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The Image of the Democratic Soldier in the United Kingdom

British Case

Contents

The following paper aims at describing the civil-military relations in the United Kingdom. It also concentrates on identifying images of the democratic soldiers at the political-societal level. I start with looking at the UK from an institutional perspective. Chapter 1 describes how Britain has established a system of rigorous civilian control over the military establishment. In Chapter 2 I look upon the UK's defence and security policy which provide the core foundations for the operations of the Armed Forces. With the end of the Cold War, the changing security environment provided considerable challenges which also affected the operational planning for the Armed Forces. This chapter also seeks to identify the role images in the British foreign and defence policy which serve as guidelines for military action. In Chapter 3 the political discourses about the proper role of the Armed Forces and the individual soldiers will be reflected. How does the government perceive the role of the British military? Chapter 4 then concentrates on the parliamentary debates on the British Armed Forces. To what extent do these discourse differ from the leadership perceptions? In Chapter 6 I concentrate on the public opinion and the British media: How do they perceive the role of the British military? The final Chapter 7 gives a first, brief overview about the external security relations the UK and its Armed Forces rely on. In particular, the "special relationship" with the United States has become constitutive for the foreign policy role conception and the missions of the Armed Forces.

1. Key Features of the Military Organisation and the Civilian Control of the UK Armed Forces

The UK fields one of the most powerful, technologically advanced and comprehensive armed forces in the world. The power projection capabilities are deemed second only to those of the United States military. The UK is the second largest spender on military science, technology and engineering. It has the 2nd to 4th highest military expenditure, despite only relying on the 27th highest number of troops. In April 2006, the British Army had a reported strength of 107.700 people, of which 9 percent were women. The Royal Air Force had a strength of 52.800, and the Royal Navy which is in charge of the UK´s strategic nuclear deterrent consisting of four Trident missile submarines, relied on 39.400 people. This puts the total number of regular Armed Forces personnel at around 200.000, excluding the civilian staff. Around 50.000 people are accounted as reserve forces which have at least partly been mobilised in the process of operation TELIC in Iraq. The British Armed Forces are an all-volunteer-force; declining birth rates and increasing competition with civilian employers for skilled recruits have resulted in mounting difficulties in recruiting and retaining sufficiently suitable personnel (Woodward/Winter, 2004, 280). One of the Army's responses is an increased reliance on recruiting ethnic minorities and also women. Women are eligible to serve in all positions except direct combat positions.

Finer concludes that civilian control of the military is strongest in states with a developed political culture where institutions and legal mechanisms in civil-military

relations are well defined (Finer 1976). The UK provides a classic model for such a culture with thoroughly institutionalized modes of civilian control. They already date back to the Bills of Rights in 1689 which forbade the monarch to keep a standing army in peacetime without the consent of the Parliament. Over the centuries, a framework of political, legal and administrative rules and regulations have been enacted which ensure that the Armed Forces are subordinate to the democratically elected representatives of the people. The UK remains a specific case because it does not rely on any written constitution, nevertheless, the strict civilian subordination of the military remains at the cornerstone of UK's defence policy (Whither, 2003, 73-79).

The Commander-in-Chief of the British Armed Forces is the British monarch, currently Queen Elizabeth II. In practice, the Queen governs through her ministers, or more precisely, government is conducted in the name of the British monarch. The deployment of the Armed Forces is usually decided upon by the Cabinet in which the British Prime Minister takes up a leading role. In the Westminster democracy, the two-party system grants the executive vast powers. A fusion of powers allows the executive to dominate the legislature: the majority party nominates the government and also dominates the legislative system, the House of Commons. This fusion of powers is characteristic for the British political system. Instead of structural checks and balances, the system relies on the democratic concept of accountability of the executive to Parliament. The Secretary of States and their ministers are personally accountable to Parliament on defence matters and they must also be elected members of the House of Commons or members of the House of Lords. Without the support from the majority of parliamentarians in the House of Commons, ministers cannot implement their defence policies. Nevertheless, the proportional election system provides most governments with comfortable majorities in Parliament.

The British Armed Forces are an executive army: While the Prime Minister in his/her cabinet decides about troop deployment, the Parliament gets notified and has the right to regularly question the responsible Ministers and Secretaries of Defence on the matters of troop deployments. While these parliamentary question times can sometimes become controversial, this rarely occurs in defence and security matters. Moreover, Parliament frequently adopts a bi-partisan approach to issues that concern the deployment of British troops abroad. Recent examples underline the general broad support for military action, including the support for the civil authorities in Northern Ireland as well as the UK´s role in the two Gulf Wars. In the run-up to the First Gulf War in 1991, the members of the House of Commons were recalled from recess to debate the conflict in the Middle East; the final voting at the end was 437:35, representing a „typical example of cross-party consensus". While maintaining solidarity in policy terms, the House of Commons and, to a lesser extent, also the House of Lords, expect to receive satisfactory answers over detailed issues such as the rules of engagement or force protection.[1]

Parliament also exerts scrutiny over financial expenditures. Both chambers, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, vote public money annually to the Ministry of

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1   For more detail see Chapter 4.

Defence which provides the Defence Estimates. Without their approval, the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence do not receive their finances. Every five years Parliament must also review and approve the Armed Forces Act which provides the legal authority for the Armed Forces, their conduct and military law. The British military legal system is not a separate entity, but part of the national law: Courts Martial are conducted by civilian judges and controlled by superior civil courts.

Parliament also exercises oversight through monthly sessions of oral defence questions and the possibility of submitting written question to the Ministry of Defence (MoD). In practice, members of the House of Commons, in particular whilst in opposition, have frequently complained about the „culture of secrecy" exerted by the MoD officials which inhibits them from getting the sufficiently meaningful answers (Wisotzki, 2002, 152). Where defence issues are concerned, the Ministry of Defence is virtually a monopoly supplier of information. The requirement in the Ministerial Code of Conduct to provide „accurate, truthful and full information" vis-a-vis members of Parliament is frequently restricted due to concerns of national security. This has led to considerable tensions between the House of Commons Defence Committee and the Ministry of Defence. Successive revisions of the Ministerial Code have aimed at enhancing the information flow and improving the bilateral relations of the institutions. Oversight is furthermore exercised through two specialised House of Commons committees: The Defence Committee focuses on diverse aspects of the Armed Forces, such as their deployment and potential overstretch, adequate equipment or housing for spouses. The Public Accounts Committee investigates the use of public money in defence matters.

The British political system ensures strict civilian control of the UK military. Civilians play a key role in the senior management and administration of the Armed Forces. Nevertheless, the two principal advisers for military affairs in the Defence Ministries provide both, military and civilian expertise. The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) is the professional head of the Armed Forces and the Chief military advisor to the Government. He shares responsibilities on an equal footing with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defence who is the government's principal civilian advisor on defence matters. Overall, the post-Cold War challenges of complex emergencies and coalition operations have led to the growth of a stronger civil-military Central Staff in the Ministry of Defence aimed at finding common lines of agreement between the political options and military requirements. The constant need to balance the political, foreign and military aspects of the UK's military involvements created the need for a highly responsive Whitehall process which, from a Ministry of Defence perspective, was driven by the Central Staff.

From the point of view of the Armed Forces this development has reduced the influence of the military in political decision-making. A former Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) remembered the differences between the Falklands and the Gulf War: While in Falklands his own advice as well as that of the Chiefs of the three Armed Services was regularly received before Cabinet meetings, in the 1990s the Service Chiefs were kept more on the fringe of operational policy. Moreover, the CDS became an integral part of

the wider bureaucracy of the Defence Ministry. While from a democratic point of view, this clear distinction of civil-military relations might be a logic consequence, in practice this has led to a certain estrangement of the political decision-making process from the military operations on the ground.

In summary, executive dominance, the fusion of powers and an impartial bureaucracy leave the military to play a limited advisory role. The UK's government is responsible for drafting the security policies and for the deployment of the British Armed Forces. Traditionally, politics expect the UK Armed Forces to be highly professional and strictly apolitical. Current debates in the UK on the future of the Armed Forces are nevertheless stirred by the increasing dissatisfaction of the military personnel with the frequent deployments abroad. The current CDS Richard Dannatt publicly criticized the government for its policy in Iraq and demanded a possible exit strategy with a date for leaving the Gulf. He also generated a public debate on the current "overstretch" of the Armed Forces by the current government. This already shows the discrepancies between the theory of civilian control of the Armed Forces in Britain and the living practice. While in the political culture, the civilian control of the British military is deeply engraved, the more recent changes in the defence and security policy of the UK have led to an increase in the numbers of war-fighting and peacekeeping missions. The "apolitical" culture of the British Armed Forces have been increasingly questioned from "bottom-up". The statement of CDS Richard Dannatt reflects the dissatisfaction of the soldiers with political leadership. The postmodern British army in the 21st century has become in particular overstretched due to their vast deployment by the political executive. The wide range of international conflict and crisis engagements have led to shortages in personnel and to an increasing reliance on reservists, for example during Operation TELIC in Iraq where more than 20.000 reservists have been deployed. As of April 2005, the Army could rely on 177.430 reservists which either are retired former soldiers or volunteers who train on a weekly basis at their local units (Heyman, 2006, 150).

2.   UK Security and Defence Policy: Political Directives for the Armed Forces

The end of the Cold War confronted the UK with a new security situation which was difficult to define. Despite the gradual decline of the Soviet threat in the late 1980s, the defence policy planning of the UK remained concentrated on the challenges posed by the conventional threat of the Warsaw Pact states. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, the basic guidelines for defence planning and doctrine had to be adjusted and redirected towards a newly evolving, but still vastly unknown security environment. Nevertheless, it soon became clear that the changing defence and security needs would imply doctrinal adjustments and considerable reductions of a largely over-sized UK Armed Forces. The major defence reviews of the 1990s then realized the envisioned deep-cuts in force sizes.

As a traditional maritime power and a former colonial power, the UK has always been accustomed to „use a larger map", meaning to deploy the Armed Forces frequently outside UK territories. In the self-understanding of British Defence planners the UK had to live up to its role as „global power of first order" (Lindley-French, 1999, 7) which requires active participation and support for all operations which seek to stabilise the international system. In an unstable and uncertain world, it is perceived as the UK's own interest to play a crucial part in fostering international stability (MoD, 1992, 8). For this purpose, defence spending and the size of the Armed Forces always ranked first in comparison to other major democracies.

While this historical part of British political culture did not cease to exist during the Cold War, the confrontation between the US and the Soviet Union nevertheless put restraints on the British international ambitions. Over the course of conflict, security was mainly defined as defence of the British Islands and the territories overseas. Moreover, Britain made a strong commitment to the defence of Europe as part of NATO. To preserve its position as a major power, Britain also relied on the acquisition of nuclear weapons from the United States. This agreement was linked to the maintenance of a special relationship with the US, guaranteeing the UK a special status in the Atlantic Alliance, in particular as a mitigator in the transatlantic relations. Beside the firm commitment to NATO and the special relationship with the United States, Britain also maintained large navy and out-of-area capabilities. Interventions took place in Jordan 1958, Kuwait 1961, Cyprus 1963, Malaysia 1963-66 as well as in the Korean War. The successive withdrawal from Suez due to the deteriorating economic situation at home led to a reduced military presence in the Middle East. In 1968, the „shift to Europe" in British defence policy became apparent (Bluth, 1991, 48). Only in 1982, when Argentine forces occupied the Falkland Islands, this immediate security threat forces the UK to deploy British Armed Forces and liberate the British territory. Britain's justification for engaging in this military conflict was based on Article 51 of the UN Charter: the right to self-defence against aggression on British territory. The same respect for international law led the UK to refrain from joining the US intervention in Grenada in 1983 where they sought to remove communist forces from government.

With the end of the Cold War, the British defence doctrine had to be revised. The concept of security was gradually enlarged to live up again to the traditional role concept of being a "global power of first order". In British thinking, the diverse security challenges which became apparent with the Yugoslav wars and the Gulf Wars did not allow the nation to continue with concentrating on national defence. Quite contrary, the realities of global interdependence and the UK's perceptions of its own values and interests led the Conservative as well as the Labour government to internationalize the concept of national security and adjust the role of the Armed Forces according to it. The process of reviewing the defence planning already started in 1990 with "Options for Change". This first restructuring process of the Armed Forces aimed at cutting the defence spending and realizing a "peace dividend" following the end of the Cold War. At this time, the UK military strategy almost entirely focused on defending the UK territory against a potential Soviet threat. As these scenarios were no longer relevant, manpower was cut by 18 percent. In 1994, the British Army of the Rhine was replaced with British

Forces Germany and the manpower of this regiment was cut by half. In the same year, the Defence Cost Study "Front Line First" recommended further deep cuts into the UK Armed Forces: Several regiments and bases were reduced or closed.

With the change of government, New Labour initiated in 1998 the Strategic Defence Review which aimed to reflect the new security conditions in a more holistic way. The SDR also sought to modernize and reshape the Armed Forces to meet the challenges on the incoming 21st century. Defence Secretary George Robertson spoke of a radical review "reflecting a changing world, in which the confrontation of the Cold War has been replaced by a complex mixture of uncertainty and instability....Our Armed Forces are Britain`s insurance against a huge variety of threats (Robertson, 1998, 1)." In the SDR, the UK tried to determine future security challenges and further adapted the Armed Forces according to these changing needs. Intra-state conflicts in Bosnia or Kosovo demonstrated the nature of future threats which needed to be countered through numerous means, first and foremost through a modernized and technologically well-equipped army. The SDR outlined eight defence missions and tasks which encompass a broad variety of tasks for the military ranging from war-fighting capabilities in regional conflicts to peacekeeping mission in humanitarian operations. The defence review concluded that the new international environment had become in many ways more demanding. "Undertaking smaller but frequent, often simultaneous and sometimes prolonged operations can be more difficult than preparing for a single worst-case conflict (SDR, 1998, 16)." The SDR called for expeditionary Armed Forces that were quickly deployable, agile and adaptable.

The Strategic Defence Review undertaken by the incoming Labour government in 1997/98 was announced to be foreign policy-led. It finally heralded the end of the defence policy that had been established during the Cold War era. While it became clear that commitments in peacekeeping outside Western Europe and also outside NATO would receive priority, the implications for the Armed Forces remained blurred. George Robertson, Secretary of Defence, took up the Army slogan „you can peacekeep if you have trained for war, but you cannot fight a war if you have trained only to peacekeep". The military insisted on being a war-fighting army and remaining to do so in the years to come. Nevertheless, New Labour sought to give the British Armed Forces a new image as „ a force for good in the world" to reflect upon their new ethical foreign policy and their international security commitments (SDR, 1998).

September 11, 2001 became another water-shed for the UK which led to renewed efforts to adjust defence and security planning to the threat of global terrorism. Adapting the Armed Forces to the challenges of international terrorism was reflected in the SDR´s New Chapter – the defence review of 2002. Experiences since 1998 and since September 11th suggested that the UK deployed forces more often and further afield than Europe, the Gulf and the Mediterranean which the SDR had identified as the primary focus of British interests. "The world changed on 11 September, but there are no doubt more twists and turns to come to which we must ready to response", stated Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon in the New Chapter (Hoon, 2002, 5). On the operational side, the British Armed Forces were deployed more frequently than envisaged at the time of the SDR. Rapid reaction in concert with allies, most importantly with the United States, became a cornerstone of

UK's military planning. The new force structure the SDR already envisaged stressed the need of smaller, more flexible units capable of cooperating closely with troops from other states.

The British Armed Forces had to face a broader range of tasks across a wider geographical area than originally envisaged under the SDR. This line of military planning was continued in the 2003 Defence White Paper "Delivering Security in a Changing World". Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon identified the following principal security challenges for the future: international terrorism, the proliferation of WMD; weak and failing states. Flexible and adaptable armed forces must become properly equipped to carry out the most likely expeditionary operations. While the Defence White Paper of 2003 also sketched out some further reductions in manpower, it stressed the necessity of further modernisation of equipment (Ministry of Defence 2003). Moreover, the Armed Forces should be able to support three concurrent small and medium scale operations at the same time, at least one of which is an enduring peace support operation (MoD, 2003, 19). Additionally, the British Armed Forces must still retain the ability to adapt themselves at longer notice to much less frequent, but more demanding, large scale operations, such as Operation TELIC in Iraq. This comes in additions to the standing military tasks and overseas commitments (MoD, 2005, 6).

The Defence White Paper of 2003 avowed that Britain will no longer conduct major military operations independent of the US. This statement acknowledges the fact that the UK cannot operate alone and that the European partners remain more restrained in committing themselves to the use of force in pursuit of security. In 2007, Prime Minister Tony Blair reiterated the UK's commitment to continue to deploy the Armed Forces abroad for mainly two purposes: to do "war-fighting" and "peacekeeping". For him, "September 11 2001 changed everything" and had also profound implications for the Armed Forces. According to him, the asymmetric nature of global terrorism seriously threatens international security. While terrorism could not be defeated by military means alone, it could also not be fought without it. Hard military power and soft power in form of defence diplomacy would therefore need to go together. "Global interdependence requires global values commonly or evenly applied" because todays threats such as state failure "threatens us as well as them". He complains about the missing loyalty which the British people owe their Armed Forces. He therefore concluded that the military covenant between the Armed Forces, Government and the British people has to be renewed. He asked the British public for their continuous support of the military personnel deployed abroad while he promised to increase expenditure on equipment, personnel and the overall conditions of the Armed Forces. This announcement came as immediate reaction to the critique of soldiers and commanders who complained about being "overstretched" (Blair, 2007, 1-6).[2]

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2   The military covenant between government and the Armed Forces contains the formal expression of mutual loyality between the two sides. While the government promises to pay attention to the needs of the soldiers and their families, the military remains loyal and executes the political orders. The military covenant is an important part of British military culture. It dates back to the 19th century when the Duke of Wellington drafted the covenant for the first time. The Army last reviewed the covenant in 2005.

In summary, the successive reviews of military capacity and structure, including the 1991 Options for Change program and the 1998 Strategic Defence Review, have resulted in leaner armed forces, down in strength from 305.700 in 1990 to 204.700 in 2002. Despite this considerable reduction in force strength, the British contribution to foreign intervention and peacekeeping missions rose in the 1990s. The British participation in the Gulf War of 1991 was the second largest after the US. In 1993, the UK sent troops to Bosnia to protect the humanitarian aid delivery. In that case, even a rather limited contribution of 2.300 soldiers was problematic for Britain. Manpower shortage only allowed to form battalions ad hoc and by units belonging to different regiments. Moreover, the deployment took several weeks and the promises of 24-month intervals between renewed deployments were not fulfilled. Nevertheless, the British contribution to UNPROFOR steadily increased and came to constitute the largest deployment and movement of troops since the Gulf War. By the end of 1995 half of the Army was on operational duties abroad. When NATO took over from UNPROFOR in 1995, Britain supplied troops to IFOR and a year later also to SFOR. Already in the annual defence report of 1992, the British Armed Forces were given „a wider world role". The report stresses British „interests" and „international stability" as new objectives, while the defence of the British territory receive less emphasis. Peacekeeping, humanitarian interventions or complex emergency situations became the major challenge for the British Armed Forces in the post-Cold War era. The number of requests for British participation increased, and so did the costs. The political decision-making establishment stressed that the deployment of Armed Forces for supporting peace and fighting aggression anywhere in the world underlined the British commitment to match word with actions and suited the British self-image of a „civilised nation" (Frantzen, 2005, 99).

3. The Political Discourse on the Future of the Armed Forces and the Professional Soldier

In chapter 2 I described the profound changes in military doctrine and deployment practice, the British Armed Forces have experienced in the 1990s. In this chapter I seek to identify in more detail how the role image of the "democratic soldier" has been adapted and changed throughout the diverse governmental discourses on the future tasks of the military. What does the government expect from the British Armed Forces and how should the ideal soldier look like according to their views?

As a "global power of first order" the UK is in need of adequate Armed Forces to live up to the self-defined internationalist role concept and to fulfil its ambitious foreign policy aims. As a consequence, Prime Minister Tony Blair perceives the British military as a "major part of our foreign policy" (Blair, 2007,1). The political leadership expects the Armed Forces to be the main instrument for realizing the overall foreign policy aims. The British military should ideally represent the two forms of power which Blair identifies as crucial for realizing global security. Hard and soft power are the two poles or roles, the Armed Forces have to fulfil. "The new pioneers of soldiering in the 21st

century" - as Blair puts it (Blair, 2004, 2) - should not only win the wars Britain is engaged in, but also need to build peace and "win the heart and minds of the people" at home and abroad. Where terrorism and brutal and repressive regimes have to be overcome, successful nation-building becomes a crucial task which for Britain and the Armed Forces have to take part in it.

For his Labour government, Blair nevertheless clearly stated that stressing the relevance and need of peacekeeping and nation-building must not blur the need for a UK military which relies on strong capabilities to fight and win wars. While in the SDR of 1998 the role of the British military as "forces for good" was stressed, the political expectations gradually changed after September 11. Fighting terrorism and becoming engaged in preventing states from failing completely reiterated the military's combattance role. As an all-volunteer Armed Forces the individual soldiers must be commited to fulfill different tasks ranging from humanitarian support missions up to active engagement in war-fighting or combatting terrorism and risking their life. In the perception of the government, the troops have always remained a high degree of loyalty and strongly support the concept of an all-volunteer force. Moreover, the British soldiers do not want to become limited to a peacekeeping role which strongly contradicts their self-perceived ethos (Blair, 2007, 2).

The British Prime Minister opposes the public perception that the current deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan might be part of the problem and a clear exit strategy could be a life-saving strategy for the UK Armed Forces. In his perceptions this new form of terrorism deliberately builds on the victim sensitivity of the Western public opinion and aims at provoking a public debate at home which then forces the government to retrieve the military from these states. This is why the Armed Forces are in need of continuous support of the British public, Blair concludes. The British soldiers want the "people back home to understand their value not just their courage" (Blair, 2007, 1).

In the all-volunteer British Armed Forces, the individual soldier knows about the risks and potential sacrifices of his profession. The sense of professionalism creates the courage, dedication and discipline of the individual British soldier to make them indeed the "new pioneers of soldiering in the 21st century". Together they form a military which "delivers safety and security for us here and for countless other nations in the world" (Blair, 2004, 3). Politics highly value the services of the Armed Forces: "There are many things about this country which make us proud. But close to the top of any list must come our Armed Forces. Their professionalism and courage has earned respect right across the world. Their discipline and dedication make them first choice for peace-keeping and humanitarian operations. Again right round the world...Our forces are doing a magnificent job....It's one of the reasons why Britain counts in the world. Britain is seen to have values and be prepared to back them up" (Blair, 2000, 2). For the Labour government, on of the main reasons for Britain's strength and for Britain's ability to affect stability in the world, are the Armed Forces. The humanitarian intervention in Sierra Leone did not only bring new stability to the country, but "hope to a people who have suffered terribly. As a "principled nation", such types of "principled conflicts" force the government to enforce international law and protect the people when they are

mistreated by their own governments. A similar rhetoric is provided for war-fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. "We have justice and right on our side and a strategy to deliver", confesses Prime Minister Tony Blair in the case of Afghanistan (Blair, 2001, 2).

> "Democracies don't sponsor terrorism. No country that obeys the rule of law tortures and mains its citizens. No government that owes its position to the will of the people will spend billions of pounds on chemical, and biological and nuclear weapons whilst their people live in poverty. And these threats together produce chaos, because in the world in which we live, if there is chaos then the whole world system economically and politically breaks down. And this conflict here was a conflict of enormous importance, because Iraq was the test case of that. Iraq was a country whose regime and proven record of the use of weapons of mass destruction, not just their development, and a regime so abhorrent that as you will know better than you did before, literally hundreds of thousands of its citizens died in prison camps, in the ways of torture and repression. And if we had backed away from that, we would never have been able to confront this threat in the other countries where it exists. *And so the British soldier and the British Armed Forces in what you have done in winning the conflict in Iraq was immensly important"* (Blair, 2004, 1).

4.   The Parliamentary Debates and the Attitudes of the British Parties towards the Military

The two chambers of the British Parliament – the House of Commons and the House of Lords – regularly reflect on the role of the Armed Forces as part of their legislative task to exert oversight and scrutiny in the British system of checks and balances. Nevertheless, the increasing distance between society and the military as consequence of a considerable size reduction of the British military and several base closures is also mirrored in Parliament. Experts criticize that among the Members of Parliament, the expertise on defence and military matters has been considerable diminished.

In the debates on the British military, a strong overall support for the Armed Forces can be identified. Members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords frequently stress that they admire the professionalism, skills and bravery of the British Armed Forces (Lord Astor of Hever, 2007, Column 1382). Nevertheless, members of Parliament even from the majority party which provides the government frequently criticise the officials for not providing sufficient care and attention to the British soldiers stationed abroad. They therefore point to British covenant: The all-volunteer forces sacrifice their lives for their nation and defend national interests abroad, and are therefore privileged to expect the utmost support by the British government.

Moreover, a broad inter-parliamentary consensus on the role of the Armed Forces and the professional image of the British soldiers can be identified. For the MPs, Britain has to maintain a war fighting as well as a peacekeeping capability to live up to its own role internationalist role model. As a nation "that will act forcefully when the moral right in on our side", the Armed Forces are "surely one of the most capable...men and women

have served our national interests with professionalism, skill and bravery while continuously displaying ability to adapt and succeed" (House of Commons, British Army, 30.1.2007, Column 25WH). MPs such as Claire Curtis-Thomas (Labour) stress the duality in role and the flexibility to continuously adapt to new situations and threats. International terrorism and failing states are among the most severe challenges for the UK in ensuring global security. Members of Parliament have frequently reflected in their debates the changing role of the Armed Forces. While in the SDR, humanitarian intervention became the new type of mission, 5 years later new strategic interests need to be defended by force. For parliamentarians, the British Armed Forces are "not just a force for good", as the strategic analyst Lawrence Freedman summarized it in a debate with members of the Defence Select Committee (Freedman, 2007, 3). The newly defined strategic interests as consequence of the global terrorist threat and an increasing number of failing states have increased the pressure on politics and have frequently led to the world-wide deployment of Armed Forces. Iraq and Afghanistan are therefore the prototypes for the new forms of war-fighting which will keep the Armed Forces engaged abroad in the future.

Nevertheless, UK parliamentarians remain a critical corrective in the current debate on the over-stretch of the Armed Forces albeit their influence on the government has been limited. They support a more open debate on this issue and have invited the CDS as well as former commanders of the Armed Forces to discuss these questions with them. The Defence Select Committee expresses its concerns about the growing discrepancies between the political ambitions of the government and the existing military capabilities. They have received the support from former generals of the British Armed Forces who express their concerns that the current long-term deployments in areas of acute crisis such as in Afghanistan and Iraq are not matched by adequate force sizes. Quite contrary, the MOD announced further force cuts in their latest Defence White Paper of 2004. In consequence, the Defence Select Committee identifies the civil service as the main source of the problem. By blandifying impact reports of the military the rely on a "culture of dumbing down criticism" (House of Commons/Defence Committee, 2007, Q 181). The traditional apolitical culture of the British Armed Forces make it difficult for the officers and soldiers to voice their criticism – even the Chief of Defence Staff is expected to remain either loyal or to resign when he cannot cope with the political directives.

Parliamentarians also point to other root causes for the current problem of over-stretching the British Armed Forces. Allies within NATO do not provide sufficient forces to areas of crisis or are restricted in their deployment policies due to national laws. This habit of "ornamental presence", as one Lord puts it, cannot be understood from a British point of view. Parliamentarians frequently express their concern about rising numbers of retentions when the most skilled people leave the military due to personal frustrations. Contrary to the rather glamorous picture the Ministry of Defence draws of the Armed Forces, reports from the Defence Committee speak a different language and allow to identify some rifts in the civil-military relations in the UK which need to be examined in more detail.

In the debate on the SDR, members of the Defence Committee voiced their concern about the increased estrangement between the military and the wider society. While the general acceptance and valuation of the Armed Forces by the British public has not been an issue of concern, the widening gap between military and society has serious consequences for the Armed Forces. Recruiting young and skilled people and concurring with the civil employment market has become increasingly difficult for the British military, as the Defence Committee report concludes:

> "A changing role for the (Armed – S.W.) Services is running parallel with rapid changes in society which contribute to making the values of the Armed Forces seem less relevant and less acceptable both to many of those looking in from the outside and many of those inside looking out. Along with these cultural changes, the disappearance of the 'cradle to grave' ethos of the Armed Forces may mean that the perceived benefits of life in the Services may no longer be enough to outweigh the attractions of civil life (House of Commons, Select Committee on Defence, 2001, 1)."

From the perspective of the Committee it is therefore important that the Armed Forces address this problem of their reduced visibility in society in order to prepare the grounds for recruiting new people. "Yet the Services must accommodate social change to an extent which permits them to succeed in remaining attractive to the young people they are attempting to recruit" (Committee on Defence, 2001, 15). In this context, parliamentarians have also reflected issues of equality in the Armed Forces. Gender and more particular the integration of women into the Armed Forces in all positions remain a frequently debated topic. While the MoD civil servants, the Ministry of Defence and representatives of the Armed Forces stress their conviction of equal opportunity, limits to gender equality appear when the issue of of combat effectiveness is raised. Women remain excluded from the infantry and are not allowed on submarines due to health concerns. Parliamentarians such as Laura Moffatt have criticized the MoD and the Armed Forces for continuous discrimination on the basis of sex and gender.

5. Public Opinion: The Core Debates on the UK Military and the Democratic Soldier

An international survey of patriotism has found that Britain's Armed Forces are its greatest source of national pride. Researchers of the University of Chicago found that Britons ranked the military as their proudest achievement when asked to say which of ten choices gave them the strongest national feelings (Kettle, 2005,11).[3] While the public in general strongly supports the British Armed Forces, the image of the democratic soldier has suffered over recent accuses of torture and abuses of prisoners of war in Iraq. The "shocking images of British soldiers' brutality" has led to a media debate about the proper role of the British Armed Forces in missions abroad. This breakdown of military discipline received strong criticism by the British media. Politics and the Armed Forces

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3   The finding is part of a 22-nation survey condcuted by the university's national opinion research centre.

reacted immediately by jailing and dismissing these soldiers. Several members of the Armed Forces have faced courts martials. While these reports shocked the public, the Armed Forces in general receive high public support. Traditional parades, such as "trooping the colours" at the Queen's birthday, are widely broadcasted and perceived by the British public.

Nevertheless, the Britons have become more critical when it comes to troop deployment abroad. While an overwhelming majority strongly favoured the war against Argentine over the Falkland Islands in 1982, less than half of the British population supported NATO's war in Kosovo. Despite the fact, that more than 80 percent of the people supported the government's view that September 11 has changed the world forever, support for the war in Iraq was seriously diminished when the media discovered that the political leadership had not told the truth about the nature of the Iraqi threat. September 11 and the rising fear of global terrorism swifted public opinion and led them to support the war in Afghanistan – 67 percent voted in favour of military action. Defence and fighting terrorism suddenly became the most important feature in public opinion polls (Mori, 2001). Four years later, the majority of the British public expressed a strong desire to immediately withdraw the troops from Iraq irrespective of the current security situation. Criticism does not target the Armed Forces, but is merely directed to the political leadership and its ineffective crisis management. As a father of a soldier puts it: "I didn't support the war but obviously you support the troops. They have got a job to do and they sign up to do it." For many British experts, the invasion of Iraq also has long-term consequences. "It may well be much harder to get the British public to back other overseas adventures by the military because of what's happened in Iraq (BBC News, 2007, 1)."

Critics argue that British security policy urgently needs rethinking. The current military interventionism is neither necessary for Britain's defence, nor even beneficial to it. According to Robinson, the current policy "undermines our security and imposes undesirable costs on our nation" (Robinson, 2006, 1).Some British military experts demand a clearer burden-sharing between the army and civilian institutions. Once the initial military task is over, the responsibilities must pass to the international community and their experts in civil affairs and administration (Guthrie, 2001, 3). The backlash of British interventionism on its own security situation at home and for the troops abroad becomes increasingly prominent in the public media discourse. Moreover, the British media has increasingly become a battlefield for former soldiers, but also for the Chief of Defence Staff Richard Dannatt who openly criticized the Blair government for not fulfilling the military covenant. Former soldiers and particularly the large number of war victims have called upon the government to stand by the military covenant, a pledge given to British troops that they will receive decent medical and social care and support in return for their sacrifices. The apolitical traditions of the Armed Forces has become questioned and the criticism of the soldiers deployed abroad is increasingly voiced publicly, e.g through using the internet and writing blogs expressing the dissatisfaction of combatting soldiers. The media challenges the continuous relevance of this apolitical custom and proposes to overcome this outdated tradition (Hastings, 2005 1).

While public opinion in general supports the military covenant, it remains reluctant when it comes to the question of additional resources allocations to increase the defense budget. Nevertheless, the intense media debate on the problem of the overstretching the British Armed Forces serves as an indicator of a growing gap between the political leadership and the Armed Forces. Public opinion resides on the side of the military supporting their concerns of becoming a frequently used tool of British foreign policy without receiving adequate funds and equipment to fulfill this task. According to the media, there should be a debate over the future role of the British Armed Forces before further cutting the troops (Independent, 2004, 30).

> "Yes, the end of the Cold War means we need far fewer tanks to fight a mobile campaign across the plains of central Europe. But the experience of Iraq and Afghanistan suggests that we still need mobile armour. And even more, we need the boots on the ground to keep the peace and build a nation. Cutting four infantry battalions hardly seems the bet way of preparing for Tony Blair's vision of a Britain that will stretch out its armed fist to the world's trouble spots (Independent, 2004, 30."

While the government stress the professionalism and uniqueness of the British Armed Forces, soldiers and their commanders instrumentalize the media to keep the Britons informed about their growing opposition about current deployment practices. This also involves the question to what extent the Armed Forces are equipped and sufficiently suitable to provide for post-conflict security and adequately ensure progress in nation-building. Max Hastings, a leading Guardian journalist, questions the adequacy of deploying foreign troops for ensuring security in Iraq. "Combat units are inherently unsuitable tools for imposing law and order", he reasons (Guardian, 2006, 29). His position is supported by military ranks: CDS Richard Dannatt went public and called for rapid exit of British troops from Iraq. His public statement received strong applause by the British soldiers stationed abroad.

6. NATO, ESDP and the United States: To What Extent Do They Shape the British Armed Forces?

The special relationship towards the remaining superpower – the United States – remains a core constitutive feature of British security policy and also an underlying rationale for the organisation of the Armed Forces. This has also been reflected in the recent White Papers where a larger military operation without the United States is virtually excluded. For the UK, it remains critical to maintain the military means of being able to cooperate with US armed forces (Dandeker, 1999, 364). As recent common operations demonstrate, the UK has been eager to become the most reliable partner of the US and sought to gain access to the level of strategic operations and command. Nevertheless, the differences in the soldiering practice is frequently stressed. The political leadership expects to British soldiers deployed on foreign soil to "act as forces for good" in their relation to local civil society and to win "the hearts and minds" of the people.

Despite the fact, that after September 11, the war-fighting capacities of the Armed Forces have been reiterated, the image of the benign soldier remains to be cultivated by British politics.

By taking the lead in NATO peace-support operations, Britain managed to secure its central position, contributed to NATO´s institutional reforms and helped maintain the continued relevance of the international organisation. NATO and the newly formed Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) were being perceived as guarantors against small conflicts: this provided a rationale for maintaining the corps level within the British Armed Forces. Even though the ARRC was created as an instrument of defence, not intervention, it was also perceived as an instrument against potential security challenges from the "New Europe" and a guarantor of NATO´s continued importance. Leading officers saw the British role in the ARRC as decisive for preserving British influence within NATO.

The interest in a European security and defence policy results from the UK's attempt to balance European and US interests and to become the mitigator between both sides. In December 2003, Britain ratified the European Security Strategy (ESS), which stressed the existence of a common set of European values and interests (Haugevik, 2005, 45). Nevertheless, the Labour government has so far left little doubt that the US and NATO remain the UK's key security and defence partners. In summary, alliances have always been a cornerstone for British defence policy. The "special relationship" with the United States have been reiterated in the aftermath of September 11. Nevertheless, part of the current overstretch problem results from the cooperation in alliances. While other NATO partners remain more restricted in their deployment practice, the UK has become heavily engaged due to its ambitions of remaining the most prominent partner of the United States. The strong reliance on alliances has also be reflected in the on-going restructuring process of the British Armed Forces. British politics expect the Armed Forces to quickly adapt to newly formed coalitions and closely cooperate with the allies – this also impacts on the image of the soldier who has to be increasingly flexible, extremely professional and able to fulfill a vast array of tasks and missions.

Conclusion: The Image of the British Soldier and Issues for Further Debate

The Armed Forces have become the UK's most visible sign for living up to their role as "global power of first order" and also the main instrument for realizing these rather ambitious foreign policy aims. The British internationalist role model has recently led to frequent deployments of the Armed Forces around the globe. "Accustomed to use a larger map" to defend British security interests, the diverse mission ranged from war-fighting missions such as in Afghanistan and Iraq to humanitarian aid missions and peacekeeping tasks, for example in Sierra Leone. The British Armed Forces are an all-volunteer force and an executive army under strict civilian control - from a theoretical point of view the civil-military relationship is organised according to the highest democratic standards. The

end of the Cold War resulted in considerable reductions of the Armed Forces. As a consequence, the all-volunteer forces have become furthermore estranged from the wider society. While the overall acceptance of the Armed Forces in the British public remains high and a strong sense of patriotism in public opinion continuously leads to high rates of support when troops are stationed abroad, the gap between society and the military has been widened. This developlment confronts the British military with considerable problems: Attracting and recruiting young people has become difficult. As the "cradle to grave"-ethos which constituted the identity of the British soldier has gradually disappeared and "soldiering" is being perceived as profession for a limited amount of time, the military is increasingly confronted with the challenge to attract young people and offer them education and skills which can also be used in their later on in civil lives. Interestingly enough, perceptions about the nature and range of these problems seem to differ between military people and politicians. While in particular the Members of Parliament have frequently reflected on the increasing estrangement of the British Armed Forces and society, leading officers of the Armed Forces point to the fact that young soldiers learn and internalize certain values when becoming soldiers. From a military point of view, these soldiers will be "assets" to British society because of their discipline and professionalism which helps to stabilize a society which has become out of touch with core British values. However, more research needs to be done on the differences in values and perceptions between society and the military on this matter. In summary, the focus on political and public discourses demonstrated a broad consensus about the role of the Armed Forces and the ideal British soldier. Differences in opinion occur when it comes to the question of deployment. Here, the members of Parliament, the political leadership and the civil service differ in their perception whether the Armed Forces have been stretched or are already in the stage of being over-stretched.

Nevertheless, the growing gap in British civil-military relations is connected to to the continuous and long-term deployments of a large number of troops. Critics from the opposition, such as the Liberal Democrats, point to the National Audit Office study which says that the forces have been operating beyond planning level for over 7 years. The recent results of the National Audit Office underline the problematic trend of the Armed Forces of being overstretched and under-manned (National Audit Office, 2006). The all-volunteer British Armed Forces face increasing problems of recruitment. Explanations range from demographic factors such as age-groups with low birth rates to competition with the civilian sector or the increasing risks in complex emergency situations and war-fighting operations. Defence business is making it increasingly hard to recruit and retain both the number and the quality of the people the Armed Forces need. Currently, the Army is some 8.000 people under strength, and the Royal Navy seeks some 1.000 additional forces. It seems unlikely that this will change until 2008. The government seeks to solve these problems by increasingly rely on reservist forces.

The recent statement of the CDS Sir Richard Dannatt who openly opposed the political establishment on the future of British deployment in Iraq and who received strong applause from the soldiers abroad and at home, demonstrates the growing gap between the political establishment and the British Armed Forces about questions of troop deployment. While the democratic standard of civilian control of the military

cannot be put into doubt, the question of participatory rights and the opportunity to reach political attention should be taken more seriously. The public debate in the media points into this direction. Nevertheless, these debates serve as important indicators for the gap in civil-military relations about the proper role of the Armed Forces in the future. Former CDS Lord Guthrie recently argued that combat effectiveness needs to come before issues of "social engineering", indirectly criticizing the government's policy of deploying Armed Forces for post-conflict nation-building.

CDS Richard Dannatt also commented on what he perceived as increasingly estranged relations between members of the Armed Forces and the British people. The Chief of Defence Staff believes that core Christian values are under threat in Britain and that Islamist visions are on the rise in his home country. The long-term troop deployment in Iraq further worsens the situation. This statement might serve as an indicator about the differences in values between the British multicultural society and the Armed Forces where the Chief of Defence Staff stresses the continuous relevance of the Christian ethics despite renewed efforts by the civilian political leadership to overcome the recruitment and retention problems by employing more British people with an immigrant background. Again, more detailed research needs to be undertaken to find out about the differences in values between the British society and the Armed Forces.

The carefully constructed image of the "forces for good" has suffered in the course of the Iraqi war and post-conflict reconstruction efforts undertaken by the British Armed Forces. The Strategic Defence Review stressed the role of the Armed Forces as "forces for good" who are trained to fulfil diverse tasks ranging from special operations in combat situations to disaster relief efforts. The experiences in Afghanistan and more recently in Iraq demonstrate the difficulties of peace-making and sustainable post-conflict reconstruction. The image of the post-modern, professional soldier seriously suffered after the accusations of torturing Iraqi prisoners of war and the shocking images of the brutality of British soldiers. While in general, the respect for of the "democratic soldier" in British public opinion remains high, nevertheles, the image of the "forces for good" was considerably damaged over these recent incidents.

In summary, the image of the democratic soldier has undergone a continuous adaptation after the end of the Cold War. The overall image immediately started to change in the aftermath of dissolution of the Soviet Union. While the internationalist role model has always been part of Armed Forces' identity, defending British and NATO territory by nuclear and conventional means had become the main rationale of British defence doctrine during the Cold War. The defence doctrine and the image of the British soldiers rapidly changed after the end of the Cold War. The increasing number of humanitarian interventions allowed Britain to resume its international role model. As a consequence, New Labour was able to draft an other image for the Armed Forces which should live up to their role as "forces for good". The tasks of defence diplomacy and "winning the hearts and minds of people" in war-torn countries became part and parcel of this new image of the democratic British soldier. September 11 was very much perceived in the UK as considerable water-shed. Again, the image of the soldier needed to undergo further adjustments. The war-fighting capabilities which have in fact never be

relinquished, but had been less stressed in the White Papers of the MoD in the early 1990s, were reiterated. Prime Minister Tony Blair therefore identified two parallel roles of the British Armed Forces: Power projection and war-fighting as well as peacekeeping capabilities. The British soldier has to be extremely professional, flexible and able to fulfill a wide range of tasks in war zones and post-conflict scenarios.

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