moravcsik argue that national interests are exogenously given, the general Social Constructivist ontology has been that national interests may change, and that norms are able to both constitute identities and to influence behaviour (Katzenstein 1996:5). According to Wendt (1999:113-114), Social Constructivists do not deny the fact that states act on the basis of perceived interests – they simply believe that these interests can be modified by norms and ideas. Similarly, Bill McSweeney (1999:4) questions whether or not state behaviour is as predictable as some Realists imply, arguing that states acquire identities in order to define their interests and policy choices. Hence, neither identities nor interests are seen as constant, and it is natural that they are influenced by changing external and internal factors. Moreover, McSweeney asserts that national security is closely related to national identity. One must therefore assume that national security interests are likely to change when the national identity is exposed to changes (ibid., 12).

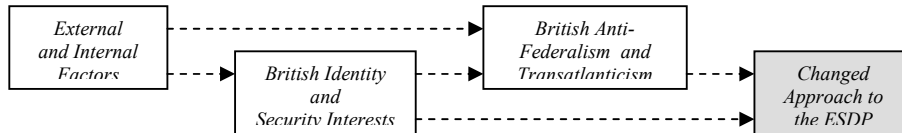
Social Constructivists argue that institutions have a constitutive effect on national identities and security interests – as opposed to a constraining effect like the Neo-Liberalist and Liberal Intergovernmentalist perspectives suggest. This means that institutions like the EU do not only affect states’ strategic choices, they also affect their ‘most basic preferences and very identity’ (Rosamond 2003:117). Socialisation processes related to the EU are often referred to as *Europeanisation*. Johan P. Olsen (2003:334) lists five possible uses of the term Europeanisation, of which ‘the penetration of European-level institutions into national and subnational systems of governance’ is the most relevant in this context. Rieker (2004:24) adds another dimension by defining Europeanisation as the effects that the EU’s security policy has had on the security identities of specific states. The Europeanisation process is complete when European norms and values are institutionalised in the state, and become an integrated part of the national identity (ibid., 98). In the following, the term Europeanisation will be used when specifically referring to the European integration process and its effects on British identity and security interests.

2.3.1 A Social Constructivist Approach to Britain and the ESDP

British identity and security interests have traditionally come to expression as anti-federalism and transatlanticism, and Winston Churchill’s famous statement that Britain was ‘with Europe, but not of it’, is commonly used as an illustration of Britain’s reluctance to become actively involved in the EU.

According to McSweeney (1999:184), Britain chose to identify itself as a marginal European already at the very beginning of the European integration process. Instead of taking an active role in the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and later the European Economic Community (EEC), Britain made it clear through its policy choices that its transatlantic and Commonwealth links remained its two key priorities. However, from a Social Constructivist viewpoint, one would assume that these anti-federalist and transatlantic preferences over time have been gradually modified by external factors and internal factors. This is illustrated in Figure 3:

Figure 3: Britain's New Approach to the ESDP as Identity Change



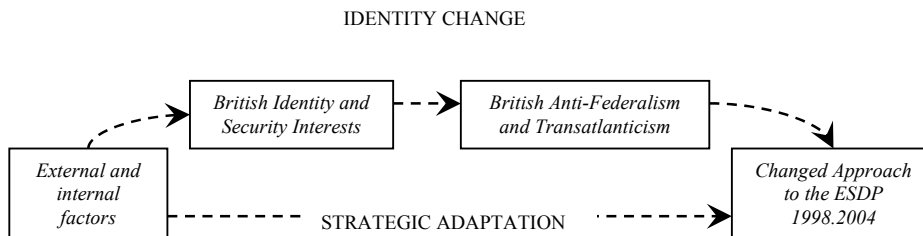
(Based on Jepperson et al. 1996:53)

External and internal factors influence Britain's approach to the ESDP *through* the British identity and security interests. Instead of viewing security interests as exogenously given units that exist to be discovered by self-interested and rational actors, this figure implies that the British interests and preferences are 'constructed through a process of social interaction' (Katzenstein 1996:2).

2.4 Analytical Model and Expected Empirical Findings

We have now been introduced to two theoretical perspectives that can each contribute to explaining the changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP between 1998 and 2004. In figure 4, the two perspectives are combined, in order to further emphasize the differences between them:

Figure 4: Two Perspectives on Changes in Britain's Approach to the ESDP



It is important to note that the arrows do not indicate causal relations. Rather, they mark possible connections. Rationalists and Social Constructivists would agree on the importance of external and internal factors in order to explain the changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP. However, whereas Rationalists would argue that the external and internal factors have influenced Britain's approach directly; Social Constructivists would argue that these factors have influenced the British approach more profoundly, through a process of identity change. Based on this, we can move on to outlining some expected empirical findings.

2.4.1 Evidence Suggesting Strategic Adaptation

Previously, we have established that Britain's security interests have traditionally been expressed as anti-federalism and transatlanticism. If the changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP are merely the result of strategic adaptation, these preferences are assumed to have remained stable. A continuation of the British anti-federalist and transatlantic approach to the ESDP through would strengthen such a theory of strategic adaptation. The following empirical evidence would indicate continuation in Britain's traditional security interests and preferences:

- i) British rather than European security interests remain the key focus in the British security discourse.
- ii) Britain will continue to resist transferring sovereignty to the EU's supranational institutions on ESDP matters.
- iii) The British security discourse emphasises NATO and the United States as Britain's key security and defence allies, and Britain will accept new ESDP documents only when in accordance with its transatlantic preferences.
- iv) The ESDP developments are supported by the United States and NATO.

2.4.2 Evidence Suggesting Identity Change

If, however, these preferences have been changed or modified due to external or internal factors, this could imply that the British identity and security interests have been more profoundly changed. Evidence suggesting modified anti-federalism and transatlanticism in Britain's approach to the ESDP would strengthen such a theory: The following empirical evidence would indicate change in Britain's traditional security interests and preferences:

- i) European security interests have become a more important part of the British security discourse.
- ii) Britain will to a larger degree accept the transfer of sovereignty to the EU's supranational institutions in ESDP matters.
- iii) The British security discourse will to a larger extent emphasise Europe/the EU as key security and defence allies for Britain, rather than primary focus on its transatlantic relations. Britain's acceptance of ESDP documents does not depend upon their description of the United States and NATO's roles.
- iv) The development of the ESDP takes place independently of the priorities of the United States and NATO.

2.5 Summary of Chapter Two

This chapter has established a theoretical framework that can be used to analyse the change in Britain's approach to the ESDP after 1998. Rationalist perspectives suggest that external and internal factors have affected Britain's approach to the ESDP directly, whereas the British identity and security interests have remained stable. This would imply that the changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP between 1998 and 2004 are merely the result of strategic adaptation. In contrast, Social Constructivists argue that external and internal factors may have influenced Britain's identity and security interests more profoundly, in a process of identity change. This, in turn, may have affected Britain's approach to the ESDP.

The Rationalist perspective would be strengthened by empirical evidence suggesting that British anti-federalist and transatlantic preferences have remained unaltered between 1998 and 2004. The Social Constructivist perspective would be strengthened by empirical evidence suggesting that British anti-federalist and transatlantic preferences have been modified during this period. However, before

we move on to the analysis, it is necessary to provide a brief historical background of Britain's approach to European security and defence from 1951 to 1997.

3. British Anti-Federalism and Transatlanticism 1951-1997

In my lifetime all the problems have come from mainland Europe, and all the solutions have come from the English-speaking nations across the world.

Margaret Thatcher, 5 October 1999

This chapter gives an historical overview of Britain's approach to the EU's foreign, security, and defence policies until the turning point in Saint Malo in 1998. Throughout the process of European integration, the various British governments have left little doubt that the British identity and security interests are best served through anti-federalism and transatlanticism. The British security discourse has focused on British rather than European security interests, and Britain has consistently resisted transferring sovereignty to the EU on security and defence matters. Moreover, the transatlantic alliance has clearly been Britain's main security and defence priority, and developments within European security and defence have been in accordance with the viewpoints of the United States and NATO.

This chapter's point of departure is Britain's approach to the formation of the European Coal and Steel Cooperation (ECSC) in 1951, followed by a presentation of the British approach to other key events in the process of creating a common security and defence policy in Europe. Such events include the failure of the European Defence Community (EDC), the formation of the Western European Union (WEU) and the European Political Cooperation (EPC), as well as the treaties of Maastricht (1992) and Amsterdam (1996).

3.1 Britain Turns its Back on the European Project

The bitter experiences from two world wars taught most European states that there was an urgent need to strengthen their national defences in order to avoid ever being caught 'off guard' again. When the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was founded in 1949, Britain and the eleven other member states committed themselves to 'sharing the risks and responsibilities as well as the benefits of collective security' and to protect Western Europe and North America from the Soviet Union (NATO 2001:29). The establishment of NATO was considered an efficient way of committing the United States to the territorial defence of Europe, and preventing the Americans from once again choosing isolationism as their dominant foreign policy strategy. It is commonly said about NATO that its initial purpose was to 'keep the Americans in, the Russians out and the Germans down'. Similarly, one of the main purposes behind the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 was to create interdependence between its six members – Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Italy – so that going to war against one another would be considered disadvantageous. The formation of the ECSC was motivated by a will to solve the so-called German problem, referring to the fear of German re-armament that existed particularly in France after the Second World War (Dedman 1996:57-59).

Britain supported the establishment of the ECSC, but declined participation in the cooperation itself. Consequently, it voluntarily put itself on the sideline when the Treaty of Paris (1951) marked the beginning of a long epoch of European integration. Moravcsik points out that two of the main reasons for the British scepticism regarding the ECSC, and later the European Community (EC), were suspicion of European federalism, and fear of harming the transatlantic alliance (Moravcsik 1998:124). In addition, Britain's coal and steel production was far ahead of the production elsewhere in Western Europe, and only a small percentage of its steel exports went to Europe (Dedman 1996:64-

65). This means that cooperation with France, Germany, and the other ECSC-countries would not necessarily be economically beneficial for Britain. Hence, Britain's decision to stay outside the EC appears to be in accordance with the Rationalist argument that states act according to 'stable and well-ordered interests' (Moravcsik 1998:18).

The scepticism communicated by the British made the EU's founding fathers, Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, fear that Britain would undermine the supranational aspect of the ECSC. Consequently, they decided to make Britain an offer they were certain would be turned down (Dedman 1996:65). Reportedly, Monnet told the British Chancellor of the Exchequer of that time, Sir Stafford Cripps, that

I hope with all my heart that you will join from the start. But if you don't, then we will go ahead without you; and because you are realists you'll adjust to the facts when you see that we have succeeded (cited in Blair 2003f).

Monnet's prediction came true. Ten years later, Britain applied for membership in the EC together with Denmark and Ireland. However, the French had in the meantime decided that they did not want Britain as a member after all. France's President, the legendary General Charles de Gaulle, vetoed British membership twice – in 1963 and 1967 – before Britain was finally accepted after de Gaulle's resignation in 1973 (Urwin 2003:20).

3.2 Britain and the European Defence Community

At the same time as the ECSC process began, ideas for a common European defence programme began to smoulder. The Korean War (1950-1953) had caused an international war scare, and Germany was still considered a potential threat in Europe. In 1950, one year before the ECSC was officially established, the French government introduced the so-called Pleven Plan for a European Defence Community (EDC).¹² The EDC was intended both to permit the rearmament of Germany and to create a European army (Dedman 1996:74; Smith 2003a).

As with the ECSC, the British government announced their support of the EDC, but at the same time it confirmed that it did not wish to contribute British forces to a European army (Dedman 1996:77). According to Michael Blackwell (1993:145), Britain did not think that a supranational institution would constitute a better defence against the Russians than intergovernmental coalitions. In addition, Britain was more vulnerable to attack by air than by land campaign, and it therefore made more sense to strengthen the transatlantic relationship with the United States than to build a new relationship with Europe (ibid.).

Ironically, the formation of the EDC was actually to a large extent a product of American pressure. The United States wanted West Germany to rearm so that the country could take an active part in the Korean War, but for security reasons the rearmament was preferred to take place under European supervision (Forster and Wallace 2000:463). The solution was to include West German forces in the EDC plans. Hopes were that the European army should prevent West German authorities from taking control over the German soldiers, while at the same time making the most of German resources (Dorman and Treacher 1995:9). Unfortunately for its many supporters, the EDC stranded in the French Assembly in 1954. The breakdown can partly be explained by Stalin's death in 1953, and the end of the Korean War. These events made it less urgent for France to commit itself to a supranational framework and to restore German forces. In addition, the French were worried that the EDC in practice would end up being controlled by the United States (Dedman 1996:83; Sæter 2003:30).

Not long after the collapse of the EDC, the Western European Union (WEU) on mutual defence was established. The WEU was to a large extent the result of a British proposal, and taking this into consideration, it is not surprising that the WEU's military functions were explicitly integrated into NATO. This organisational structure prevented the WEU from becoming fully operational, and protected Britain's anti-federalist preferences. In practice the WEU became a negotiating table with Britain on the one side and the six ECSC countries on the other. The inclusion of Britain in the EC in

¹² Named after the French Prime Minister of that time, René Pleven.

1973 therefore resulted in the WEU lying dormant for a long period (Smith 2003a:28; Dorman and Treacher 1995:10). This was more or less status quo until 1984, when the foreign and defence ministers of the WEU member states agreed to meet on a more regular basis. In 1986, the Single European Act stated, in accordance with Britain's transatlantic preferences, that nothing should be done regarding European security and defence cooperation that would undermine either NATO or the WEU (Forster and Wallace 2000:474).

3.3 Britain and the European Political Cooperation

In 1969, the idea of coordinating the foreign policies of the six EC members was launched in an intergovernmental meeting in Hague. One year later, the Luxembourg report established the European Political Cooperation (EPC) as an intergovernmental forum for cooperation within areas of high politics such as security and defence (Matlary 2002:166). Since foreign policy was – and still is – considered a sensitive policy area, it was decided that the foreign ministers had to agree by consensus in order for the EPC to state a common position in international affairs. Moreover, the EPC was to remain a separate framework and not to be incorporated into the EC. This means that the EC's supranational institutions – the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Justice – had little influence on the EPC's agenda (Smith 2003b:234). From 1970 and onwards, the EPC's outspoken goal was to reach common positions in foreign affairs and then gradually take action in those cases where consensus had in fact been reached. Following the London report of 1981, the EPC's new aim became joint action for the member states, a goal that was further emphasised both in the Single European Act, and in the Maastricht Treaty (Forster and Wallace 2000:468-9).

According to Christopher Hill (1996:72-5), the EPC was in general treated as secondary to the transatlantic alliance throughout Margaret Thatcher's time as Prime Minister (1979-1990). Thatcher and US President Ronald Reagan were close friends both on a personal and on a political level, and Thatcher left little doubt that the United States and NATO would remain Britain's most important security and defence partners. However, Hill points out that Thatcher most likely was more cooperative on EPC matters than she appeared from the outside, since the intergovernmental structure of the EPC posed less of a threat to British sovereignty than the plans for a supranational Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) (ibid.). Following the so-called Delors report on the EMU in 1989, she sceptically remarked that the report was in fact not about the EMU, but about 'getting European federalism in by the back door' (Thatcher 1989). In general anti-federalism and transatlanticism were essential ingredients in British identity and security interests under Thatcher. In her famous anti-European Bruges speech in 1988, she declared that:

We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them reimposed at a European level, with a European superstate exercising a new dominance from Brussels (Thatcher 1988).

Similarly, in 1990, she characteristically announced that in her view, Britain had surrendered enough sovereignty to the EU as it was (Thatcher 1990). She also established that if one 'did not retain out national identities in Europe, the dominant people in Europe would be German' (ibid.).

Such statements were no rarities during Thatcher's time as Prime Minister, and her role as a 'brake block' in the European integration process was well known. Almost ten years later, she confirmed this view by stating that in her lifetime 'all the problems [had] come from mainland Europe, and all the solutions [...] from the English-speaking nations across the world (cited in MacAskill 1999).

3.4 Britain and the Common Foreign and Security Policy

In 1992, the seminal Maastricht Treaty was signed by the EU member states. The so-called three-pillar system was established, and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was organised under pillar 2. With the establishment of the CFSP, the EU took one step further in the direction of becoming an important security and defence actor. The Maastricht Treaty stated that the CFSP should cover ‘all areas of foreign and security policy’ (European Council 1992 V:11-1). However, the intergovernmental European Council and the Council of Ministers remained the most important decision makers, and consensus was still widely sought in decision making procedures.¹³ This was first and foremost due to the fact that Britain and a few other states were unwilling to allow the use of QMV within the CFSP out of fear of setting a precedent (Peterson and Smith 2003:208).

Later that year, the Petersberg declaration introduced the so-called Petersberg Tasks. These tasks include humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping, as well as crisis management, and were intended to be carried out by the WEU (Smith 2003b:235). In 1996, the Petersberg Tasks were incorporated into the CFSP-pillar in the Amsterdam Treaty. In addition, a High Representative for the CFSP was introduced, in order to give the EU ‘a single voice and the CFSP a single face’ (Peterson and Smith 2003:209). The appointment of former NATO Secretary General Javier Solana as High Representative is generally believed to have strengthened the relationship between the EU and NATO. The Amsterdam Treaty also allowed the EU – through the WEU and the Petersberg tasks – to implement security-related decisions and to act beyond both EU and NATO borders (ibid.). However, Anthony Forster and William Wallace (2000:483) point out that the Amsterdam Treaty was ‘littered with qualifying clauses and conditional words’. This vagueness in language makes it difficult to extract what in fact were the extended powers of the EU on CFSP matters.

Hill (1996:77) notes that Britain’s approach to the CFSP was ‘wholly consistent with the previous line taken on EPC’, meaning that its anti-federalist and transatlantic preferences remained largely intact. The fear of losing sovereignty still seemed to dominate over the fear of a ‘Europe in two divisions’ where other countries would proceed with the integration process and Britain would fall behind. According to Stephen George (1998:275), Britain under John Major (1990-1997) remained an ‘awkward partner’ for the EU, despite the fact that the relationship between Major and US President Bill Clinton was not as close as the ones between Thatcher and Reagan, and Thatcher and George Bush. During his time as Prime Minister, Major faced a serious split in his own party on the European issue. Although his loyalty undoubtedly remained with the transatlantic alliance, disagreements between Britain and the United States over the war in Bosnia convinced even Major that ‘some type of European solution had to be found’ (Howorth 2000b: 13).¹⁴ However, he assured his British audience during the Maastricht negotiations that ‘Britain’s interests will come first – for me, and this Party. First. Last. Always’ (Major 1992). So why did the Major government accept the formation of the CFSP, considering its anti-federalist and transatlantic preferences?

First, it is important to note that the CFSP did not in fact represent a major change from the EU’s previous institutional arrangements regarding foreign, security, and defence policy (Forster and Wallace 2000:473). Intergovernmental policy making procedures were still preferred, and accepting the CFSP consequently did not involve any radical transfer of sovereignty on Britain’s part. This means that British anti-federalism remained unchallenged.

Second, the establishment of the CFSP did not conflict with the roles of the United States and NATO in Europe. On the contrary, only one year before the Maastricht Treaty was agreed upon, NATO decided to establish a separate European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) within the framework of NATO. It may therefore be argued that the CFSP did not challenge the role of NATO, but was rather intended to function as a supplement to it, and to act only when NATO decided not to. The crisis in Bosnia in the early 1990s showed that the EU was dependent upon support from the United States to take action. The United States decided at an early stage not to get involved because

¹³ Both the European Council and the Council of Ministers are intergovernmental in structure. In the European Council the Presidents and Prime Ministers of all the EU member states meet. The Council of Ministers is attended by one minister from each member state, depending on which policy area is being discussed.

¹⁴ The disagreements were largely the result of European military inadequacy to handle the situation in Bosnia, together with the United States’ increasing unwillingness to contribute economically (Howorth 2000b:13).

there were no US national interests at stake, but was nevertheless ‘forced’ to take action following the massacres in Srebrenica and Sarajevo (Matlary 2002:215-217). One must therefore assume that it was in the interest of both the United States and the EU to have a well-functioning CFSP that could ease the workload of the United States and NATO whenever necessary. This means that British transatlanticism also remained safely guarded.

3.5 British Anti-Federalism and Transatlanticism 1951-1997

The idea of a common foreign, security, and defence policy within the EU is, as we have seen, not new. As early as in 1950, France launched the Pleven Plan for a European defence community. Although this project failed, its two successors – the WEU and the EPC – dealt with similar issues. In 1992, the Maastricht Treaty included the CFSP in its three-pillar structure, and four years later, the Amsterdam Treaty further strengthened the role of the CFSP.

Britain’s part in developing a common EU security and defence policy was limited from the very beginning. Britain did not take part in the EDC plans, and was also somewhat reluctant with regard to joining the WEU and the EPC. The Thatcher government marked itself as predominantly Euro-sceptic throughout its time in 10 Downing Street, and the Major government suffered under inflamed debates on the EU question. Neither British anti-federalism nor transatlanticism were challenged during this period, and the British approach to European security and defence must therefore be seen merely as a strategic adaptation to external and internal factors. As we shall see in the next chapter, this situation changed with the Saint Malo meeting in 1998.

4. The Saint Malo Declaration: British Anti-Federalism and Transatlanticism are Challenged

On European Defence I am proud that we have played a leading role. We have succeeded in changing the whole focus of the debate.

Geoffrey Hoon, 20 December 1999.¹⁵

The shift in Britain's approach to European security and defence became evident when the joint French-British declaration on European defence was agreed upon in Saint Malo in 1998. The declaration stated that the EU needed 'strengthened armed forces that can react rapidly to the new risks', and that the EU should be able to act autonomously in order to respond to international crises (France and Britain 1998, art. 2,4). These words clearly aimed at strengthening the EU's security and defence role. Shortly after Saint Malo, Tony Blair called for 'a new role for Europe in defence', thus marking the beginning of a new era in the story of Britain and the ESDP (Blair 1998g).

This chapter discusses why Britain in 1998 evolved from being a sceptic European to becoming an active promoter of European security and defence. The chapter begins with a brief overview of important external and internal factors that are likely to have affected Britain's approach to the ESDP between 1998-1999. Then we will move on to discussing to what extent British anti-federalism and transatlanticism were modified during this period. If these preferences remained unaltered, this would imply that Britain's new approach to the ESDP in Saint Malo was merely the result of strategic adaptation. If, on the other hand, they were modified, this would strengthen the assumption that the British identity and security interests had gone through more profound changes.

4.1 Internal and External Factors Affecting Britain and the ESDP, 1998-1999

Three factors, one internal and two external, are particularly likely to have affected Britain's approach to the ESDP between 1998 and 1999. The internal one is the change of government in Britain. The external ones are the CFSP/ESDP integration process, and the war in Kosovo.

First, the change of government in Britain in 1997, from the Conservative Major government to Blair's New Labour, marked the beginning of a new era in Britain's relations with Europe. Richard Heffernan (1997:181) points out that the Blair government is the most pro-European government in Britain since that of Edward Heath – the government that eventually got Britain into the EU in 1972. Whereas the Thatcher government had been famous for its Euro-scepticism, and Major had experienced significant conflicts within his own party on the issue of Europe, New Labour firmly declared in their 1997 election manifesto that their goal was to 'give Britain leadership in Europe' (Deighton 2001:311). Blair's signature tune was that Britain did not have to choose between its partnerships with Europe and the United States. Like Winnie the Pooh, he would have them 'both, please'.

Second, the process of creating a common European security and defence policy had at this point already evolved for some time. The Maastricht Treaty had included the CFSP in the three-pillar system, and the Amsterdam Treaty had further developed the CFSP's structures. Perhaps more importantly, NATO had launched the concept of a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) within the structures of the organisation. The ESDI expressed the United States' acceptance of French sensitivities regarding NATO, as well as the American willingness to let Europe take on more

¹⁵ British Secretary of State for Defence 1999-2005.

responsibility for its own security and defence (Forster and Wallace 2000:483). The transatlantic acceptance of the ESDI was most likely a key reason why Britain took such an active part in the Saint Malo initiative, as this meant that the initiative did not conflict with British transatlanticism.

Third, the Kosovo crisis in the late 1990s revealed the need for a stronger and more efficient EU that could take action within its own neighbourhood. When the internal conflict in Kosovo deteriorated during the first months of 1998, the experiences from Bosnia a few years earlier put pressure on the international society to take action. Two of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, Russia and China, made it clear that they considered Kosovo an internal affair in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia. Consequently, they would use their veto to stop a UN mandate for hard power intervention. In practice, this made it impossible for the UN to act. At the same time, the United States was ambivalent with regard to intervention in Kosovo, the general signal being that it did not wish to play a key role. US President Clinton characterised Kosovo as an internal European matter, and called on the EU to take action (Matlary 2002:219-22). However, instead of seeing Kosovo as a chance to demonstrate its capabilities as a global actor, the EU was caught up in endless discussions. In the end, the organisation was incapable of reaching a common position, and once again it was a United States-led coalition that took action (Smith 2003a:1).

4.2 Strategic Adaptation or Identity Change?

How did the change of British government, the ESDP integration process, and the Kosovo crisis affect Britain's approach to the ESDP between 1998 and 1999? Rationalists would argue that Britain's new approach to the ESDP in Saint Malo was simply a matter of strategic adaptation to these external and internal factors, and that British anti-federalism and transatlanticism therefore remained largely intact. Consequently, expected empirical findings (see chapter two) would be (i) that the British security discourse continued to focus on British rather than European security interests, (ii) that Britain resisted the transfer of sovereignty to the ESDP in the Saint Malo declaration and in subsequent ESDP documents, (iii) that the special relationship with the United States remained Britain's key security and defence priority, and (iv) that the ESDP developments did not conflict with the preferences of the United States and NATO.

In contrast, Social Constructivists would argue that Britain's new approach to the ESDP in Saint Malo can be seen as the result of more profound changes in the British identity and security interests. This would mean that the British anti-federalist and transatlantic preferences had been gradually modified due to the external and internal factors. Hence, expected empirical findings would be (i) that the British security discourse would focus more on common European security interests than before, (ii) that Britain had become more willing to transfer sovereignty to the ESDP in the Saint Malo declaration and other ESDP documents, (iii) that European allies had come to challenge the transatlantic alliance's dominant position in the British identity and security interests, and (iv) that the ESDP developments would take place independently of the preferences of the United States and NATO.

Based on these assumptions, the following sections discuss the Europeanisation of the British security discourse at the time of Saint Malo, British sovereignty in the Saint Malo declaration, transatlantic relations in the Saint Malo declaration, and finally the transatlantic response to the Saint Malo initiative.

4.2.1 Europeanisation of the British Security Discourse?

Blair's personal impact on Britain's approach to the EU in general and to the ESDP in particular has been widely discussed. The informal meeting between the EU Heads of State in Pörttschach in October 1998, shortly after Blair's entry as Prime Minister, is commonly referred to as the first turning point in Britain's approach to the ESDP. At the press conference that followed the Pörttschach meeting, Blair announced that Britain shared 'the willingness (...) for Europe to take a stronger foreign policy and security role', and called for 'fresh thinking' with regard to the European security and defence identity

that had been launched by NATO a few years earlier (Blair 1998e). Blair left little doubt that his government represented a more pro-European approach than the two previous ones:

I made it very clear, before the election, that a new government would mean a new approach in Europe. The last Government [...] allowed Britain to be taken to the margins of Europe (Blair 1998g).

Since the election, there is evidence of a remarkable shift in public opinion in Britain. The narrow chauvinism of the years of Conservative Government is gone. [...] For the first time in many years there is a growing consensus in Britain in favour of constructive engagement with Europe (Blair 1998a).

Such statements were in stark contrast to Britain's previous approach to the CFSP/ESDP, and can be seen as the prelude to the path breaking Saint Malo summit between France and Britain less than six weeks later. Prior to Saint Malo, France and Britain had often differed in their views regarding the role of the EU in international security and defence issues. Whereas France supported the idea of an independent ESDP, Britain appeared worried that a stronger role for Europe would threaten British sovereignty and its special relationship with the United States. Although differences remained in their visions for Europe, the Saint Malo meeting narrowed the gap between the two European great powers (Howorth 2000:33). Several points of agreement between the two governments were listed in the subsequent declaration. Most notably, the Saint Malo declaration called for strengthening the EU's international role so that the organisation could 'be in a position to play its full role on the international stage' (France and Britain 1998, art. 1). This formulation clearly marked a shift from what Britain previously had agreed to with regard to CFSP/ESDP issues.

In general, evident changes in Britain's security discourse regarding Europe can be observed both before and after the Saint Malo meeting. On several occasions, Blair expressed a wish for Britain to move closer to Europe. One example is his 1998 statement that 'Britain's future lies in being full partners in Europe' (Blair 1998e). Another is when he, in an address to the US State Department, made it clear that

[...] we are back as a country engaged and constructive in Europe. Internationalist not isolationist in perspective. There is no future in isolationism in today's world (Blair 1998d).

Blair's language when speaking of Europe differed noticeably from that of Thatcher and Major. In a speech shortly after Saint Malo, Blair claimed that it was 'far better to be in [the EU], engage in the arguments, and win the arguments' than to be outside the Union (Blair 1998g). Although his statement suggested that Britain's intention with the Saint Malo initiative was to lead Europe in Britain's direction rather than the other way around, he did argue that Britain should be an integrated member of the EU. This suggests that the British security discourse had in fact become more 'European' in nature. Hence, it was perhaps not so surprising that Thatcher took the opportunity presented by the Saint Malo meeting to express her scepticism towards the ESDP. She declared that she saw the ESDP as a step on the way towards creating a European superstate, and that she thought Blair was 'in pursuit of a doomed ambition to lead Europe' (Deighton 2001:321; Howorth 2000a:47). This statement clearly illustrates the difference between Thatcher and Blair's approach to European security and defence. Whereas Thatcher consistently had focused on British security interests alone, Blair to a larger extent saw British security interests as part of European security interests:

The next era must be about how we build Europe's strength, power and responsibility vis-à-vis the outside world. The challenges are now external: in the economy; in defence enlargement (Blair 1999c).

Britain must overcome its ambivalence about Europe. Then our creativity and our practical common sense can be accepted as the contribution of a partner, not an outsider. This is in Britain's interests. It is in Europe's interests too (ibid.).

Arguably, Britain had come to consider itself as a more integrated part of the EU, with security interests coinciding with those of the rest of Europe. This strengthens the assumption that British anti-federalism had been somewhat modified in Saint Malo.

4.2.2 *British Sovereignty in the Saint Malo Declaration*

Robert Cooper (2003:9) asserts that states are ‘naturally inclined to protect [their] sovereignty’. This has also traditionally been the case with the EU’s member states, although the degree to which they have been protecting their sovereignty has varied. Moravcsik (1998:70) points out that Britain has a record of being the most anti-federalist member of the EU – a claim that appears to have been particularly accurate during the Thatcher era of British politics.

With the Saint Malo initiative, Blair marked that his approach to European security and defence was radically different from that of Thatcher:

When we began the European defence debate at Pörschach in Austria and then followed it with the St Malo Declaration, there was rightly a sense of optimism. It was a breakthrough. But it is only a start (Blair 1999c).

Rather than saying that the Saint Malo achievements were the furthest Britain would go with regard to the ESDP, Blair made it clear that he considered the Saint Malo initiative to be only the beginning of increased security and defence cooperation in Europe. However, despite Blair’s assurances that Britain had become a more integrated part of the European security and defence, the ESDP’s general structures remained intergovernmental both in the Saint Malo declaration and in the subsequent declarations from the Helsinki and Cologne European Councils. Article 1 in the Saint Malo declaration reads that the intergovernmental European Council is to ‘decide on the progressive framing of a common defence policy in the framework of CFSP’. Moreover, it is made clear that the Council is to act ‘on an intergovernmental basis’, meaning that national vetoes were sustained (France and Britain 1998:1). Similarly, the report from the Cologne European Council one year later states that

[...] the policy of the Union shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States (European Council 1999a).

From this, it can be argued that the change in Britain’s approach to Europe in 1998 did not involve fundamental changes in the British identity and security interests. On the contrary: the national veto on security and defence was secured, meaning that British sovereignty was not substantially challenged. In fact, the ESDP developments between 1998 and 1999 appeared to be completely in accordance with the preferences set out by the Blair government in their 1999 British Defence White Paper. Here it is made clear that ‘national governments will retain the right to decide when and how to employ their own armed forces’ (Ministry of Defence 1999, art. 20). Hence, when Blair, prior to the Saint Malo meeting, was asked if he had ‘given away too much, in erosion of the British veto’, he warded off the questioner by replying that the British veto was secured in important policy areas such as security and defence (Blair 1997b). After Saint Malo, he confirmed this position, by assuring that the EU’s supranational bodies would not play a distinct part in shaping the ESDP:

[...] the deployment of forces is a decision for Governments. I see no role for the European Parliament or the Court of Justice. Nor will the European Commission have a decision-making role on military matters (Blair 1999a).

Defence Secretary Geoffrey Hoon explained that:

[...] what we are proposing is that Europe’s forces, the forces of *fully sovereign* European states, acting in cooperation, should make a greater contribution to their own security, nothing more, nothing less (Hoon 1999, my italics).

Such statements strengthen the assumption that Britain's approach to the ESDP remained merely strategic, and that fundamental changes in the British identity and security interests had not taken place.

Nevertheless, and despite the fact that Britain did not de facto transfer any sovereignty to the ESDP between 1998 and 1999, the Saint Malo declaration opened for a closer and more efficient security and defence cooperation within the ESDP. In 1998, Blair called for more capable and efficient EU in defence matters:

We willingly pay the price of pooled sovereignty in defence, for the greater prize of collective security through NATO. We should be ready to pay a similar price in the European Union for the prizes of political security and stability (Blair 1998a).

On external policy, the EU must be both effective and seen to be effective internationally. [...] We must equip Europe with better machinery. This means the right candidate to be EU's voice on common foreign and security policy. It also means enabling Europe to act in a sensible and co-ordinated way both politically and economically (ibid.).

Pooled sovereignty on ESDP issues would mean that a voting procedure other than consensus – in this context QMV – would be chosen. Moreover, a more efficient EU on ESDP matters would arguably presuppose that the states were deprived of their right to veto ESDP decisions. Hence, the statements quoted above strengthen the assumption that British anti-federalism was gradually losing ground, and that the British identity and security interests had in fact been altered.

4.2.3 *Transatlantic Relations in the Saint Malo Declaration*

Only months prior to the Saint Malo meeting, Blair visited US President Clinton in Washington D.C. During his stay, Blair gave several speeches praising the special relationship between the United States and Britain. His opening speech at the White House was characterised by a friendly and informal tone. Blair declared that he was pleased to call Clinton a good colleague and 'proud to call [him] a good friend' (Blair 1998b). Blair's choice of words reflects the warmth in the relationship between the two leaders, and it was evident that they had developed close links on a personal as well as on a political level. Blair emphasised the strong relationship between the two nations, as well as the similarities between the British and American identities:

[...] what binds us together, you know, is more than our history and it is greater than our language and it is deeper than our mutual self-interest (ibid.).

Later, Blair stressed that Britain and the United States thought alike 'on so many issues' and that he looked forward to strengthening the bonds between the two nations (Blair 1998c). Comments such as these were most likely what inspired Jonathan Freedland, in a comment in *The Guardian*, to remark that 'Bill Clinton knows he has one admirer whose heart is forever his. Not Monica Lewinsky, but Tony Blair' (Freedland 1998).

The special relationship between Britain and the United States has throughout history particularly been manifested through NATO. In official British documents and speeches after 1998, it seems clear that NATO remained Britain's top security and defence priority – despite the fact that Britain at the time took the lead on several ESDP initiatives. The Saint Malo declaration, the Cologne European Council, and the London declaration all assure that NATO's role as the key security and defence organisation in Europe will remain intact. This view is also reflected in the Blair government's speeches. Early in 1998, the British Defence Secretary, George Robertson, stated that NATO would continue to be the cornerstone of Britain's defence planning, and assured that Britain intended to continue its role as a leading member of NATO (Robertson 1998).¹⁶ Similarly, Blair repeatedly assured that the development of the ESDP would be fully compatible with NATO's role, and that Britain's defence interests would first and foremost be secured through NATO. An illustrative

¹⁶ George Robertson was appointed NATO's 10th Secretary General in 1999.

example is found in late 2000, when he stated that Britain was ‘engaged in a debate that will ensure Europe’s defence policy proceeds absolutely consistent with NATO’ (Blair 2000c).

It seems clear that Britain continued to rank its transatlantic relations with the United States and NATO over its European partnerships. This observation is supported by the British political commentator Timothy Garton Ash, who concludes that the United States continued to be Britain’s most important partner between 1998 and 1999 (Ash 2001:9). This strengthens the assumption that Britain’s approach to the ESDP during this period was first and foremost one of strategic adaptation.

However, at the same time, it is important to note that the Saint Malo declaration marked a turning point in that it emphasised the EU’s need to be able to act independently of other organisations, including NATO. This is particularly unique when considering that Britain was one of the originators. Article 2 of the Saint Malo declaration reads that

[...] the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises (France and Britain 1998 art. 2, *my italics*).

The same view is echoed in the French-British London declaration one year later, where it is stated that it is necessary for the EU to have ‘autonomous capacity to take decisions’ (France and Britain 1999, art. 3). Furthermore, the Helsinki European Council makes it clear that ‘[t]he European Council underlines its determination to develop an autonomous capacity to take decisions’ (European Council 1999b). Jolyon Howorth (2000b:4-5) notes that the word ‘autonomy’ is controversial in the ESDP context, as it opens for speculations that the ESDP was aiming at taking over NATO’s security and defence role in Europe. The fact that the Blair government not only accepted these formulations, but also actively fronted many ESDP initiatives during this period, suggests that British transatlanticism had been challenged, and that the new British approach to the ESDP was in fact a result of commencing changes in the British identity and security interests.

4.2.4 The Transatlantic Response to the Saint Malo Initiative

Considering the transatlantic relationship’s dominant position in the British identity and security interests, a natural assumption would be that the Saint Malo initiative did not conflict with the interests of the United States and NATO. Certainly, following the ESDP breakthrough in Saint Malo, Blair was eager to point out that the ESDP developments were fully in accordance with the transatlantic alliance. He was also careful to stress that the initiative had ‘been welcomed in the US, by the Administration and others’ (Blair 1998g). Following a NATO summit in early 1999, he assured the British Parliament that:

The [NATO] Summit unanimously welcomed and endorsed the initiative, which I and President Chirac launched at our Summit last December in St. Malo, to develop a European defence capability for crisis management operations where the Alliance as a whole is not engaged (Blair 1999b).

It seemed important for Blair to make sure that his partners in the transatlantic alliance did not feel threatened by the new ESDP. Luckily for Blair, both the United States and NATO soon confirmed that they were fully supportive of the Saint Malo initiative. In 1999, NATO’s Strategic Concept made it clear that NATO considered the development of a common security and defence policy for the EU to be fully compatible with NATO’s own policy (NATO 1999, art. 17). Similarly, Clinton declared in a joint press conference with Blair and the President of the EU Commission, Jacques Santer, that the United States ‘welcomes a strong partnership with a strong and united Europe’ (Blair et al. 1998). This statement seems to confirm the observation from the Kosovo crisis that the United States was ready to hand over the responsibility for Europe’s security to the Europeans themselves. A stronger ESDP would in this context mean less responsibility on the shoulders of NATO, and thus also on the United States. From this perspective, the British initiative in Saint Malo can be seen as a strategic adaptation to external and internal factors.

There are, however, some aspects that should be added to this picture. According to Forster and Wallace (2000:486), the US government supported a greater role for the ESDP in security and defence issues, but at the same time it also warned against misconceiving or mishandling this type of initiative. Only a few days after the Saint Malo meeting, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright wrote an article in *The Financial Times* entitled 'The Right Balance Will Secure NATO's Future'. Although Albright emphasised that she welcomed Blair's initiative 'for Europeans to consider the ways they can take more responsibility for their own security and defence', she nevertheless felt the need to clarify the respective roles of NATO and the EU. Therefore, she announced that the United States would

[...] examine all proposals on European defence and security with a simple question in mind: Does it improve our effectiveness in working together? (Albright 1998).

This statement demonstrates that the United States did not unconditionally endorse the ESDP initiative. Albright admitted that the United States was sceptical towards 'additional institutional structures' like that of the ESDP, and consequently she introduced her famous *three D's* in order to secure 'the right balance' between transatlanticism and Europeanism. The first D, to avoid decoupling, meant that the ESDP should not be separated from NATO's structures, but rather organised under it. To avoid duplication meant that NATO and the ESDP should be complementary rather than competing security actors, and that the ESDP should not attempt to undermine the role of NATO. Finally, to avoid discrimination meant not to discriminate 'against NATO members who are not EU members' (ibid.). Thus, all NATO member states should be involved in decision making processes regardless of whether they were members of the EU or not. US Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott, also expressed his concerns regarding the division of labour between the ESDP and NATO:

We would not want to see an ESDI that comes into being first within NATO, but then grows out of NATO and finally grows away from NATO, since that would lead to an ESDI that initially duplicates NATO but that could eventually compete with NATO (Talbott 1999).

Referring directly to the Saint Malo initiative, he admitted that:

The Anglo-French Summit at St. Malo last December raised concerns among non-EU Allies that they might not be sufficiently involved in planning and decision-making structures. Then came the EU leaders' declaration at Cologne in June, which could be read to imply that Europe's default position would be to act outside the Alliance whenever possible, rather than through the Alliance (ibid.).

Albright's article and Talbott's comments suggest that the establishment of the ESDP was not as warmly welcomed in the United States as Blair had claimed. Neither did the opposition in Britain accept Blair's assurances that the transatlantic relationship remained a key priority for Britain. Thatcher predicted that the ESDP developments would eventually lead to the collapse of NATO, and the leader of the Conservative party, William Hague, claimed that the Saint Malo initiative had 'profound dangers' (Howorth 2000a:47; Deighton 2001:321). These sceptical reactions both from high-ranking members of the Clinton administration, and from the British opposition were most likely the reason why NATO's new Secretary General, George Robertson, felt the need to clarify that

ESDI does not mean 'less US' – it means more Europe, and hence a stronger NATO. Strengthening Europe's role in security is about re-balancing the transatlantic relationship in line with European and American interests (Robertson 1999).

Robertson modified Albright's three D's, giving them a more 'positive' meaning. His *three I's* refers to the improvement of European defence; the inclusiveness of all Allies; and the indivisibility of transatlantic security (ibid.). His speech also signalled that the United States and NATO preferred the ESDP to be subordinate to rather than on equal footing with NATO. Howorth (2000a:44) reveals that under pressure from the United States, Britain sought – but failed – to tone down the word 'autonomous' in the Saint Malo declaration. In other words, the United States supported the

establishment of the ESDP, but only as long as it was explicitly stated in the ESDP documents that the ESDP would be subordinate to NATO. The mentioning of autonomous action may have been interpreted in the United States as a sign that the ESDP would seek to obtain powers independent of the transatlantic alliance. The scepticism expressed from both the United States and NATO regarding the new ESDP developments, implies that the British initiative in Saint Malo was not only a matter of strategic adaptation. Rather, it suggests that Europeanism had started to challenge the dominant position of transatlanticism in the British identity and security interests.

4.3 British Anti-Federalism and Transatlanticism are Challenged

During the governments of Thatcher and Major, anti-federalism and transatlanticism dominated Britain's approach to European security and defence. This chapter has discussed how the European integration process, the Kosovo crisis, and the change of government in Britain affected these preferences between 1998 and 1999. Was the new British approach to the ESDP in Saint Malo merely the result of strategic adaptation, or was it the result of deeper changes in the British identity and security interests?

There was undoubtedly an observable change in the British security discourse when the Blair government came to power after a long period of Conservative rule. The approach to Europe became much more open and positive during this period, and the Blair government increasingly spoke of common European interests and values. Nevertheless, the Blair government continued to resist transferring sovereignty to the ESDP. Although Blair talked about strengthening the ESDP's capability to reach decisions and take action, the ESDP's intergovernmental structure was maintained both in the Saint Malo declaration and in the declarations from the Cologne and Helsinki European Councils.

At the same time as strengthening its European relations in Saint Malo, the Blair government reiterated that the transatlantic alliance remained Britain's number one priority. However, the introduction of the word 'autonomous' in the Saint Malo declaration suggests that the ESDP in the future aimed to work independently of other organisations – including NATO. In addition, and despite Blair's claims that the United States was fully supportive of the ESDP, members of the Clinton administration expressed serious concern that the ESDP would become a rival to NATO in Europe.

Britain's continued reluctance to transfer sovereignty to the ESDP, and the continued priority of the transatlantic alliance over other security and defence partners, indicate that British anti-federalism and transatlanticism remained largely intact between 1998 and 1999. However, at the same time, the shift in the British security discourse, the new autonomous nature of the ESDP, and the American scepticism towards the ESDP's role, give a hint of the opposite, namely that British anti-federalism and transatlanticism had been challenged, and to some extent modified.

5. The Nice Treaty and the Laeken Declaration: Modification of British Anti-Federalism and Transatlanticism

Britain's relations with Europe have too often been ambivalent or indifferent. Indeed, I believe Britain's hesitation over Europe was one of my country's greatest miscalculations of the post-War years.

Tony Blair, 23 February 2000.

Between 2000 and 2002, the EU's role as a security and defence actor was further modelled, first in the Nice Treaty and later in the Laeken declaration on the future of Europe. The purpose of the Nice Treaty was above all to strengthen the EU's institutions ahead of the scheduled eastern enlargement in 2004. The result was that national vetoes were given up in many policy areas, leading various anti-federalist movements to criticise it for steering the EU towards a 'United States of Europe'. In late 2001, the Laeken Declaration declared the ESDP operative, hence marking the beginning of a new epoch in the ESDP's history.

In chapter four, we saw how the traditional British identity and security interests were challenged by the Saint Malo initiative. This chapter discusses the nature of Britain's approach to the ESDP between 2000 and 2002. To what extent was the British acceptance of the Nice Treaty and the Laeken declaration simply a strategic adaptation to the ESDP, and to what extent was it the result of more profound changes in the British identity and security interests?

5.1 External and Internal Factors affecting Britain and the ESDP, 2000-2002

Four factors, one external and three internal, are particularly important when it comes to understanding Britain's approach to the ESDP between 2000 and 2002. The external ones are the change of government in the United States, the September 11 terrorist attacks, and the war in Afghanistan. The internal one is the re-election of the Blair government.

First, the change of administration in the United States in late 2000 clearly had influence on the transatlantic relationship between the United States and Europe. With the Republican administration of George W. Bush in command, the United States soon marked itself as increasingly unilateralist by refusing to sign the Kyoto protocol, and by withdrawing from the Treaty on Antibalistic Missiles (ABM). Furthermore, it was accused of viewing international organisations like NATO and the UN simply as toolboxes of which the United States could make use whenever necessary, and ignore them beyond that. *The Guardian* commented that the Presidential shift marked a 'decisive moment' for Britain, since the United States now appeared to be 'reverting to the conservatism and unilateralism of earlier in the last century' (Guardian 2001). Consequently, it could be argued that the time had come for Britain to turn to its European partners instead.

Second, the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11 2001 changed the ideas of international security and defence forever. This was the first attack on American soil in modern time, and it caught not only the United States, but also the entire international community off guard. It did not take long before the fundamentalist terrorist organisation Al-Quada was held responsible for the attacks. Intelligence reports showed that the organisation was actively supported by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and that its leader, Osama bin Laden, was hiding in the Afghan mountains. Consequently – introducing the third external factor – Afghanistan became an obvious target for a retaliatory strike. However, despite the fact that September 11 invoked NATO's article 5 for the first time, the subsequent military action in Afghanistan did not involve either NATO or EU

forces.¹⁷ Instead it was led by a ‘coalition of the willing’ of which Britain and the United States were the main actors.

Fourth, the re-election of Blair in the 2001 British general election provided for expectations of further steps towards increased security and defence cooperation. Throughout the first term of the Blair government, several British commentators had characterised Blair as a strong Prime Minister, and compared him to distinctive state leaders such as Churchill, Thatcher, and Clinton (Kavanagh 2001:3). Blair’s efforts to bring Britain closer to Europe had in particular been evident in ESDP matters, with the Saint Malo meeting as his undisputed greatest achievement.

5.2 Strategic Adaptation or Identity Change?

To what extent did the change of government in the United States, the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Afghanistan campaign, and the re-election of the Blair government affect the British anti-federalist and transatlantic components in the British identity and security interests? Following the same analytical structure as in chapter four, the following sections discuss the Europeanisation of the British security discourse at the time of Nice and Laeken, British sovereignty in the Nice Treaty and Laeken declaration, transatlantic relations in the Nice Treaty and Laeken declaration, and the transatlantic response to the Nice Treaty and Laeken declaration.

5.2.1 Europeanisation of the British Security Discourse?

The process of moving closer to Europe appears to have continued in the immediate years following Saint Malo. The Blair government seemed increasingly eager to disassociate itself from the approach to Europe taken by Thatcher and Major, and willingly took the opportunity to criticise the Thatcher government’s isolationist and hostile approach to the EU. Moreover, British interests were increasingly seen as part of European interests in the British security discourse. In a particularly pro-European speech entitled ‘Committed to Europe, Reforming Europe’ in early 2000, Blair argued that Britain throughout history ‘too often has been an observer in Europe’s development, not a player’ (Blair 2000a). Furthermore, he accused the British media of presenting his government’s pro-European position in a negative way, and assured that New Labour would continue to fight for Britain’s role as a ‘leading partner in Europe’ (ibid.). Similarly, in the spring of 2002, Blair once again pointed out the difference between his own government and the previous ones:

Under the last government, Britain was marginalized, without influence appropriate to our weight and size, in the isolation room. Now, from economy to defence to institutional reform, Britain is in there, shaping Europe’s future, making Europe work in a way that is better for Britain and Europe (Blair 2002a).

British and European interests are seen here as largely intertwined. One year later, at the European Research Institute, Blair delivered what has been referred to as ‘the most explicitly pro-European speech of his premiership’ (Tempest 2001). Here, he emphasised that the future of Britain was ‘inextricably linked with Europe’ and claimed that Europe was an important part of Britain’s international security interests (Blair 2001b). On yet another occasion, Blair stated that British security interests had become more ‘intimately linked’ with the interests in the EU, and that changing circumstances would increasingly lead states to cooperate and to seek ‘common answers to problems increasingly global in scope’ (Blair 2000c). Furthermore, he remarked that it was his government’s duty to counter ‘arguments of isolationism’ (ibid.). Blair’s message seemed to be that when national security interests are changing, cooperation and institution building may be the most efficient way to secure them. His statement is thus not in accordance with a Rationalist understanding of national interests and preferences as exogenously given. On the contrary: if the British security interests and

¹⁶ Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty reads: ‘The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all’ (NATO 1949).

preferences were changing due to global factors, this rather corresponds with a theory of identity change.

5.2.2 *British Sovereignty in the Nice Treaty and Laeken Declaration*

Despite indications of change in the British security discourse, the Blair government remained eager to safeguard British sovereignty between 2000 and 2002. For instance did Blair continue to underscore that what he wanted was ‘a Europe of sovereign nations, countries proud of their own distinctive identity’, and that decisions regarding foreign, security, and defence policy would remain under national control (Blair 2000b; Blair 2001b). From a Rationalist point of view, it certainly seems as if the ESDP in the Nice Treaty would remain largely intergovernmental in structure, and that British sovereignty would remain protected. Such an understanding is supported by Andrew Osborn and Richard Norton-Taylor, journalists in *The Guardian*, who remark that the Nice Treaty is ‘littered with ifs and buts and apparent contradictions’, and claim that it failed to clarify the true nature of EU's role in defence. ‘European defence’, the two journalists observe, ‘is clearly an issue that will ultimately be decided by member states’ (Osborn and Norton-Taylor 2001). This type of outcome seems to fit well with Blair’s own affirmed wishes. Before the Nice summit, he said that Britain had to

[...] negotiate toughly and get our way, not stand aside and let other European countries make the decisions that matter to us (Blair 2000c).

Furthermore, after the summit, he seemed content when declaring that his government had succeeded in promoting Britain’s interests (Kirk 2000a).

However, the interpretation of the Nice Treaty as a victory for British interests was not one that was shared by everyone. The British Conservative leader, Hague, proclaimed that the Nice Treaty represented ‘a major step towards a European superstate’ and underscored that it would never have been ratified under a Conservative government (Kirk 2000b). Similarly, the always-involved Thatcher pointed out that Britain’s participation in the EU rapid reaction force – as outlined in the Nice Treaty – would not be beneficial either for Britain, Europe, or NATO. ‘Europe’, Thatcher sarcastically noted, ‘has less chance of becoming a military power than of creating a sound currency’ (Szamuely 2000). Thatcher’s comments clearly annoyed Blair, who hit back by stating that the ‘Thatcher era’ in British politics was passé, and that there consequently was no reason to take notice of the ex-Prime Minister’s advice (ibid.). But despite Blair’s protests, the Conservatives appeared to be at least partly right in their suspicion. The Nice Treaty did in fact increase the supranational element of the EU in general, in that it once again extended the number of policy areas in which QMV could be used. Furthermore, it strengthened the so-called Community method in the EU, by offering the supranational European Parliament the European Commission, and the European Court of Justice increased powers in decision making procedures.¹⁸ Although the national veto on foreign and security policy remained intact in the Nice Treaty, important changes did take place also within this policy area. The most crucial points were the inclusion of the ESDP under the CFSP-pillar, the transfer of authority from the WEU to the ESDP, and the incorporation of the Petersberg tasks into the EU (Bono 2002:21). In addition, the treaty opened for the development of a common European defence in stating that

[t]he common foreign and security policy shall include all questions relating to the security of the Union, including the progressive framing of a common defence policy, which might lead to a common defence, should the European Council so decide (European Council 2001, art. 1).

If carried out, this would not only mean taking the Saint Malo goals one step further – it would also imply that the British acceptance of the Nice Treaty had had more implications for British security interests and preferences than Blair was willing to admit.

¹⁸ The Community method is a decision-making procedure in the EU where the European Commission has the monopoly on legislative initiatives, and the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament are granted equal powers in approving these propositions. In addition, the European Court of Justice has jurisdiction over any decision taken (Cini 2003:416).

When it comes to the Laeken declaration, this is a seminal document because it was the one that eventually declared the ESDP operative (European Council 2001). Interestingly, both federalists and anti-federalists claimed that the Laeken declaration had been an achievement for their own position. Anti-federalists seemed content with the fact that the declaration both warned against turning the EU into a superstate, and in addition opened for the possibility of returning sovereignty from the EU level to the national governments (*Economist* 2001c). In contrast, the rotating EU President at the time, Belgium's Guy Verhofstadt, commented that the declaration had broken several 'taboos' within the EU, and could be seen as another step towards an ever closer union (*ibid.*). Blair, on his part, announced after the Laeken summit that Britain had 'achieved the outcome it desired' (Blair 2001c). This could of course be interpreted as a sign that the British veto was secured, but it could also mean that Blair was content with the strengthening of the ESDP. At Laeken, Blair complimented the European Council for taking stock of the ESDP, as this would allow the EU to carry out the Petersberg tasks (*ibid.*). At the same time, he challenged British anti-federalists by arguing that

[...] those opposed to Britain's role in Europe argue about sovereignty: that the gains we have made are outweighed by the fact that in many areas national sovereignty is no longer absolute. My answer is this: I see sovereignty not merely as the ability of a single country to say no, but as the power to maximise our national strength and capacity in business, trade, foreign policy, defence and the fight against crime (Blair 2001b).

In this situation, Blair defined national sovereignty as more than the ability to veto decisions taken at the EU level. He pointed out that 'decision making on key issues is too slow and secretive' in the EU, and he arguably took a decisive step away from British anti-federalist traditions when he stated that sometimes, 'sovereignty has to be deployed for national advantage' (*ibid.*). Later, he left little doubt about his commitment to the European project:

[...] we must end the nonsense of 'this far and no further'. There are areas in which Europe should and will integrate more: in fighting crime and illegal immigration; to secure economic reform; in having a more effective defence and security policy (Blair 2002b).

With this statement, Blair opened for further integration on security and defence. He continued with even more preciseness, stating that Britain should not 'reach for intergovernmentalism as a weapon against European institutions', and that 'we need supranational European institutions for Europe to work' (*ibid.*). Similarly, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw emphasised that there was an urgent need to make the EU a more effective actor on the international arena. In order to achieve this, Straw suggested, one should extend the scope of QMV, and reduce the number of EU Commissioners so that there would no longer be one Commissioner for each member state (Straw 2002). Both suggestions would, at least in theory, involve the transfer of more powers to the EU's supranational institutions at the expense of the member states. The same thoughts were reflected in a policy paper on European defence released by the British Ministry of Defence in the same period. The document stated that the EU increasingly would have to 'pull its weight' in the response to crises like September 11, and that Britain wished to 'strengthen the ability of European nations to act together on foreign policy objectives' (Ministry of Defence 2001).

To be fair, these formulations do not necessarily imply that the British government approved of increased transfer of sovereignty from national to EU level on ESDP matters. However, it can be argued that it is difficult to increase the EU's efficiency and capability to act on security and defence matters if national vetoes are maintained. The British government's eagerness to strengthen the EU's decision making abilities on ESDP matters could therefore be interpreted as a modification of the traditional British anti-federalism.

5.2.3 Transatlantic Relations in the Nice Treaty and Laeken Declaration

The re-election of the Labour government in June 2001 gave Blair an opportunity to at last 'show his true colours' (*Economist* 2001b). Throughout his first term, Blair had often expressed a wish to 'resolve British ambivalence towards the mainland', but nevertheless had various polls shown that in reality, the British people's suspicion of the EU had in fact increased rather than declined during this

period (ibid.). Blair therefore seemed to be stuck in an awkward middle-position, between on the one hand the rapidly changing EU, and on the other the increasingly unilateralist United States. This self-appointed – and rather unrewarding – role as a bridge over the Atlantic has by Ash (2004:16) humorously been termed ‘The Blair Bridge Project’. Hence, it is perhaps not surprising that the Blair government between 2000 and 2002 continued to assure that strengthening Britain’s position in Europe would in fact also mean strengthening its position in the United States. ‘Britain has close ties with America’, Blair stated, and continued:

They will remain close, no more so than under this government. But America wants Britain to be a strong ally in a strong Europe. The stronger we are in Europe, the stronger our American relationship (Blair 2000a).

It was most likely to Blair’s relief when the Feira European Council in 2000 formalised the structures for establishing a dialogue between the EU and the United States. The most important issues were of course to avoid Albright’s three D’s – duplication of NATO resources, discrimination against non-EU NATO members, and decoupling of the ESDP from NATO’s structures (Howorth 2000b:5). These respects were also looked after in the Nice Treaty, where a section on ‘permanent arrangements for EU-NATO consultation and cooperation’ was included (European Council 2001). According to Lawrence Freedman (2001:301), Britain succeeded in shaping the language of the Nice Treaty so that there remained no doubt about the superiority of NATO and the transatlantic relationship. Following the Nice Treaty, Blair noted that

[...] if there is the development of a rival, strategic military planning capability to NATO, then yes, that would be a threat to NATO.

But he continued by assuring that this was not the case and – as far as Britain was concerned – it never would be either (House of Commons 2001:44).

Despite these assurances, speculations on whether Britain’s special relationship with the United States could remain as strong after the shift from Clinton to Bush flourished during this period. This was most likely the reason why the Blair government chose to explicitly reaffirm its position as a loyal partner of the United States. In an article in *The London Times* entitled ‘It Could be the Start of a Beautiful Friendship’, the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, made it clear that the United States would continue to be Britain’s ‘closest ally and our biggest export market’, despite the change of government (*Economist* 2001a). The sincerity of this promise was proved in the aftermath of September 11, when Britain immediately stepped forward as the United States’ most visible and loyal friend. The reward was an observable strengthening of the bilateral Anglo-American friendship, as well as a statement from President Bush that Britain was the United States’ best friend in the world and that there was no person he would rather discuss mutual concerns with than Blair (Blair and Bush 2001). At the same time, Britain’s actual influence on the US foreign policy was widely debated. Harvard Professor and liberalist Joseph Nye and senior researcher at the Brookings institution, Ivo Daalder, both argued that Blair now had more impact on American politics than any other foreign leader. A more sceptical approach was taken by The Royal Institute of International Affairs’s William Hopkinson, who claimed that ‘overall the UK has little leverage or influence over the US’ (Katwala 2002). Blair himself appeared to view Britain’s role as far more important, arguing that his country was ‘politically influential’ both in its relationship with the United States and Europe (Blair 2001b).

Although the special relationship with the United States clearly remained the key priority for Britain between 2000 and 2002, it should be noted that Blair at the time of the Afghanistan invasion focused not only on Britain’s relationship with the United States, but was careful to also speak warmly about his European partners. After the September 11 terrorist attacks he informed the British people that he had

[...] spoken to several world leaders, including the Presidents of France and Russia, Chancellor Schroeder, and Prime Minister Verhofstadt in his capacity as the current President of the EU (Blair 2001a).

The fact that Blair chose to emphasise EU President Guy Verhofstadt as one of the leaders he had spoken to indicates that the British government considered the EU to be an essential security and defence actor in this context. He was also eager to assure that the Europeans were on board on the Afghanistan campaign:

Certainly, from the discussions I had with European leaders just a few days ago, their commitment is real and their determination is also absolute to see things done (Blair and Bush 2001).

Contrary to what one might expect, NATO was granted only a minor role in Afghanistan – despite the fact that the September 11 terrorist attacks had invoked NATO's article 5 for the first time.¹⁹ According to Robert Kagan (2003:51), 'the Bush administration had little interest in working through NATO', which was unfortunate seen from a transatlantic perspective. Kagan's observation is supported by Mark Leonard (2002:xiv), who argues that the United States at the time of September 11 had 'learned the frustrations of multilateralism, regarding even NATO as a terminally bureaucratic institution'. Hence, instead of working through NATO or any other organisation, the United States and Britain decided to go it alone in Afghanistan, supported by an ad hoc coalition of the willing. This decision was somewhat puzzling – at least when considering that US Deputy Secretary of Defence, Paul Wolfowitz, later insisted that NATO had 'proven itself a flexible instrument' (Wolfowitz 2002). The rejection of NATO in Afghanistan can hardly be interpreted as anything but a setback for NATO as the main forum for transatlantic relations. However, at the same time, the bilateral relations between the United States and Britain seemed stronger than ever. This strengthens the interpretation that the transatlantic alliance had kept its superior position in Britain's heart, and hence that the changed approach to the ESDP was primarily of strategic character.

5.2.4 The Transatlantic Response to the Nice Treaty and the Laeken Declaration

Taking into consideration the consistently strong position of the transatlantic alliance in British politics, it makes sense that Blair was eager to assure that the United States favoured the latest ESDP developments, and that Britain's involvement with the ESDP would in fact be beneficial for the transatlantic relationship:

[...] America wants Britain to be a strong ally in a strong Europe. The stronger we are in Europe, the stronger our American relationship (Blair 2000a).

However, despite Blair's efforts to communicate that transatlanticism and Europeanism were by no means conflicting values, his transatlantic partners nevertheless expressed uncertainty of the ESDP's intentions following the Nice Treaty and the Laeken declaration. This scepticism was partly caused by signals from the French government that the planned EU force might turn out far more independent of NATO than what had initially been the plan. 'We certainly have a different view,' the French Defence Minister Alain Richard confirmed when asked if all military planning should continue to be carried out through NATO (Freedman 2001:301; Kirk 2000a). US Secretary of Defence William Cohen reacted to the French position by informing his colleagues in NATO that an independent EU force could end up reducing NATO to 'a relic of the past'. NATO's Secretary General Robertson took a similar stand, arguing that if the EU should attempt to duplicate NATO, this would be 'highly dangerous to both' (Kirk 2000a). The French expression of opinion, and the transatlantic reaction to it, hints that the Nice Treaty and the Laeken declaration cannot uncritically be interpreted in the way Blair wished to present them – namely as fully consistent with the United States and NATO's interests. On the contrary: the clash of opinions between the French on the one hand and the United States and NATO on the other can be seen as an indication that the ESDP was about to shape its own security and defence path, independently of the transatlantic alliance. From this point of view, the

¹⁹ The United States feared that a bigger role for NATO in the Afghanistan campaign would lead to a 'war by committee' as in Kosovo in 1999. However, NATO was later offered a more significant role in the peacekeeping process in Afghanistan. See Black (2002).

British acceptance of the Nice Treaty can be seen as a step closer to Europe – and one away from the traditional priority of transatlanticism over Europeanism.

Bush's victory in the 2000 US Presidential election triggered a long debate regarding the future relations between the United States and Europe. Shortly after the Bush administration's entry into the White House, Christopher Layne (2001:11) observed that 'the United States and Europe are destined to drift apart politically and strategically'. A similar argument is made in Kagan's bestseller *Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, where it is established that

[...] on international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus. They agree on little and understand one another less and less (Kagan 2003:3).

Early signals hinted that the neo-conservative members of the Bush administration were less positive towards the ESDP than its predecessors in the Clinton administration had been (Bono 2002:41). In the spring of 2001, the new US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld admitted that he was 'a little worried' with regard to the EU's plans for increased military independence (*Economist* 2001a). Similarly, one of Bush's key defence advisors, Richard Perle, revealed profound scepticism by referring to the ESDP as 'French manoeuvres aimed at sidelining the United States in Europe' (ibid.). Hence, despite Blair's assurances that the ESDP would not challenge the superior role of the United States and NATO in British security policy, Rumsfeld and Perle's statements show that the United States was not entirely convinced that the ESDP would not pose a threat to the United States and NATO's dominant security and defence position in Europe. This makes the British acceptance of the Nice Treaty and Laeken declaration more controversial, and strengthens the assumption that British transatlanticism had been modified to a larger extent than the Blair government was willing to admit.

5.3 Modification of British Anti-Federalism and Transatlanticism

Between 2000 and 2002, important events in the ESDP's history took place. The Nice Treaty incorporated the ESDP and the Petersberg tasks under the CFSP-pillar, and the Laeken declaration declared the ESDP operative. At the same time, the US Presidential shift, the September 11 terrorist attacks, the war in Afghanistan, and the re-election of the Blair government contributed to shaping Britain's future relations with the ESDP.

The empirical evidence presented in this chapter shows that the British security discourse under Blair continued to focus more on European interests and values than it had done under Thatcher and Major. Also, the Blair government repeatedly argued that British and European security interests were closely linked together. Moreover, although the Blair government still insisted that the EU should not develop into a superstate, it appeared less reluctant than before to transfer sovereignty to the ESDP. At one point, Blair even stated that sometimes, sovereignty had to be deployed for the sake of national advantage. This is evidence suggesting that British anti-federalism had been modified.

At the same time, the Blair government continued to rank the transatlantic alliance above the ESDP on security and defence issues. Official documents and statements from the Blair government during this period emphasise the strong ties between Britain and the United States, and confirm NATO's superior position in the British identity and security interests. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the ESDP developments were more conflicting with the transatlantic partnership than Blair liked to acknowledge. The Bush administration was more sceptical towards the ESDP than the Clinton administration had been, and Britain's active role in promoting a stronger role for the ESDP was not received only with pleasure in Washington. Britain's acceptance of the ESDP developments in Nice and Laeken, despite American scepticism, therefore suggests that also British transatlanticism to some extent had been altered.

6. The European Security Strategy and the Constitution Treaty: Towards More Profound Changes of British Anti-Federalism and Transatlanticism?

It is not possible to imagine a Europe in which Great Britain would not have an imminent role to play. It would be a Europe that would be missing something.

Jacques Chirac, 24 November 2003.

In the previous two chapters, we have seen how after 1998, Britain gradually moved closer to Europe on security and defence issues. Between 2003 and 2004, Britain appeared to continue on its new path as a more active and involved player in the ESDP. During this period, the EU obtained some of its most important achievements on security and defence, first with the European Security Strategy (ESS) in December 2003, and then with the signing of the Constitution Treaty in June 2004. Despite tensions between Britain and its key ESDP partners France and Germany over the war in Iraq, both documents were accepted by the Blair government.

This chapter discusses to what extent external factors such as the Iraq war, the Euro-Atlantic divisions that followed from it, and the EU enlargement from 15 to 25 member states affected Britain's approach to the ESDP between 2003 and 2004. To what extent was the British acceptance of the ESS and the Constitution Treaty the result of strategic adaptation to the ESDP, and to what extent was it the result of continued modification of the British identity and security interests?

6.1 External Factors Affecting Britain and the ESDP, 2003-2004

The following external factors are particularly important when it comes to understanding Britain's approach to the ESDP between 2003 and 2004.

First, the war on Iraq resulted in deep disagreements not only between the United States and parts of Europe, but also within Europe. In October 2002, the United States Congress ruled that force could be used against Iraq if UN weapon inspectors were not allowed to return to investigate claims that Saddam Hussein had developed weapons of mass destruction. In the beginning of 2003, Iraq was given a final ultimatum: either it was to cooperate fully with the inspectors, or it would face an invasion by American and British forces. Disagreements soon arose in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) over the Iraq question. Whereas two of the permanent UNSC members, the United States and Britain, were early out in pushing for an invasion, the remaining permanent members, France, China, and Russia, announced that they would wait for the UN inspectors to finish their task. Germany's Gerhard Schroeder, at the time a rotating member of the UNSC, made it clear that nobody should 'expect Germany to approve a resolution legitimising war' (*Guardian* 2003a). The conflict was also reflected in the EU. Two opposing camps were established, making the EU incapable of reaching a common position. The camp that continued to push for a UN-solution was fronted by Germany and France, whereas Britain once again proved a loyal ally for the United States. Thus, the internal crisis within the EU was in place, and the atmosphere between Blair and Chirac was at one point described as 'tense and frosty' (*Economist* 2003b). However, despite these conflicts, the Iraq issue actually seemed to have created 'a momentum for a consensus on the EU's long-term security goals' (Leonard and Gowan 2004:7).

Second, the inclusion of ten new member states in the EU on 1 January 2004, among them several former members of the Soviet Union, confirmed that the Cold War truly was history. The treaties of Amsterdam and Nice had already prepared the EU for enlargement by introducing various institutional reforms. The enlargement process affected almost all aspects of the EU, including the

foreign, security, and defence policy (Glenn 2003:221). The five big member states – Britain, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy – had to give up their privilege of having two Commissioners each, and the use of QMV was extended within a number of policy areas. However, Smith (2003a:19,51) notes that despite these efforts, enlargement could make it more difficult for the EU to reach unity, and that such difficulties might ‘encourage a core group to press ahead with deeper integration’. The accession countries’ support for the United States in Iraq arguably shows that the enlargement process would strengthen the EU’s transatlantic dimension. This in turn, may have affected the British approach to the ESDP.

6.2 Strategic Adaptation or Identity Change?

To what extent did the war on Iraq, the Euro-Atlantic divide, and the EU enlargement affect Britain’s anti-federalist and transatlantic preferences in relation to the ESS and the Constitution Treaty? The following sections address this question by discussing the Europeanisation of the British security discourse, British sovereignty in the ESS and Constitution Treaty, transatlantic relations in the ESS and Constitution Treaty, and the transatlantic response to the ESS and the Constitution Treaty.

6.2.1 Europeanisation of the British Security Discourse?

The acceleration of the Iraq crisis in early 2003 became a real test of the sincerity in Britain’s new involvement in the ESDP, and the ‘European element’ in Blair’s speeches and statements was arguably less evident at the time when the European disagreements over Iraq reached their climax. At this point, the focus on national interests and the transatlantic alliance were the main ingredients in the British security discourse. However, evidence of Europeanisation of the British security discourse could also be observed between 2003 and 2004. Before the outbreak of the Iraq war, Blair spoke with great conviction about Britain’s place in Europe:

To separate ourselves from [the EU] would be madness. If we are in, we should be in wholeheartedly [...]. For 50 years we have hesitated over Europe. It has never profited us (Blair 2003a).

Once again, Blair distanced himself from previous British governments’ positions on Europe, pointing out that British and European interests were largely coinciding, and that British anti-Europeanism belonged to the past. On other occasions, he pointed out that Europe should have ‘the capability and power to act in the interests of Europe and the wider world’, and be able to act ‘where the vital European interests are involved’ (Blair 2003f; Blair and Chirac 2003b). The latter two statements show that Blair was not only concerned about British security interests – European security interests had also become increasingly important. An important aspect here seems to be that British and European security interests on several aspects had become closely linked:

My passionate belief in Europe is not born of any diminishing of my belief in Britain. On the contrary, I believe in Europe because I believe membership of the European strategic alliance is a crucial part of the British national interest. Anti-Europeanism is not British patriotism. It is an out of date delusion (Blair 2003g).

It is in our interests to be part of Europe, so let’s get there, play our part right at the centre of Europe, have the confidence to believe that our country can be a great and central player in Europe and should never relegate itself to the sideline (Blair and Chirac 2004).

These statements show that Europe remained an important part of the British security discourse also after the European disagreements over the Iraq war. Arguably, new global challenges such as weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and regional conflicts had once and for all revealed the need for cooperation, making Blair recognise that ‘Europe must do more and do it better’ (Blair 2004b). In a British white paper from December 2003, it is stated that

In foreign and security policy, changes agreed in the 2003-4 Inter-Governmental Conference could significantly strengthen the ways the EU acts collectively. The UK's objective will be to make the EU a stronger player, better able to pursue common policies globally as well as in its own neighbourhood (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2003).

Similarly, the ESS, which was ratified by the British government in December 2003, establishes that there exists a common set of European security interests and values:

The increasing convergence of European interests and the strengthening of mutual solidarity of the EU makes us a more credible and effective actor. Europe should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world (European Council 2003).

Moreover, it states that 'an active and capable European Union would make an impact on a global stage' (ibid.). Once again, common European interests and policies were emphasised, suggesting that the British identity and security interests had gone through more profound changes.

It should, however, be noted that although Britain's security discourse appeared to have become Europeanised, there were at the same time also signs that the European security discourse had become 'Britainised'. Following the agreement on the Constitution Treaty, Blair triumphantly noted that 'this Convention is basically come out from most of the British position' (Blair 2003c). Blair's observation was largely supported by the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, which established that 'the greatest paradox of the European Union is that its most sceptical member calls the shots' (McAllister 2004). Blair himself seemed particularly content when he noted that 'the whole of Europe is moving in Britain's direction today' (Blair 2003e). Hence, it can be argued that the British security discourse during this period was characterized both by strategic adaptation and by identity change.

6.2.2 British Sovereignty in the ESS and the Constitution Treaty

During the spring of 2003, the internal European disagreements over Iraq reached new heights. Considering the subsequent strained relations between France and Britain, it was somewhat surprising that a scheduled French-British summit on security and defence actually took place in Le Touquet in February.²⁰ The meeting explicitly aimed at strengthening the security and defence cooperation in Europe, stating that the EU now had

[...] the capacity to take decisions and to act in crisis management, including institutions, civilian and military assets, which will enable it to conduct operations with or without resource to NATO assets (France and Britain 2003).

The declaration urged the EU to intensify its efforts to 'improve the military capabilities of the EU member states' (ibid.). Following the meeting, Chirac noted that the EU had reached the stage where it had 'a common defence policy which is developing apace' (Blair and Chirac 2003a). Following up, Blair declared that the Touquet meeting represented 'a significant push forward' for the process that had begun in Saint Malo, and that France and Britain wished to 'see Europe develop and cooperate more' (ibid.). With this, the vision of a strong and autonomous ESDP proved surprisingly resilient, and Blair's dedication to continue the French-British cooperation on security and defence seemed convincing.

Nevertheless, and despite Blair's assurances that he and Chirac aspired to create a Europe with a common position and a single voice, there were also clear indications that this would by no means take place at the cost of national sovereignty. Blair made it clear that the ESDP would be aiming at intergovernmental rather than supranational defence capabilities. He was also careful to point out that cooperation should be 'on the basis of a Europe of nations' (Blair and Chirac 2003). In general, the progress of strengthening the ESDP proceeded slowly during the period of the Iraq invasion, and

²⁰ The strained atmosphere was, to be fair, not only due to the Iraq question, but also to a bitter row between France and Britain over farm subsidies in October 2002. The agricultural row ended with Chirac reprimanding Blair in front of the other EU leaders (*Economist* 2003a).

numerous statements by the Blair government implied that Britain was reluctant to transfer more sovereignty to the EU on security and defence matters. At the European Council meeting in Brussels in March 2003, Blair once again pointed out that ‘any European foreign and defence policy will remain a matter for governments’ (Blair 2003b). Taking this into consideration, it is therefore particularly interesting that two of the most seminal events in the ESDP’s history – the ratification of the ESS and the signing of the Constitution Treaty – actually took place in 2003 and 2004.

The ESS’ significance has been widely debated. On the one hand, it has been argued that a common security strategy for Europe represents ‘a significant step forward in working towards greater cohesion on the strategic level among EU Member States’, and ‘a real departure’ for the ESDP (Miskimmon 2004:295; Leonard and Gowan 2004:7). Seen from this perspective, and considering the British tradition for anti-federalism, the British embracement of the ESS can be seen as a sign of more profound changes in the British identity and security interests. However, it can also be argued that the ESS did not de facto involve any radical changes for the ESDP. Sven Biscop (2003:37) points out that many of the formulations in the ESS are rather vague and equivocal, making it hard to grasp their actual meaning and implications. Similarly, Mark Leonard and Richard Gowan (2004:36) observe that ‘elements of the Solana paper remain obscure, allowing for numerous, and often misleading arguments in the future’. This could imply that Britain’s acceptance of the ESDP was fully in accordance with Britain’s previous attempts to promote European interests and protect British sovereignty at the same time.

The constant British duality of both allowing for the development of European interests while at the same time protecting national sovereignty was also reflected in Blair’s comments on the Constitution Treaty. Following the signing of this seminal document, Blair noted that it was ‘a good thing for Europe and for Britain because Europe of 25 cannot work as Europe of 15’ (Blair 2004a). Blair seemed to imply that institutional changes were necessary in order to strengthen the EU’s ability to make decisions and take actions after the enlargement:

[...] I think the principle of getting a more effective, properly working European Union is one that should appeal to people in Britain, not put them off (ibid.).

However, at the same time, he confirmed the traditional British anti-federalist position on the ESDP with statements such as the following:

[...] issues to do with taxation, foreign policy, defence policy and our own British borders will remain the prerogative of our national government and national Parliament. I think that’s immensely important (Blair 2003c).

[...] the European constitution for Britain has got to be one based on sovereign nation states co-operating together, not some federal superstate. We will not agree to anything that leads us down that road (Blair 2003e).

He declared victory over federalist viewpoints by announcing that those who had tried to ‘make foreign and defence policy the prerogative of the Brussels Commission’ had been defeated. Moreover, he proudly announced that he had managed to protect all his government’s so-called red lines on key issues such as security and defence (Blair 2004c; 2003e). Taking a look at the Constitution Treaty, Blair seems to be at least partly right. The supranational European Commission – often referred to as the ‘engine’ of the European integration process – is in fact deprived of its right to make proposals in CFSP/ESDP matters. Furthermore, consensus remains the fundamental decision making procedure on CFSP/ESDP in the Council of Ministers, meaning that the national veto is sustained (European Convention 2004, art III-294–308).

On the other hand, the Constitution Treaty also strengthens the supranational elements of the EU on many aspects, for instance by suggesting increased use of QMV in general, by depriving the big five EU countries their right to have two Commissioners, by replacing the rotating Council Presidency with a full-time president, and by introducing the idea of a single Foreign Minister for Europe (*Economist* 2004). In addition, it could be argued that the mere introduction of a Constitution Treaty in itself represents a step towards increased supranationality, simply because a Constitution is a feature

that one usually associates with federations and nation states. This aspect may very well have been the reason why Blair's motives in signing the Constitution Treaty were seriously questioned both by the media, the opposition, and the voters in Britain. Britain's biggest tabloid newspaper, *The Sun*, went as far as naming him 'Blair the betrayer', and putting 'Blair sells out to EU' on its front page (McAllister 2004). Similarly, both the British Conservative Party and the Independence Party revealed their repugnance towards the Constitution Treaty, and polls showed that the majority of the British people were highly sceptical. Blair's argument that Britain should be 'at the heart of Europe' did not seem to have found understanding in Britain. The fact that he nevertheless continued to campaign for increased ESDP cooperation could be seen as an indication that his affection for Europe is more than just a 'casual fling', and that the British identity and security interests had in fact gone through deeper and durable changes.

6.2.3 Transatlantic Relations in the ESS and the Constitution Treaty

Despite Blair's many assurances that transatlanticism and Europeanism are highly compatible policy choices for Britain, he was forced to making the choice between the United States and his French and German EU partners regarding the invasion of Iraq. Ash (2004:45) observes that the Iraq question revealed 'an unbridgeable difference' between Britain and France, and that characteristically, it was at the European end that Blair's bridge over the Atlantic fell down (*ibid.*). Whereas Chirac and Schroeder criticised Bush's approach, Blair declared his support for the United States at an early stage. He also assured that the alliance between the United States and Britain 'never [had] been in better or stronger shape' (Blair and Bush 2003a). He added:

[...] we should remain the closest ally of the United States, and as allies influence them to broadening their agenda. We are the ally of the US not because they are powerful, but because we share their values. I am not surprised by Anti-Americanism; but it is a foolish indulgence (Blair 2003a).

Such statements led Chirac to admit – in what must be seen as more than a minor understatement – that Britain and France had 'different' and 'not quite identical' approaches to the Iraq question (Blair and Chirac 2003a). Earlier that spring, Blair and seven other European leaders had expressed their support to the Bush administration on Iraq in an open letter published in *The Times*. In this letter, commonly referred to as 'the letter of eight', the leaders pointed out that transatlantic relations should 'not become a casualty of the current Iraqi regime's persistent attempts to threaten world security' (Aznar et al. 2003).²¹ It did not take long before France, Germany, and Russia had produced a response. In a joint declaration, Chirac, Vladimir Putin, and Schroeder made it clear that an alternative to war in Iraq still existed, and that use of force should be the last resort (Chirac et al. 2003). As a result, the European Council called for an extraordinary meeting, trying to unite the EU member states over the Iraq question. However, the meeting did not prevent frictions from continuing throughout the spring of 2003. In the meantime, serious tensions had also arisen within the Blair government. Shortly after the invasion of Iraq, former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook announced his resignation, explaining that 'I cannot give my support to military action in these circumstances' (Cook 2003). International Development Secretary Clare Short followed Cook's example, taking the opportunity to accuse Blair for having become 'increasingly obsessed' with securing his place in history (*Guardian* 2003b).

Blair's firm support for the United States despite the tensions both within Europe and within his own government, may lead us to the conclusion that Blair indeed had chosen the transatlantic relationship over his key partners in Europe. However, it must be added that such an interpretation presupposes that France, Germany, and their allies over the Iraq war are considered to represent the core of the EU. In fact, a majority of 25 EU countries supported the United States, which means that one could just as well claim that it was France and Germany, and not Britain, that was out of step with

²¹ 'The letter of eight' was signed by the state leaders of The Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Poland, and Portugal. A few days later, another ten countries – the so-called Vilnius group – signed a similar letter. Among these countries were several of the EU accession countries. This latter letter clearly irritated Jacques Chirac, who remarked that these countries had 'missed a great opportunity to shut up' (CNN 2003).

the rest of the EU. At least, this was the message that Blair tried to communicate throughout the spring of 2003.

Considering Blair's attempts to combine Europeanism and transatlanticism, one might wonder about the extent to which the transatlantic relationship was attended to in the ESS and the Constitution Treaty. In early 2003, Blair's former special adviser, Robert Cooper, argued that Europe should develop its own security strategy rather than complain about the American one from the sidelines (Cooper 2003:165). Interestingly, the ESS was drafted shortly after the publication of Cooper's book, something which, according to Hill (2004:1), was more than a mere coincidence. Cooper had in the meantime become one of the main advisers to the EU's High Representative Javier Solana, and had in fact been appointed the primary writer of the ESS. As Cooper is thought to share many of Blair's political ideologies, it is therefore not surprising that the language in the ESS is largely in accordance with previous British security documents and American viewpoints (ibid., 5). This observation is supported by Giovanna Bono (2004:445), who points out that the US Security Strategy and the ESS have a very similar threat perception. Both attach a great deal of attention to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction as key threats to the international society. Furthermore, the ESS is careful to emphasise the importance of the transatlantic relationship, and uses the emergence of new threats as an explanation as to why the EU should become a more active player on the global stage:

The United States has played a critical role in European integration and European Security, in particular through NATO. The end of the Cold War has left the United States in a dominant position as a military actor. However, no single country is able to tackle today's complex problems on its own (European Council 2003:1).

In light of this reasoning, it can be argued that Britain's acceptance of the ESS did not conflict with its transatlantic relations. This was also something that Blair underlined in a comment on the ESS:

[...] the Strategy Paper on Defence and Security Policy [...] emphasises the importance of the transatlantic alliance, emphasises the importance of dealing with the issues of weapons of mass destruction, and the need to take tough action against international terrorism (Blair 2003c).

Similarly, in one of his first comments on the Constitution Treaty, Blair ad nauseam pointed out that although Britain favoured a strong European defence, 'nothing whatever must put at risk our essential defence guarantees within NATO' (Blair 2003e). When asked whether his commitment to increased defence cooperation with France and Germany represented a step away from the United States, he replied that

I will never put at risk NATO, and I think in the last year it would be impossible to accuse me of being anything other than a staunch ally and friend of the United States (ibid.).

Having secured that the Constitution Treaty would not jeopardise Britain's strong ties with the United States and NATO, it was perhaps not so unexpected that Blair considered the document 'a success for Britain and a success for Europe' (Blair 2004).

On the other hand, it could also be argued that both the ESS and the Constitution Treaty present the EU as an independent security actor with a security approach of its own. Gerard Quille remarks that the US Security Strategy focuses largely on 'a unilateralist approach to international security', whereas the ESS concerns itself with a multilateralist approach 'embodied in international law and the UN charter' (Quille 2004:422). In addition, the ESS shows that the EU, to a larger extent than the United States, values other security instruments than just military ones, and that the EU is a civilian rather than a military actor (ibid., 436). With this perspective in mind, the British embracement of the ESS can be seen as a sign of Britain moving away from the traditional security approach (pursued e.g. by the United States) and closer to a European 'soft power' approach. Similarly, the Constitution Treaty contains elements that could challenge NATO's position as the dominant security and defence organisation in Europe. First, it extends the Petersberg tasks. Second, it introduces a mutual defence clause resembling that of NATO, and a solidarity clause in cases of natural disasters or terrorism. Finally, it allows for a group of member states to proceed in the integration process where the rest of

the member states are not ready for increased cooperation (European Convention 2004: art. III, 309-312). These are all developments that hint to a potential duplication of NATO's role in the future.

Britain's choice of transatlanticism over Europeanism with regard to the Iraq war suggests that the transatlantic relationship remained Britain's number one priority, and that the new approach to the ESDP was primarily strategic. However, the British acceptance of the ESS and the Constitution Treaty can also be seen as one step closer to a European security identity, in which a different security approach from that of the United States was dominating. Such an understanding would imply that British transatlanticism had been moderated.

6.2.4 The Transatlantic Response to the ESS and the Constitution Treaty

One of the most critical remarks on Blair's alliance with Bush on the Iraq question came from former South African President Nelson Mandela, who sarcastically referred to Blair as 'the foreign minister of the United States' (Dynes 2003). Certainly, the friendship between Bush and Blair became known as remarkably solid throughout the spring of 2003. In one out of many joint press conferences with Blair in 2003, Bush noted that

The close partnership between the United States and Great Britain has been, and remains essential, to the peace and security of all nations (Blair and Bush 2003b).

Similarly, Blair made it clear that the ESS gave the EU the opportunity to 'keep the transatlantic American alliance very strong' (Blair 2003f), and warned that

[...] if we don't deal with the world on the basis of a partnership between Europe and America, then we will in a sense put back into the world the divisions that we wanted to get rid of when the cold war finished (*Economist* 2003e).

Taking this into consideration, it is particularly interesting to observe the reactions of the United States and NATO regarding the strengthening of the ESDP in the ESS and the Constitution Treaty.

On the one hand, it can be argued that the launching of the ESS actually confirmed that the ESDP would not attempt to duplicate NATO, nor challenge its role as the key security and defence organisation in Europe. According to *The Economist* (2003d), the ESS reconfirmed EU's commitment to NATO, and thus contributed to soothing transatlantic fears that the EU would seek to establish a rival defence pact. In late 2003, after the launching of both the ESS and the Constitution Treaty, US Secretary of State Colin Powell commented on the relationship between the United States and the EU as follows:

This year we celebrate 50 years of relations between the United States and the European Union and its predecessor organizations. The United States wants a unified Europe, an expanded Europe, a Europe that plays a full role on the world stage. Our security is bound together in NATO, even as the European Union expands its capabilities. And we support all the initiatives that are under way to expand the capabilities of the European Union in the security field (Powell 2003).

Based on Powell's statement, one could deduce that Britain's increased involvement in the ESDP did not conflict with its transatlantic relations.

Yet, at the same time, signals from French officials were that NATO was so dominated by the United States that it could never become anything but a toolbox for the Americans. In order for NATO to become a partnership of equals, the EU should therefore, according to the French, strengthen the ESDP so that the EU could speak with a single voice within NATO (*Economist* 2005). After the disagreements over the Iraq war, Chirac increasingly talked about creating a 'European counterweight' to the United States. Moreover, he left little doubt that he disagreed with the United States justification of pre-emptive attacks on potential sources of terrorism such as Iraq (*ibid.*). Such signals from the French were most likely a main reason why many officials in London, Washington, and in the NATO headquarters reacted with scepticism towards the new ESDP initiatives. Fears were that the

strengthening of the ESDP would undermine the transatlantic alliance (*Economist* 2003e). Although clearly trying to avoid another Euro-Atlantic dispute, US Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld revealed uncertainty regarding the EU defence initiative at a meeting in Brussels in December 2003 (Black 2003). Similarly, NATO's Secretary General Robertson once again expressed concern that the EU would challenge the supremacy of the transatlantic alliance. According to *The Guardian*, critics in London and Washington feared that Blair had 'started down a path that will inevitably lead to more independent EU military activity', and that the ESDP could become a 'Trojan horse' for the NATO-sceptic France (*ibid.*). A senior American diplomat is reported to have said that the formation of a separate European unit within NATO could mean the death of the entire organisation (*Economist* 2005).

Similarly, the American response to the Constitution Treaty was by no means unreservedly positive. Although Bush during a visit to Europe declared that America supported 'a strong Europe', he avoided an explicit endorsement of the Constitution Treaty. Moreover, he consistently referred to 'Europe' rather than to the 'EU' in his speech. This reportedly pleased EU sceptics both in Britain and in the United States, since the US President's opinions are expected to always be of importance to Blair (Wastell and Stares 2005). According to *The Daily Telegraph*, a conservative American policy adviser pointed out that if the European foreign and security policy had been stronger during the Iraq crisis, 'it would have meant we had no allies at all in Europe' (*ibid.*). In this light, the Blair government's embracement of the Constitution Treaty must be seen as more than just a strategic adaptation to the EU. Rather, the signs that Britain's transatlantic partners remained uncertain and sceptical regarding a stronger and more united EU regarding security and defence, imply that transatlanticism was no longer as dominating in the British identity and security interests as it once had been.

6.3 Towards Identity Change?

The period between 2003 and 2004 was characterised by unrest in the international community. The war in Iraq resulted in serious disagreements within the EU, and Britain was once again caught in the middle, trying to be a reliable partner for the United States while at the same time maintaining its newly gained position in the heart of Europe. During the same period, the EU member states reached an agreement both on the European Security Strategy (ESS) and the Constitution Treaty. This chapter has discussed the extent to which the British acceptance of these documents was a result of strategic adaptation, and the extent to which it was the result of further modification of the traditional British identity and security interests.

At the time of the Iraq invasion, the focus of the British security discourse was on British and transatlantic, rather than European, security interests. In general, however, the British security discourse continued to emphasise the importance of European relations also between 2003 and 2004. This shows that European security and defence had become a more integrated part of the British identity and security interests. Although Britain managed to protect all of its so-called red lines, including the national veto on security and defence in the ESS and the Constitution Treaty, it can be argued that the supranational elements of the ESDP were strengthened by the fact that the EU now had its own security strategy and possibly also its own constitution.

Britain's support for the United States, and its disagreements with France and Germany over the war in Iraq, suggest that transatlanticism upheld its dominant position in the British identity and security interests. Furthermore, the Blair government showed little willingness to compromise in the ESS and the Constitution Treaty on NATO's role as the key security and defence actor in Europe. Still, the ESDP continued to extend its security and defence role, gradually taking on more tasks that had previously been reserved for NATO. Signals from Britain's transatlantic partners were that neither the Bush administration nor NATO officials were unreservedly positive regarding the direction in which the ESDP was heading.

The Blair government's successful protection of British sovereignty in the ESS and the Constitution Treaty, and the continued emphasis on transatlantic relations imply that British anti-

federalism and transatlanticism remained key ingredients in the British identity and security interests. Nevertheless, the persistent European element in the British security discourse, and Britain's acceptance of the ESS and the Constitution Treaty despite sceptical reactions from the United States and NATO strengthen the assumption that British anti-federalism and transatlanticism had been moderated also during this period.

7. Conclusions: Strategic Adaptation or Identity Change?

If the UK were a group of islands 20 miles off Manhattan I might feel differently; but we're 20 miles off Calais and joined by a Tunnel. We are part of Europe – and want to be.

Tony Blair, 18 July 2003.

Britain has often been described as an awkward partner in its relations with the EU in general, and with the EU's foreign, security, and defence policy in particular. During Margaret Thatcher and John Major's periods as Prime Ministers, anti-federalism and transatlanticism were the key characteristics of Britain's approach to European security and defence. However, after the seminal French-British Saint Malo initiative in 1998, the ESDP integration process picked up momentum, and Britain came along for the ride. Overnight, Britain appeared to have changed from a reluctant adaptor to an active initiator of new ESDP developments.

By discussing the merits of Rationalist and Social Constructivist perspectives, this paper has analysed the changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP between 1998 and 2004. To what extent have the traditional British anti-federalist and transatlantic preferences been modified as a result of external and internal factors during this period? If these preferences have remained intact, this strengthens the Rationalist assumption that the changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP are merely the result of strategic adaptation. If these preferences have been altered, this strengthens the Social Constructivist assumption that the changes in Britain's approach to the ESDP are the result of more profound changes in the British identity and security interests.

The analysis has focused on Britain's acceptance of essential ESDP documents such as the Saint Malo declaration, the Nice Treaty, the Laeken declaration, the European Security Strategy, and the more recent Constitution Treaty. The discussion of British anti-federalism and transatlanticism during this period has been based on four factors. The degree of Europeanisation of the British security discourse, and the degree of protection of the British sovereignty in the various ESDP documents measure to what extent British anti-federalism has been adjusted. The degree of protection of the transatlantic alliance in the ESDP documents, and the transatlantic response to them measure to what extent British transatlanticism has been adjusted.

7.1 British Anti-Federalism 1998-2004

7.1.1 Europeanisation of the British Security Discourse

The change of government in Britain from the indecisive Major government to the pro-European Blair government in 1997 led to observable changes in the British security discourse. In the late 1990s, the Blair government announced, on several occasions, that its approach to Europe was radically different from the isolationist and anti-federalist approach promoted especially by Thatcher, and to some extent also Major. In official speeches and documents, the Blair government focused not only on British values and security interests, but also increasingly on European values and security interests. A central argument was that British security interests had become more intimately linked with European security interests, and hence that taking an active part in shaping Europe's future made absolute sense for Britain. This tendency of the British security discourse gradually turning more pro-European also continued after the Saint Malo meeting. When the British government chose to accept the Nice Treaty and the Laeken declaration in 2001, Blair noted that changing circumstances had led to an increased

need for international cooperation, and that states to a larger extent than before would seek common solutions to common problems (Blair 2000c).

When serious disagreements arose within the EU over the Iraq war in early 2003, the European element in the British security discourse was for some time less evident. The tense relationship between the three big EU states, France, Germany, and Britain, caused great uncertainty regarding the future of the ESDP. During this period, the British security discourse focused more on British and American interests and values, and less on European ones. However, Blair soon reiterated that it would be madness for Britain to distance itself from Europe. In December 2003, Britain ratified the European Security Strategy (ESS), which confirmed the existence of a common set of European values and interests. Furthermore, the Constitution Treaty, signed by Britain in June 2004, aims at strengthening the EU's common identity, interests, and values, also with regard to the ESDP. The increasing European element in the British security discourse, as well as its persistence, suggest that British anti-federalism had in fact been altered.

7.1.2 Continued Reluctance to a Transfer of British Sovereignty to the ESDP

Despite widespread opinions of the Saint Malo meeting as path breaking for the ESDP, empirical findings show that the ESDP's structures remained largely intergovernmental between 1998 and 2004. The Saint Malo declaration emphasised that ESDP decision making would be reserved for the intergovernmental European Council and Council of Ministers. Moreover, the Council of Ministers would make its decisions based on unanimity rather than on QMV. This means that the national veto on the ESDP was sustained, and that the British acceptance of the declaration was not as controversial as it might have appeared at first sight. The Blair government also safeguarded British sovereignty in the Nice Treaty and the Laeken declaration. Blair made it clear that he would not let other European states make the decisions that mattered to Britain, and emphasised that foreign, security, and defence policies would remain under national control (Blair 2000c; Blair 2001b). Regarding the ESS and the Constitution Treaty, Blair was equally eager to point out that national governments were to have the last word on ESDP matters. This objective seems to have been provided for in both these documents. The ESS did not de facto involve any radical changes for the ESDP, and Blair managed to protect all his government's red lines in the Constitution Treaty. These are factors implying that Britain's approach to the ESDP remained merely strategic between 1998 and 2004, and that British Anti-Federalism remained intact.

Nevertheless, some evidence of identity change can also be observed. Ash (2001:8) notes that with the various EU treaties since 1998, Britain's sovereignty has to a large extent been 'shared and qualified'. When the Laeken declaration declared the ESDP operative in late 2001, Blair even said that sometimes sovereignty had to be deprived in order to pursue national interests (Blair 2001b). This statement suggests that Blair was open to the idea of transferring sovereignty on ESDP issues in the future. Moreover, the Blair government stated on several occasions that it wished to strengthen the EU's capability to reach common decisions and take actions. In addition, the British opposition made it clear that they did not trust Blair's assurances that he would protect British sovereignty. After the agreement on the Nice Treaty, the Conservative leader William Hague claimed that the EU was developing into a superstate (Kirk 2000b). Similarly, neither the Conservative Party nor the Independence Party managed to hide their strong dislike of the Constitution Treaty, which they claimed would strengthen the supranational element of the ESDP. Hence, although British sovereignty was largely protected in the various ESDP documents between 1998 and 2004, British anti-federalism appeared less dominating than before.

7.2 British Transatlanticism 1998-2004

7.2.1 *The Transatlantic Alliance Remains Britain's Number One Priority*

Despite the new approach to the ESDP in Saint Malo, the Blair government left little doubt that the United States and NATO remained Britain's key security and defence partners. During the presidency of Bill Clinton, the special relationship between Britain and the United States seemed stronger than ever. It is therefore no surprise that ESDP documents from this period reconfirm NATO's status as the cornerstone in the British identity and security interests, and reassure that the ESDP is to develop in a way fully consistent with NATO. Following the US Presidential election in 2000, where George W. Bush emerged the winner, some predicted that the special relationship could not remain as solid as it had been in the past. However, this prediction did not come true. The Blair government continued to speak with warmth about its preference for the transatlantic alliance, and in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, Britain once again proved itself to be the United States' most reliable ally. Similarly, when disagreements arose between the United States and the Franco-German coalition over the Iraq war, Britain sided with the United States rather than with its two key EU partners France and Germany. The result was a temporarily strained atmosphere in Europe. This indicates that transatlanticism remained a superior ingredient in the British identity and security interests, and thus that the adjustment to the ESDP was first and foremost of a strategic nature.

Nonetheless, the word 'autonomous' in the Saint Malo declaration opens for the EU to take action independently of other organisations, including NATO, in the future. Reportedly, Britain sought, unsuccessfully, to remove this wording from the Saint Malo declaration due to American pressure. The British acceptance of this wording in the Saint Malo declaration and other ESDP documents indicates that the traditional dominance of transatlanticism in the British identity and security interests to some extent had been challenged.

7.2.2 *Scepticism From the United States and NATO Towards the ESDP*

Considering Britain's strong transatlantic ties, one would expect that the British acceptance of the developments in the ESDP did not conflict with the interests of either the United States or NATO. Certainly, both the Clinton administration and the Bush administration expressed that they supported the European initiative to take more control over their own neighbourhood. This was particularly the case after the Kosovo crisis in 1999, when the United States encouraged the EU to take action, but in the end had to lead the campaign itself.

However, at the same time there were also fears in the United States and NATO that the ESDP would become too independent of the transatlantic alliance. US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright revealed after the Saint Malo initiative that she was worried the ESDP would decouple itself from NATO structures, duplicate NATO resources, and discriminate against NATO members who were not EU members (Albright 1998). Similarly, following the Nice Treaty and Laeken Declaration, both US Secretary of Defence William Cohen and NATO Secretary General George Robertson expressed concerns that the ESDP would come to challenge NATO's role as the superior security and defence actor in Europe (Kirk 2000a). The same fears were communicated after the ratification of the ESS in late 2003 and after the signing of the Constitution Treaty in 2004. Signals from France were that an ideal situation would be if the EU could speak with a single voice within NATO, and Jacques Chirac admitted that he wished to create a European counterweight to American dominance (*Economist* 2005). In the same way, Gerhard Schroeder created controversy when he, prior to President Bush's visit to Europe, declared that NATO no longer was 'the primary venue where transatlantic partners discuss and co-ordinate strategies' (ibid.). Statements such as these increasingly worried members of the Bush administration regarding the ESDP's role in relation to NATO. In a state visit to Europe after his re-election, Bush avoided an explicit endorsement of the Constitution Treaty. Moreover, the Americans appeared to have realised that had the ESDP been stronger at the time of the Iraq invasion, the outcome would most likely have been quite different (Wastell and Stares 2005). The fact that Blair has been willing to face the criticism from his transatlantic partners over the ESDP developments,

strengthens the assumption that the ESDP has become a more integrated part of the British identity and security interests, and that British transatlanticism has been somewhat modified.

7.3 Concluding Remarks

Through closer examination of Britain's role in essential ESDP developments such as the Saint Malo declaration, the Nice Treaty, the Laeken declaration, the European Security Strategy, and the Constitution Treaty, this analysis has revealed that British anti-federalism and transatlanticism remain important ingredients in the British identity and security interests. However, there is at the same time also evidence suggesting that even the EU's traditionally most reluctant member state has become gradually more European regarding security and defence issues. Although at times to a varying degree, both British anti-federalism and transatlanticism have been challenged, and to some extent modified, in the years after the Saint Malo meeting. This is in accordance with the assumptions of the Social Constructivist perspective presented in chapter two.

First and foremost, the British security discourse has come to focus more on European security, values, and interests than before, and Blair has repeatedly pointed out that British and European security interests are closely linked together. This marks a clear shift from the approach taken by former British governments. Second, although British national sovereignty has not yet been seriously challenged with regard to the ESDP, the British acceptance of a more supranational EU in general, together with Blair's statements that the EU should be able to reach common decisions and take common action, also on ESDP matters, imply that anti-federalism towards a common European security and defence policy has lost some of its firm ground in Britain. Third, the special relationship with the United States undoubtedly remains Britain's key security and defence priority, but at the same time Britain's European partners have become an increasingly important part of Britain's identity and security interests. NATO has lost its once clearly dominant position, and was not a key actor in the initial phases of the wars in Kosovo, Afghanistan, or Iraq. Moreover, the mentioning of an 'autonomous' ESDP in several documents after Saint Malo, opens for the ESDP acting independently of NATO in the future. Finally, both the United States and NATO have on several occasions expressed concern regarding the direction in which the ESDP is heading. This means that Britain's new role in the play about the ESDP is not one that has been 'staged' by its transatlantic partners.

There are seventy-three years between Sir Winston Churchill's statement that Britain was 'with Europe but not of it' and Tony Blair's assurance that Britain is 'part of Europe - and wants to be'. The empirical evidence in this paper suggest that although Britain's changed approach to the ESDP between 1998 and 2004 may initially have been the result of a strategic adaptation to external and internal factors, there are clear signs that the traditional British anti-federalist and transatlantic preferences have been challenged, and to some extent modified. Whether this process of identity change will continue in light of future external and internal changes remains an interesting topic for future research projects.

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