Cox, M. and Oliver, T. (2006) 'Security Policy in an Insecure World', in Patrick Dunleavy et al eds, *Developments in British Politics*, **London: Palgrave Macmillan**

Britain's approach to the war in Iraq appeared to further fuel feelings that Britain's commitment was always to the US and not to Europe or other allies…. For Blair the decision to follow the Bush Administration in attacking Iraq was very much a result of his own personal convictions that the action was morally correct and necessary and it also reflected the concern to ensure that Britain always sides with the US (Wallace and Oliver, 2005) …. The British government stood alongside the US, but it did so with a deeply divided country and amid poor relations with many of its European neighbors and international allies…. British security policy has long placed a close relationship with the US as a central guiding principal for Britain's place in the world and its relations with Europe. The experiences since 11 September have not radically changed this; they have indeed appeared to have 'reaffirmed the vice-like grip of Atlanticism on Britain's identity' (Dunne 2004, 908). But this helps to highlight three sets of continuing tensions which have characterised British foreign, security and defence policy in the era of post 11 September:

First, in both the Cold War and the post Cold War world Britain's security interests have been advanced through a close relationship with the US. This relationship is characterised by Britain offering private counsel and support in the hope that US power can be harnessed and steered. The former British Ambassador to the US, Christopher Mayer, reports that when he was appointed to the post Blair's senior adviser, Jonathan Powell, told him "We want you to get up the arse of the White House and stay there" (Meyer 2005: xx). Peter Riddell summed up this general approach more genteelly as being one of 'hug them close' (Riddell 2003). Blair's Premiership seems set to be defined by his following such a policy, particularly with regard to Iraq.

Second, while hugging the Americans close has had its associated problems being close to Europe, it also provokes serious domestic problems along with questions about the future of Britain's international position. In an EU of 25 member states [now 27] Britain is no longer seen as quite the 'awkward partner' it once was (George 1990). It can, however, be argued that Britain's relations with the EU under Blair have been one of 'missed opportunities' ranging from staying outside the euro to institutional reform to garnering stronger public support for Europe (Smith 2005). As a leading international player Britain brings to the development of European foreign and security policy qualities it fails to bring to economic or social discussions. Yet, here too there remain key tensions most notably over the future of NATO. While determined to see a more developed role for Europe in the world backed up by a genuine defence capability, the UK would be loathe to be bound by the EU on issues where it feels a strong national interest. In this sense the UK's commitment to European foreign and defence policy remains 'Janus faced'.

Third, the Blair and Bush doctrines have much in common. The US, Britain and the EU have all adapted to meet some of the new challenges of post-Cold War security threats. Profound differences exist, however, in how the three view the issue of power and its application as demonstrated most potently in the works of Cooper (2003) and Kagan (2003) (Cox, 2005). That these differences also extend to a whole array of issues ranging from the social to military spheres bodes ill for the idea that Britain can continue to provide a bridge across the Atlantic, or some might add across the English Channel. Europe's inclinations towards softer power versus the Bush Administrations preference for hard power and Blair's attempt to mix the two have posed serious strains to British foreign, security and defence policy.

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