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British Strategic Leadership: Food for Thought

by Julian Lindley-French

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**DEFENCE ACADEMY  
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**BRITISH  
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP:  
FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

**BY**

**JULIAN LINDLEY-FRENCH**

**THE SHRIVENHAM PAPERS**

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## **Editorial**

by

**Mike Crawshaw**  
**Senior Editor, ARAG**

**I**N THIS FORCEFULLY ARGUED PAPER, Dr Julian Lindley-French asserts the view that the time has come for the United Kingdom to fill the leadership vacuum which he sees as having developed at the centre of Western strategy. He ranges beyond immediate concerns with the war against terror to take a strategic-level view of the way the world is developing, highlighting the shift of power towards Asia, and the developing relationship between the Russian Federation and China, based on China's ever-growing appetite for energy and Russia's ability to supply. He reminds us that Russia is using its energy-derived wealth to re-assert its status as a Great Power.

The author sees the world moving towards a resurgence of the nation-state at the expense of international institutions, with inter-state competition and possible conflict as a result, and the re-emergence of the balance of power as a major concern. He is concerned that the efforts of the European Union to perfect its institutional structures have had a markedly negative effect on the ability of member states, and the EU as a whole, to play an effective part in security operations. Only the United Kingdom and France can deploy and sustain significant forces, and French capability is, in the author's assessment, likely to decline further in the near term. The result is a Europe which would prefer to remain isolated from the realities of the world outside.

While Dr Lindley-French fully acknowledges the need for the United States to retain its strategic leadership of the West, he highlights the deficiencies in the American approach to current security operations, stemming from a mind-set committed to high-end forces and the global commitment role, a mind-set ill-suited to the long haul of stabilisation operations. When this is coupled with a growing unwillingness to become involved with situations not directly impinging on United States interests, the leadership problem becomes apparent.

The United Kingdom has an opportunity to set matters to rights. This will require the reversal of fifty years of subordination of defence policy to that of the United States, and a broader view of foreign policy. The author sees a United Kingdom leadership role as requiring great subtlety of approach; some distancing from the United States is desirable, but a parting of the ways would be disastrous. Similarly, any attempt at assertive leadership will fail by alienation. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom is uniquely equipped to provide an alternative point of leadership for the West, a 'West' which is, for the author, an idea rather than a physical entity. He feels that the situation is such that it is not merely an opportunity that offers, but an obligation.

# **British Strategic Leadership: Food for Thought**

by

**Julian Lindley-French**

## **SYNOPSIS**

**S**TRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IS BEING THRUST UPON BRITAIN. The strategic environment is evolving, and not for the better, as state power is once again pre-eminent. Emerging great powers, strategic terror, proliferating destructive technologies, radical belief systems and the increasing imbalance between available energy supplies and burgeoning demand are driving a new strategic agenda. One-dimensional American leadership, European isolationism, the lack of a strategic consensus in the West and the weakness of both NATO and the EU are preventing a cohesive strategic response.

There are two particular dangers to the system of institutionalised state stability constructed by the West: state competition in Asia that could lead in time to systemic conflict; and catastrophic penetration of democratic societies causing decisive disruption.

However, strategic leadership for a state the size of Britain requires a galvanising strategic idea, allied to political determination and the effective organisation of all national capacities and capabilities and, above all, the vision to craft grand strategy.

Strategic leadership involves the effective organisation of national means to maximise the security of the citizen. In today's environment the security of the British citizen can only be assured through a security policy that is designed to confront global challenges. For a state that has been focused on Europe for fifty years such a shift will require a profound change of attitude and organisation.

Equally, the UK can never hope to 'lead' the West. Rather, British strategic leadership should aim at leveraging the strategies of its partner states the world over and aligning both objective and method behind the British strategic idea. Indeed, trapped as it is between one-dimensional American strategy and no-dimensional European strategy Britain will be forced to fill in the gaps between the two – as is already the case.

## BRITISH STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP: FOOD FOR THOUGHT

British strategic leadership must necessarily be founded on two axes of effect: outreach to like-minded states; in-reach whereby other state institutions (FCO, DiFD etc) involved in the delivery of security are better organised as part of an over-arching security doctrine, of which defence doctrine is but one part.

The security of Britain and its people can no longer be afforded simply by reacting to the ideas of others. Balancing has reached its limits.

### Core Message

**After more than fifty years in which the political and institutional shape of Europe has dominated British strategic planning, the re-emergence of a global balance of power will demand of Britain a return to strategic leadership if the security of the state and the citizen is to be assured in a complex environment in which state power is once again pre-eminent.**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- Strategic change is being driven by the emergence of partial or non-democracies as world powers, global economic competition, the decline in available fossil fuels, radical belief systems capable of strategic effect and the globalisation of the aging technologies of mass destruction.
- In such an environment the world is a safer place when the West is the dominant force. To that end, the West today is an idea as much as a place, and thus the natural centre of gravity for the generation of strategic effect by democratic states, in an age in which deterrence, containment and, if needs be, pre-emption will be as least as important as institutional constraint. However, for the new West to be re-forged it needs a galvanising strategic vision and strategic leadership.
- Strategic leadership in such an environment requires a clear understanding of the end-states sought and the method and organisation so required.
- There are only three Western states capable of grand strategy; the US, France and Britain.
- American strategic leadership is too ideological for the governance of complex security environments and is necessarily focussed on high-end systemic deterrence and containment.
- France's 'loss' of Europe has left the French elite in deep crisis and unable to generate a global vision.
- Only Britain combines both the tradition of pragmatism and projection to lead the West towards a new grand strategy with the aim of strategic stability. The UK must therefore become the strategic leadership enabler. However, after fifty years of strategic followership is the British elite any longer capable of the vision, commitment, consistency and plain courage such leadership demands?
- Whilst Britain will never be in a position to overtly lead the West and/or Europe a clearly enunciated strategy will start a new debate within both the West and Europe and thus help to fill the security therein.

## BRITISH STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP: FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- In spite of the challenges posed by Iraq and Afghanistan, the lessons learned will prove invaluable planning aids for both America and Britain to better understand the effective generation of strategic effect. Recent events have reinforced, not undermined, British strategic leadership.
- However, to realise the opportunity now afforded Britain must first re-establish its strategic tradition surrendered in 1956 if it is to forge strategic leadership that can in turn help lead North Americans, Europeans and others towards a comprehensive approach to strategic stability that will combine the new deterrence with the new containment without micro-managing the political choices of other cultures and societies.
- In turn, British strategic leadership will require a new security doctrine of which defence doctrine is a part designed to aggregate the strategic effect of new partners and all available agencies.
- The strategic comprehensive approach must be organised along two axes of effect:
  - (1) The creation of new strategic partnerships with like-minded states (Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand etc); and
  - (2) The forging of national agencies into pro-active agencies for the realisation of a British strategic agenda.
- International institutions (UN, NATO, EU, the Commonwealth) remain vital for both legitimising action and for aggregating effect but they must not be permitted to constrain strategic leadership by the big democratic powers.

## BRITISH STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP: FOOD FOR THOUGHT

### I THE NEW STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

**T**HIS IS AN AGE OF POWER. It is also the start of an age of strategic competition. Institutions are no longer ends in themselves, even if for a state such as Britain they remain vital for the aggregation of power and its legitimisation. As the fog of peace lifts the new strategic environment is one in which democracy once again faces autocracy and extremism determined to confront the West, one through competition, the other through infiltration. Thus, a new realism is required in the West reinforced by a new planning reality founded on the need to manage strategic competition and prevent catastrophic penetration as part of a new doctrine of strategic stabilisation. Put simply, the balance of power is back. Therefore, now that Europe is by and large whole and free it is time to end the woolly strategy that has marked European policy in particular and face a world in which immature great power and strategic terror are combining to undermine the system of institutionalised security governance that the Western democracies spent a century struggling to construct.

Like it or not the world is moving into a big, unstable future in which the West remains and must remain the bastion of stability. Americans and Europeans therefore need to plan together for the governance of that world. Such a mission will require clear, top down thinking about the environment, the tasks and effect needed to successfully govern security, with whom, what, how to do it and the role of institutions therein – strategic leadership. Moreover, the nature and pace of change demands such leadership as a matter of urgency.

There are only three states in the West capable of strategic leadership – America, France and Britain. The United States will be locked for some time in a domestic debate over the nature of its presence in the World that will likely prove divisive and debilitating. France, having ‘lost’ Europe, is tipping into a political crisis that as much concerns its place in the world, as the nature of itself. The rest of Europe oscillates between isolationism and self-delusion in which the absence of strategy is mistaken for security. Therefore, it falls to Britain to forge strategic leadership. This will prove no easy task. Whilst Britain will never be in a position to overtly lead the West and/or Europe the UK has a unique opportunity to shape the grand strategy of both by moving decisively to fill the strategic vacuum from which both the transatlantic relationship and Europe suffer.

Such a role will require a profound change of mindset. Britain has for centuries used pragmatism and its traditional role as the balancer of the great

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power ledger as a metaphor for the avoidance of such strategy. Moreover, in 1956 in the aftermath of the Suez debacle Britain effectively handed over grand strategy to the US and European strategy to the French. A profound question remains. Has the spin and pretence that has become so central to British politics left a once great country incapable of the leadership upon which strategy rests? Britain, Europe and the world are about to find out.

This paper sets out the main argument for a British strategic leadership, its nature and content together with the challenges it must confront.

## II STRATEGIC CHANGE DRIVERS

**The world is changing fast and not for the better. Power is moving inexorably towards Asia and as it does so it becomes more unstable and classical.**

### 1. Six Dominant Strategic Factors over the Mid-Term

- The emergence of neo-communist/nationalist China as a global economic superpower, with the potential to become a global military superpower;
- The re-emergence of an assertive Russia, through the modernisation of its armed forces as a consequence of sustained high energy revenues;
- The continued radicalisation of eight security black holes generated by poverty, radical Islam and demographic imbalance;
- The partial collapse of the post-colonial state system in Africa and Asia;
- The ‘democratisation’ of the technologies of mass destruction through globalisation and the information superhighway;
- The re-consolidation of the West.

### 2. Four Consequences of Strategic Change

The nature of change will challenge traditional concepts of security and defence and demand the creative organisation of response and effect. The shift in the balance of power will likely lead to the following consequences:

- Strategic consensus with Russia and China is highly unlikely due to the nature of both states and their relationship with the West.

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- The scope and extent of humanitarian interventions will be drastically reduced as competition replaces co-operation between the West and China and Russia. Consequently, structural interventions designed to shore up the system the West built are far more likely. Indeed, Iraq and Afghanistan fall into this new category.
- Strategic terror as an asymmetric leveller will continue to be the weapon of choice of radical elements outside the great power system.
- In such a fractured strategic environment the paradox of the UN will become dangerous. Whilst the leitmotif of institutionalised security governance it could to all intents and purposes fail and thus become a source of dangerous constraint upon the ‘good guys’, whilst leaving the ‘bad guys’ to do their worst. Consequently, legality through the UN is likely to be replaced by legitimacy through democracies acting in concert.

### **3. The Nature of Strategic Change**

Energy competition, competition for energy in security black holes, and the Asian political order will shape the international system.

Strategic leadership has traditionally involved the shaping of the strategic environment to one’s own ends and, as such, unashamedly concerns the application of state power. In turn, such strategy has been founded on a clear understanding between the goal sought, the method and resources so required to achieve it and a cold, hard analysis of the environment in which such strategy exists. The facts of this age speak for themselves:

- The demand for energy will increase by over 50% by 2035 and 80% of that will be met by fossil fuels.(World Bank);
- Russia already supplies 25% of Europe’s gas, a figure that will climb to 50% by 2020. (OECD);
- China surpassed UK GDP in 2005 and will surpass that of Germany in 2008, Japan’s in 2033 and the US in 2040. (Goldman Sachs);
- By 2015 average share of GDP spent on defence by EU 25 will fall from 1.84% in 2003 to 1.52. (RAND);
- Population of working age is projected to fall by 6m between 2005 and 2015, down by 2.1%, although this could be offset by better economic policies. (Eurostat).

This is an age of the most profound structural change, in which power is shifting inexorably towards Asia, and as it does changing the very nature of the international system. Once again placing the state at the centre of power, it is

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change reinforced by Europe's self-imposed decline, as the obsession with institutionalism and the constraint of great powers within Europe prevent the aggregation of power and the crafting of grand strategy beyond. Paradoxically, state leadership will be vital to save the West's system of institutionalised security governance.

However, relative decline need not presage absolute failure. Far from it, because according to the OECD the most pessimistic forecast for GDP growth in Europe is 1.9% between 2006 and 2010 and 1.3% between 2011 and 2015. Indeed, no state other than the US would have an economy approaching that of the combined EU. Indeed, even the most pessimistic of OECD forecasts state that EU output in 2015 will be roughly that of US. According to RAND, European defence expenditure *grosso modo* will rise 9% by 2015.

Therefore, whilst power is indeed shifting eastwards and becoming more dangerous as it does, Europeans still possess sufficient wealth and power to shape the world, but lack the leadership courage to justify the comprehensive security and defence effort that is required, and the political courage to stand alongside the North Americans, in the forthcoming struggle for the Western way of legitimate security.

#### **4. The Fundamentals of Western Strategic Leadership**

Given the nature of change demonstrated above and the place that Europe (and by extension Britain) 'enjoys' in the world, there is no other option but to engage if the West as the West is to save the international system it created. Strategic leadership to that end would be necessarily founded upon certain fundamentals; strategic consensus as part of a total security concept founded in turn on a thoroughgoing analysis of risks and threats. Western strategy should thus be based upon the following principles:

- Attempts to reinforce disarmament and arms control regimes whilst recognising their limits.
- Strategic containment and deterrence reinforced by credible pre-emption when necessary.
- The capability to intervene credibly reinforced by the capacity to stabilise and the resources to reconstruct.
- American willingness to engage in partnership with those Europeans prepared to invest sufficiently in security and defence to be worthy of such a partnership.
- The forging of new partnerships with democracies the world over and the better integration of agencies across the conflict spectrum through a new security doctrine of which defence doctrine is but one component.

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- A strengthened NATO that necessarily goes global as the role and importance of democracies outside of the Euro-Atlantic area transforms the West from a place into an idea.
- An Alliance capable of acting as the natural organising locus for the new global containment of the forces of revulsion and revision that span the spectrum from strategic terror to unstable great power.
- An EU ready and able to fill the political security space in and around Europe as NATO goes global.

### III THE PRIMARY STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

**The ability to supply energy will rehabilitate Russia as a strategic actor, under a regime that will likely prefer power to democracy. The need for energy will force China into a strategic role under a regime that will use nationalism to prevent democracy.**

#### 1. Russia, China and the Energy Policy Dilemma.

- By 2020 three quarters of Europe's energy needs will come from Russia and North Africa (Shell).<sup>1</sup>
- Even though only 6% of proven oil reserves have been used, annual discovered volumes will by 2040 decline to roughly 1/100th of the mid-70s average (Shell).

#### Core Message

1. The 'romantic Russia' and 'cuddly China' syndrome and the wishful thinking that seems to affect much of Europe must end. Neither of these states are liberal-democracies with a tradition of peaceful coexistence and both will use whatever comparative advantages they may have in the pursuit of regional dominance.
2. The re-emergence of Russia and the emergence of China are driven by two drivers that will lead inevitably to great power state competition as peak oil further diminishes; Russia's ability to supply energy and China's need for it.

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1. This dependency may be nearer in time than given here. *International Herald Tribune* recently carried a story (issue 30 September/1 October 2006) stating that Gazprom has entered into a deal with the Algerian gas supply authorities which gives the former control over two-thirds of Italy's energy supplies.

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### 1.a. Russia.

- Russia is using high energy revenues to promote a ‘Soviet-lite’ strategy towards its near and not so near abroad, particularly as the Siloviki (the old security apparatchiks) gain ever greater control over the power ministries.
- The likes of Gazprom, Lukoil and Rosneft are increasingly agents of the Kremlin.
- In addition to the use of energy as a strategic lever Russia will use the profits so gained to rebuild its armed forces.
- Russia will not be constrained within the European security architecture.

### 1.b. China.

- Whereas Russia’s challenge is a function of its ability to export energy, that of China is caused by its need for energy (a) to fuel its growth; and (b) the need for growth to sustain the current regime in power. Indeed, the Communist Party will likely only stay in power so long as current growth can be maintained.
- The Chinese social and political edifice is increasingly unstable. First, China is going through its second revolution as the neo-communists in Beijing compete with the capitalists in Shanghai and Hong Kong. Second, the split between town and country and the migration flows from one to the other is de-stabilising the social order.
- Chinese nationalism (which is very intense) is being used by both sides in this battle and the military is in turn using the struggle to generate an impressive military modernisation programme.
- The mixture of rapid growth, ancient regional grievances, excessive nationalism, modernising militaries, advanced technologies (Japan has the largest stockpile of plutonium in the world and an intercontinental missile) and a lack of indigenous fossil fuels renders South and East Asia the centre of gravity for systemic competition with the very real possibility of strategic spill-over from which the West cannot insulate nor isolate itself.

### What to Do?

- Seek alternative sources of supply. It would be a profound strategic mistake to hand over to Moscow monopolistic control of European gas supplies from source to the consumer.

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- Bring oil and gas companies more in line with state strategy. Western states must use the high price of oil to push their own energy companies to pursue the extraction of hitherto marginal energy, whilst at the same time reducing reliance further on fossil fuels (according to Shell, the West uses only 31% of the figure for oil as a percentage of total economic output compared with 1974) whilst ensuring a balanced production of energy using all means available – including nuclear.
- Seek areas of co-operation with Russia and new inward investment opportunities without permitting reliance and further tying Russia to the West.
- Seek areas of co-operation with China, such as over North Korea and attacks by pirates on commodity transportation in the Malacca Straits.
- Plan for the strategic containment of both.

### **2. Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.**

**Weapons of mass destruction and their associated delivery systems will proliferate. The West will need a multi-faceted security strategy to manage a world in which there are many actors armed with such weapons.**

- There are now 32 states with ballistic missiles (Arms Control Association);
- There are 20 states with declared and non-declared weapons of mass destruction (Arms Control Association).

### **Core message**

Nuclear weapons are now 61 years old. Modern missile technology is one hundred years old. In an information rich global economy, no such technologies can be indefinitely denied to those who seek them and have the means to do so.

- The Non-Proliferation Treaty has worked to effect since 1968. However, it is evident in a globalised market that the spread of old but massively destructive technology is now gathering pace and leading to horizontal proliferation.
- The concern is not just that states, but small and fanatical non-state actors will obtain nuclear weapons.
- Moreover, there are several state to state competitions, such as India and Pakistan, North Korea and potentially Japan, Israel and Iran that could rapidly lead to vertical proliferation.

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- It is highly unlikely Israel will ever permit a nuclear Iran given the leanings of the current regime.
- It is therefore likely that non-proliferation will only work for those with no intention of challenging the West. Underpinning the case for NATO's Global Partnership, Structural Interventions and the UK's Comprehensive Approach is a pro-active role for just coercion and pre-emption when Western interests are threatened.
- It is evident that the West must develop the ability to manage proliferation and its consequences, as total prevention is unlikely. Pre-emptive initiatives, such as the Proliferation Security Initiative are essential.

### **What to Do?**

- Modernise and bolster non-proliferation regimes, but do not permit such regimes to be used as constraints.
- Rehabilitate coercion as an essential part of Western strategy underpinning the new containment.
- Re-habilitate deterrence through the re-establishment of both conventional and nuclear credibility.
- Pre-empt when necessary.
- Re-establish the credibility of intelligence and its link with planning and action.

### **4. Strategic Terror**

**Without an effective ability to protect against strategic terror, including greater resiliency of societies, Western democracies will find it hard to project power. There is thus a degree of synergy between the interests of strategic competitors and strategic terrorists.**

- There are eight so-called 'security black holes' from which strategic terror is emerging and eight centres of piracy across the main shipping routes between Asia and Europe. (Clingendael Centre for Strategic Studies)

### **Core Messages**

1. Strategic counter terror is mutating from a series of man-hunts into a new strategic doctrine for engagement in a world in which many western engagements will by definition be asymmetric, dangerous and with an

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ability to suck the West into sustained commitments that will stretch civil and military means.

2. Although the US is making progress in the counter-offensive against Al Qaeda and their like the generic problem that they pose cannot be easily resolved.
3. What is emerging from the counter-offensive is a new thirty years war in which extreme belief systems, old but massively destructive technologies, instable and intolerant societies, strategic crime and the globalisation of all commodities and communications combine to create, potentially at least, a multi-dimensional threat which transcends geography, function and capability.
4. Strategic terror is in effect a counter-strategy that will likely be orchestrated to a significant extent by state adversaries, as well as ideological adversaries.
5. The ideological battle should not be one that is fought between democracy and theocracy in which the West by default endeavours to impose the former in the belief that there is a simplistic relationship between democracy and stability. Rather, western grand strategy and the stability it seeks to generate must be founded both on the defence of western interests and society. It must not be ashamed of that basic insistence as well as on the principles of international law and insistence that regimes and groups adhere to certain behaviours consistent with international humanitarian law.

### **What to Do?**

- The sources of danger and challenge are radically greater than individual state power (including that of the US) and demand radically different solutions from the institutions and systems created in the past to protect society.
- Better protection and prevention against attacks, greater resiliency of society in the event of attacks as well as more effective consequence management will be vital if Western democracies are to retain the support of public opinion when force is projected in pursuit of security interests.
- Strategic counter terror and lessons learned therein must provide the benchmark for transformed thinking that will underpin planning for generic forces and capabilities that can go anywhere and fight anyone for however long it takes.
- Effect therein will also require a new security doctrine that incorporates the activities of civilian agencies and personnel, part of a recognition that

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success in what are structural interventions can only be judged by the stability generated. Armed forces will be used primarily to create the space in which stabilisation and reconstruction will take place without themselves being the primary agents of effect.

### IV THE STRATEGIC RESPONSE

#### 1. Western Grand Strategy.

**Western grand strategy concerns first and foremost the protection of the status quo through the progressive inclusion of revisionist states within the Western system and the progressive interdiction and destruction of strategic terror. However, extending the West must not be equated with simplistic notions about the spread of democracy which is a possible consequence of moderate state behaviour, not a guarantee of it.**

#### **Core Messages**

1. In such an environment a Western grand strategy would first and foremost require new criteria for intervening and a better understanding of the capacities and capabilities to generate effect across the strategic landscape and conflict/construction spectrum.
  2. New criteria should be founded on a clear concept of Western interests (values and interests have become conflated contributing to the West's strategic woolliness) and an effects-based total security concept in which Britain becomes a primary effects enabler and generator. This approach will require a new engagement spectrum founded on new partners and two new axes of capacity and capability if 'success' in interventions is to have any meaning. The alternative is isolationism, which much of Europe seems to have chosen.
- Three problems for global structural interventions:
    - (a) Capability is being used in place of capacity and thus stabilisation and reconstruction missions have an attritional effect on high-end forces;

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(b) The whole EU security and defence edifice is founded on the principles of humanitarian interventions and enshrined in the now aspic coated Petersberg Tasks; and

(c) The use of coercion by Europeans in any or all forms is in rejected by many member-states.

- Two axes of solution:
  - (a) New democratic partners must be sought that possess a clear commitment to the just application of both coercive and non-coercive security policy;
  - (b) The generation of effect in complex environments will require a comprehensive approach to the application of power in all its forms involving new agencies within the framework of an overarching security doctrine of which defence doctrine is but a part.
- NATO remains the most likely enabler of effects-based global containment and strategic stabilisation given that the role of armed forces will remain fundamental to credibility, and US armed forces are the very cornerstone of this system.
- The EU could well emerge in the political space so created by NATO's global role as the institution best placed to organise the protection of the European security space. Given the lack of resiliency of most European societies it is hard to see how projection can take place without protection.
- However, as currently configured most Europeans find themselves with forces designed for humanitarian and rescue missions and peacekeeping in places where robust peacemaking is essential in dangerous places far away from the home base.
- The plethora of national caveats for the use of their armed forces is testament to this reality and places undue pressure on the UK in particular.

### **What to Do?**

- Reinforce big state leadership as the centre of gravity of strategic leadership with institutions consigned to support, enable and legitimise that leadership.
- Re-align other institutions, such as the Commonwealth, behind British strategic leadership.
- Reinforce the importance of ad hoc groupings, such as ABCA, MIC, etc.

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**2. American Strategic Leadership and Military Transformation.**

**American strategic leadership is vital. However, Britain must re-assert its political autonomy if it is to achieve balanced strategic leadership and be capable of sufficient political and military effect to influence American strategy.**

- Access to US strategic enablers saves the UK between 10 and 15% on the defence budget (Author's own research).
- Quote: 'There are only two states that enjoy a special relationship with the United States – Israel and Ireland' (US Senator).
- Quote: 'In a dynamic world characterised by rapidly changing and highly adaptive threats, American military strategy must seek to transform what is essentially an industrial age military organisation, optimised to respond to threats as they happen, into an information age force that can shape outcomes in a future security environment before threats arise'. Terry Pudas, Office of Force Transformation, OSD, 10/2005.

**Core Messages**

1. American strategic leadership has become dangerously one-dimensional. If Asia is the new centre of strategic competition, the Middle East is the crucible of instability. Whilst the right of Israel to exist peacefully within its borders is an inalienable right, the centrality of Israel to American policy renders balanced strategic leadership therein impossible.
2. American strategic leadership of the West is the sine qua non of international relations and the best guarantee of security and stability in the modern world. Influence over the US therefore must remain the first principle of British security policy. However, of late the special relationship has become dangerously one-sided with a British Government too willing to sacrifice British interests to maintain access to American policy-makers and strategic enablers.
3. To avoid the complexity of contemporary international relations the US has therefore become increasingly selective about the nature and scope of its engagement at any level of conflict that does not concern systemic challenge or catastrophic damage to the US. British policy, which is more nuanced than that of Washington, has by and large become neutered by current American policy.

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4. Consequently, the transformation of US armed forces is focused on enhancing the effect of US grand strategy. The US defence posture is already configured towards a global containment role and that requires emphasis on the development of high-end, long-range, strategic effect forces.
  5. Hopefully, for all the challenges posed by the global war on terror, and more specifically Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States will learn many lessons from engagements (many of which Britain has long understood) therein which will prove invaluable in for future planning and doctrine. Equally, because of the nature of the US body politic, the longer-term challenges emerging and the structure, doctrine and tradition of American armed forces any modification to US posture will be limited.
  6. Strategic stabilisation as implied by the UK's Comprehensive Approach will thus always remain a sub-component of the high-intensity focus of America's strategic effort. The marrying of the two will require a much smarter concept of transformation than has hitherto been the case in which greater capability is reinforced over time with increased capacity.
  7. The current transformation model is leading to a capability-capacity crunch whereby forces get ever smaller to become ever more lethal but lack capacity to undertake constabulary and stabilisation and reconstruction tasks vital to overall mission success. This crunch affects UK forces severely.
  8. Smart transformation will require the merging of the high-end role of the Americans with the stabilisation role of Europeans (and other democracies) through a network-enabled concept that itself enables plug and play coalitions across the conflict spectrum with NATO as the likely focus for engineering transnational force synergies.
- Network-centrism and effects based operations and analysis are vital to the successful operations be they at the high-end or the low-end of the mission spectrum, but must be better tailored to the needs of allies the forces of which will necessarily have different centres of gravity.
  - Given the weakening of formal treaty-based constraints, particularly as weapons of mass destruction and their associated delivery systems proliferate, the US is essentially correct about the need to reinforce all engagements with a credible capacity for pre-emptive action.
  - From a European standpoint US transformation is still too focused on high-end, large-scale operations because that is where the US military excels, with three consequences:
    - (a) Much of the US military is designed as a strategic 'force in being', the doctrine of which engenders great difficulties when the US deploys on stabilisation and reconstruction missions with allies and partners;

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- (b) Differences between the US and many of its European allies are exacerbated by the American idea that the transatlantic divide can be closed by urging allies to transform their forces into smaller versions of the American;
- (c) Britain is reduced to finding what common ground there may be between disparate American and continental European strategies, postures, capacities and capabilities. Ad hocery thus prevails, emphasising ad hoc solutions that render force and operational planning very complicated.
- The UK (and other Europeans) should have no illusions as to the extent internal factors influence America's strategic leadership in a manner that is not in the British interest:
    - (a) the political primacy of the Pentagon over the State Department and the consequent weakening of American diplomacy;
    - (b) the role of the US defence industries in generating research, development and production programmes through lobbying on Capitol Hill (this too often results in programmes that are not in the American interest, let alone the British);
    - (c) The role technology plays in shaping doctrine, particularly one built around combat specialisation, is at odds with the British tradition of a multi-tasking approach;
    - (d) The resistance of the US Army to nation-building and the constabulary role therein;
    - (e) Inter-agency disputes that prevent anything like the forging of a US Comprehensive Approach; and
    - (f) The political fatigue in the US given experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.

### **What to Do?**

- Britain must re-assert its strategic autonomy from the US. In current circumstances the US lacks a balanced strategic perception.
- Equally, without over-stating the case, British influence in both the 'Anglosphere' and Europe gives Britain a unique position to develop a complementary approach to the use of military force that combines American firepower and manoeuvre with policing and constabulary operations through British strategy and doctrine.
- British strategic leadership must be focused at two levels:

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(a) The re-assertion of British strategic autonomy, even if the UK loses most favoured access to some American strategic enablers for some time;  
(b) The re-balancing of force transformation to better enable the UK to lead Europeans and others in support of the US and thus increase British influence over American security policy.

- Smart transformation must be founded on the following tenets:
  - (a) Greater understanding of the implications of different levels of interoperability and co-operability within both institutions and coalitions;
  - (b) Greater emphasis on the use of effects-generation and networked-enabled solutions, not just for forces at Very High Readiness and High Readiness, but also Forces at Lower Readiness and Stabilisation and Reconstruction Forces;
  - (c) Creation of a multi-task doctrine based on enabling the entire chain with command responsibility as part of a networked ‘muddy boots’ concept that itself underpins a political and military Comprehensive Approach.

### **3. European Strategic Leadership and the Changing Strategic Roles of Institutions.**

**Europe has become a strategy-free zone. However, if Europe is incapable of generating its own strategy the first principle of its strategic security should be to support the American presence in Asia and through an effective effort in and around Europe. NATO and the EU should be re-cast to enable great power leadership.**

- Whilst the British and French can deploy around 40% of their respective headline forces, most other Europeans can achieve around 8-10%, with some around 3-4%.
- In 2004 the whole of research and development in NATO Europe amounted to US\$8bn, with 80% of that coming from Britain, France and Germany. The US spent \$61bn (Author’s research).
- EU23 (excluding UK and France) spend between 7 and 17% on procurement; not enough to develop lift, C4ISR and PGMs (RAND).
- According to the Capability Improvement Chart II/2005 of the EU’s Headline Goal 2010, following the Brussels conference of 21 November, 2005, of 64 ESDP Capability Shortfalls and Catalogue Deficits covering Land, Maritime, Air, Mobility and ISTAR (intelligence, surveillance, tar-

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get acquisition and reconnaissance), seven have been formally solved, four are showing signs of improvement and fifty-three have not changed over the 2002-2005 period identified.

### Core messages

1. Europeans face two almost intractable problems that profoundly weaken European strategic leadership:
    - (a) The retreat into Euro-isolationism that gathered pace after the Cold War; and
    - (b) The rejection of coercion as a legitimate tool of foreign and security policy and which is reflected in historically low levels of security investment.
  2. Ideally, institutions should act as both legitimisers and generators of strategic effect. However, in the absence of a strategic consensus amongst the allies coalitions of the great and willing are more likely the generators of such effect. Institutions can no longer be considered likely fora for leadership, but rather as organisers and legitimisers post hoc.
  3. For all the many failings of Britain's European partners they still represent an important pool of capability and capacity and operational cultures far more open to British leadership than American. Indeed, the EU's European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) is partly driven by an inability to maintain forces capable of operating alongside those of the US.
  4. Equally, the UK should look beyond both NATO and the EU to other groupings for pools of capability and capacity, such as the Commonwealth.
- As the world becomes more complex and dangerous only the leading Western powers have the ability to generate relevant security effect. That will require new partners and better allies. Always constructed as an aggregation of state power, NATO remains the natural centre of gravity for the organisation of contemporary Western state power for strategic effect.
  - NATO has suffered of late because of a lack of clarity about its mission. The 1990s represented the Age of Enlargement, but that is by and large over. This decade is the era of big security and the UK is by default the power of choice for leading NATO to the global role for which it is naturally designed. NATO, through its legitimacy, standards, force and command structure remains the natural locus for the organisation that enables

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the global security effect that we will need to generate to close the gap between our capabilities, our capacity and the responsibilities it generates. Power is both the greatest blessing and the greatest curse. Some Europeans are trying to escape the consequences of their power and wealth by indirectly taxing the British, French and Americans through free-riding. The UK has no such option.

- The poor deployability of most European forces renders usability (and more importantly re-usability) of forces nigh impossible in all but the most local and most permissive of operations. Many European partners mask this by sending small forces with limited rules of engagement and make great fanfare of it.
- The EU was constructed around the constraint of great power and the UN was designed to balance great power and small power through representation. Consequently, ESDP is driven by the need to balance power within Europe rather than beyond and this leads in turn to a disconnect between EU security and defence and the strategic environment. Even the much vaunted civilian security capacity reflects a need to incorporate the neutral and post-neutral member-states into ESDP.
- NATO, however, sits at the nexus of state-generated capability and capacity and, for all its many faults, is the only power aggregator capable of confronting strategic challenges.
- Equally, for any state whose actions are founded on the rule of law and the legitimacy of collective democratic action and effect, institutions remain vital instruments. However, they are instruments and not ends in themselves and for too many Europeans the elegance of institutional solutions within Europe has replaced the need for strategy and engagement beyond.
- There is thus little evidence that Europeans will or can agree over the nature and extent of the challenges that Europe must confront. This failure is compounded by several other factors:
  - (a) France's partners are not prepared to pay any longer for France's strategic ambitions as expressed through its desire over the longer-term for a strategic ESDP;
  - (b) France itself is in deep difficulties, is now Europe's third power after the UK and Germany, and will be incapable of strategic leadership for some time;
  - (c) The enlargement of both NATO and the EU has shifted the balance of power within Europe in favour of the UK, which lacks any clear strategy with which to grasp such an opportunity;

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- (d) Germany no longer feels quite so subject to past guilt, but is as yet incapable of strategic leadership.
- (e) Following the French and Dutch rejection of the Constitutional Treaty European integration is no longer viable as an alternative path to the aggregation of European power.
- Equally, ESDP still has an important role to play:
  - (a) It is right that Europe as Europe attempts to develop strategy. British strategic leadership therein will depend to an extent upon some form of European strategic culture;
  - (b) European homeland security can only be achieved at the transnational level;
  - (c) The European security space will progressively become the responsibility of Europeans as NATO necessarily goes global;
  - (d) Having the option to put operations under different flags (EU, NATO, coalitions of the willing) provides political options in terms of the political identity of missions in complex environments.
- Unfortunately, too many Europeans continue to seek to escape the consequences of power and wealth by (a) indirectly taxing the British, French and Americans through free-riding; and (b) constraining strategic leadership.
- The Commonwealth has long been derided as a remnant of empire of little political utility. However, paradoxically as the post-colonial order tips into chaos, particularly in parts of Africa, the nature of the security environment is leading to the convergence of the interests of many key Commonwealth states. Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and South Africa, for example, are vital strategic and regional partners who share not only renewed interests with each other but a culture and approach to security that Britain bequeathed to them. British strategic leadership will depend to some extent upon the recasting of the Commonwealth into a strategic grouping.

### **What to Do?**

- Given the emerging strategic context, the constraints on European strategic leadership, and the obsession with institutional frameworks, British strategic leadership in Europe will need to be focused neces-

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sarily on the EU-NATO relationship. To that end, Britain needs to play a far more nuanced game in Europe. Simply saying no to French-led strategic projects, such as satellite surveillance is counter-productive. Limited European strategic eyes and ears will help the development of a European strategic culture that is in the British interest, even if security investment is at an historic low. The more Europeans can see, the more they will need to do and the more they will seek sound leadership.

- In the interim Britain should concentrate on selling the case for strategic leadership to reasonably like-minded European partners - France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and increasingly Sweden.
- The following initiatives might be considered as part of a European strategic confidence building programme designed get both organisations and their members looking at the same big picture:

1. *EU-NATO DPKO Initiative:* Joint approach to UN to transfer EU and NATO CRO and PSO experience to other partners through NATO Standards as part of Global Capacity Building Partnership.

2. *EU-NATO Security Planning Co-operation:* Both EU and NATO need a new security planning concept. Develop jointly a new security planning model and paradigm for the effective organisation of all security actors engaged on operations.

3. *Reinforce EDA-ACT/CNAD Transformation Consultation:* Involve the European Defence Agency closely in the work of Allied Command Transformation (ACT) to strengthen the synergy of the transformation work of all agencies engaged thereon, with a particular objective of creating a post-Riga agenda for the EU-NATO Capabilities Working Group.

4. *Establish an EU-NATO Long Term Vision Working Group:* The EU and NATO need to look jointly beyond 2010, Battle Groups and the NRF. Effects-based planning and effects-based capabilities must be properly established across the institutions.

5. *Explore ways to more Effectively Harmonise PCC and the ECAP:* Encourage members to include both the Prague Capabilities Commitment and the European Capabilities Action Plan in national armaments programmes and use the Capabilities Working Group to seek further syner-

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gies between the two. To that end create a NATO-EU Working Group of National Armaments Directors.

6. *EU-NATO Co-operation on Big-Ticket Project Financing:* Reinforce NATO co-operation with the EDA by jointly looking at creative defence financing. For example, build on the experience of big ticket programmes, such as Anglo-French Skynet V milsatcom in which costs have been offset by offering a dual-use service to multinational corporations.

7. *Look Jointly at how to Spread the Cost of Modernisation:* The EDA and NATO need to look jointly at how best to introduce pan-European private finance initiatives in European acquisition programmes and help to spread the cost of investment across the life cycle of equipment.

8. *Re-consider Transformation:* Under British leadership NATO and the EDA should jointly develop a smart transformation concept focused on enhancing the natural strengths of NATO and EU members throughout the strategic stabilisation task-list and across the conflict intensity spectrum.

9. *Look jointly at the Implications of limited Defence Integration:* Smaller European states will almost certainly have to consider defence integration to create real military effect given their limited force and resource bases. The EU and NATO should jointly explore the implications of such a development.

10. *EU-NATO Proliferation Initiative:* A joint examination of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and how to combat it.

11. *EU-NATO Crisis Action Teams:* Reinforce practical co-operation between NATO and the EU in the field. Consider EU-NATO Operational Crisis Action Teams at appropriate levels of command.

12. *Consider the Applicability of the Comprehensive Approach:* To ensure the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Approach, NATO and the EU need to play their full role. Consider how best the two organisations can promote integrated effect.

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V  
BRITISH STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

**Britain has the fourth or fifth largest economy in the world, and pound for pound probably the most capable armed forces across the mission spectrum. Britain cannot escape the burden of leadership. British strategic leadership must therefore enable the re-consolidation of the West as the primary agent of strategic stability.**

- In 2004 NATO Europe (plus Canada) spent US\$244.86bn on defence. Of that Britain and France spent together US\$101.2bn, or some 41% of the total (Author's own research).
- Add Germany and that figure climbs to US\$138.4bn or 56.5% of the total. In other words, in 2004 twenty-two NATO nations spent only US\$106.5bn between them at an average of US\$4.8bn per country. (Author's own research)
- By 2015 UK and France will represent 60% of EU defence expenditure. (RAND)

**Core Messages**

1. The nature of change, America's response to it, France's political weakness and Britain's tradition of pragmatic security governance is placing the burden of strategic leadership on the UK. A simple question thus emerges; is Britain and its elite any longer capable of the vision and leadership required?
2. The figures above would suggest it is counter-intuitive for a state the size of contemporary Britain to undertake strategic leadership. However, Britain's combination of economic and useable military power imposes such leadership.
3. Strategic leadership is about the effective implementation of a strategic idea and thus requires the following elements; political vision, an agreed centre of gravity or objective, strategy, lines of operation, necessary resources and effective control and organisation, monitoring and audit. Only a few states are capable of the political and practical vision, cohesion and organisation so required.
4. Controversial though it may be, strategic stabilisation is far more the natural heir to the imperial tradition than the revolutionary international tradition of the US.

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5. Britain, with its history, a security policy founded on power and principle, its contacts (the Commonwealth is an idea that is slowly coming again), its strategic method, its quiet diplomatic style and the quality and capability of armed forces is such a state.
  6. Indeed, Britain's genius for much of the 20th century was the unrivalled ability to leverage the power of others through both the legitimacy and credibility of its strategic mission at times of crisis.
  7. However, the effective pursuit of strategic stabilisation will require a) that Britain finally lays to rest the ghost of Suez; and b) by so doing re-asserts its autonomy from both the United States and the European Union; and c) by so doing strengthens both.
  8. The fulfilment of such a role will thus require a clear and unequivocal statement that Britain intends to embark on strategic leadership in keeping with its traditions.
- *The New British Strategic Agenda:* Strategic stabilisation through a balance of co-operation, engagement, development and, if necessary, coercion founded on the generation of the New West as the agent of global political leadership. This will require of the British a global vision concerning both the challenges and opportunities to be grasped and the re-positioning of its external political effort away from Europe.
  - *The Method of British Grand Strategy:* The forging of a new security doctrine, of which defence doctrine is a part, that is an effective example of the Comprehensive Approach as a new approach to the generation of security effect.
  - *The Rationale for the Comprehensive Approach:* A conscious attempt by a leading political power with significant resources to obtain maximum effect through policy cohesion and agency co-ordination given the strategic drivers outlined above. If any state suffers from a capability-capacity crunch it is the UK.
  - *A New Strategic Security Doctrine:* Strategic planning must necessarily move up to the security policy level from the defence policy level as part of a new over-arching strategic security doctrine.
  - *Strategic Security Policy:* Such doctrine will in turn require the enunciation of a strategic security policy founded on a necessary but complicated

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approach to effects-based planning that aggregates and sequences the efforts of civilian and military agencies.

- *Better Cohesion of State Instruments:* Because Britain abandoned any pretence to strategic leadership in 1956 its major state instruments have become reactive and their efforts divided. The Foreign Office has become an instrument designed primarily to react to French leadership in Europe. The Ministry of Defence and the armed forces are established on the need to react to American strategic policy. The Cabinet Office has become the adjudicator between the two based on whatever the political need of the Prime Minister at any given time. It is a political need that is often quixotic in the absence of strategy.
- *The Role of Security Policy:* The generation of British strategic leadership will at the very least require the re-positioning of the great agencies of state to actively pursue the new strategic agenda.
- *Expand the Security Community:* The security policy that will be generated by British grand strategy will require input from the security community at its broadest. The pretence of British strategy over the past fifty years and the loss of strategic self-confidence entailed therein have led policy-makers too often to ignore those views from outside elements that do not conspire in giving greater credence to policy than is deserved.
- *The Organisation of the Comprehensive Approach:* The Comprehensive Approach is a mechanism for the generation of effect along two axes and should be presented as such. First, an expansion of the number of state partners willing to share in British strategic leadership. Second, the organisation of national and international civilian agencies and bodies to that end.
- *The Main Elements of the Military Aspects of a Comprehensive Approach:*
  - Network-enabled concepts;
  - Smart transformation;
  - Smart organisation;
  - Strategic stabilisation concept founded on defence diplomacy and security sector reform;
  - Comprehensive Approach to the role of armed forces in the generation of security effect.

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VI  
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**Britain is too powerful to avoid the burden of strategic leadership. However, British strategic leadership must reflect a cold understanding of the British strategic interest. To that end, Britain must:**

1. Re-vitalise the transatlantic relationship as the cornerstone of security of the big world into which the West is moving;
2. Rescue Europe from the dangerous isolationism into which it is falling;
3. Re-establish and establish strategic relations with new partners; and
4. Weld British state power into a useable strategic instrument.

In the absence of such strategic leadership Britain will shift blindly from the regional to the strategic via Iraq and Afghanistan without sufficient strategy, capability, or capacity. In the absence of strategy, the only option is muddling through. Not only is the world too dangerous for that, but such a failure of strategy will once again place a disproportionate burden on the young men and women of the British armed forces to make do in dangerous places often at the expense of their lives. Indeed, in the absence of strategic leadership MacMillan's famous dictum about 'events' will come to haunt British leaders as policy is dictated not by Britain but by the adversaries, enemies, challenges and threats that the UK must undoubtedly face. Indeed, without strategy the world will seem so much bigger than necessary – and the case for blind dependence on the US far more pressing.

The British must therefore generate a strategic leadership vision founded on a comprehensive approach to security that will require thinking big about a big future that will necessarily go well beyond Europe. In other words, it is no longer sufficient for Britain simply to react to the ideas of others – balancing has reached its limits.

That must now end.

END

# **Defence Academy of the United Kingdom**

## **Advanced Research and Assessment Group (ARAG)**

### **DEFENCE – SECURITY – DEVELOPMENT**

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#### *British Strategic Leadership: Food for Thought*

Julian Lindley-French

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