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HOW EUROPEAN NATIONS USE THEIR FORCES IN THE MODERN WORLD AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR FORCE DESIGN

By Brigadier NAC Baverstock, Late R Irish

INTRODUCTION

1. Power is a complicated notion. Its accumulation, form, deployment and exploitation is often as subtle as it can be raw. The relationship between the ability to influence events and the possession of coercive capability has been explored in great depth by Nye in his work on soft power.¹ What is clear from Nye’s analysis is that Machiavelli’s feral, realist world has been replaced by an (admittedly imperfect) rule-based system of international relations. The growth of International Organisations and global interdependence have brought increased levels of sophistication to the exercise of power and created new levers and opportunities for the various actors to exercise influence. These changes have led to speculation that the nation state is in decline and even that, as Jan Aart Scholte has suggested, “the Westphalian system is already past history”.² This conclusion is subject to widespread debate as academic theorists struggle to fit globalisation into a theoretical context.³ Invariably, study tends to centre on examination of either the largest or the very weakest powers within the international system. However, the way in which small, developed, sophisticated states operate provides additional insights into how power functions, how nations exploit the system and what drives their policies and decisions.

2. This study examines the way in which the smaller European nations of the Western Alliance interact over security issues in order to better understand the dynamics and motives behind their defence policy decisions and to provide insights into the nature of the international system.

THE MODERN ENVIRONMENT

3. The modern security environment can only be examined in the context of globalisation, the growth of international organisations and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This latter event effectively ended the ideological battle between the two superpowers leaving the field open to the development of global economic interdependence based upon market-based capitalism. This section examines the consequences of these changes in four main areas: moral and ethical values, international law, the meaning of power and security and the nature of the international community before discussing their effects on the international environment and European security dynamics.

MORAL AND ETHICAL VALUES

4. The period since 1945 has seen a growing emphasis on and changes in moral and ethical values, which are increasingly being reflected in national policy declarations. The British Foreign Secretary announced in 1997 that the UK’s “foreign policy must have an ethical dimension and must support the demands of other peoples for the democratic rights on which we insist for ourselves.”⁴ The US Security Strategy of 2006 also has a distinctly moral tone, declaring that “the goal of our Statecraft is to help create a world of democratic, well-governed states that can meet the needs of their citizens and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system.”⁵

⁴ www.guardian.co.uk/world/1997/may/12/indonesia.ethicalforeignpolicy, Accessed on 12 May 2008
5. This shift in moral and ethical thinking has complicated roots. The most obvious is that the liberal principles on which international organisations are predominantly founded have helped create a more internationalist order, even if states working within it act in a realist way. Other factors are also at play: a growing democratisation agenda by Western nations, the development of governance theory emphasising liberal market economics, the impact of the media and real-time reporting and the growing effect of public pressure on democratic governments to react to disasters and injustices abroad. Importantly, there is much more emphasis on synergy and mutual interest. International relations is no longer considered the zero-sum game by its practitioners that it once was.

**INTERNATIONAL LAW**

6. Accompanying these developments, and partly because of them, is a growing framework of international law based upon customary law, international agreements, conventions, charters, bilateral or multilateral agreements and protocols. This has provided mechanisms for resolving disputes peacefully and relegated inter-state war to an exceptional event rather than the realist construct in which anarchy and conflict is a normal condition. As Wiesburd observed; “there is strong reason to conclude that the international legal system limits the circumstances in which interstate force can be used …. and that customary international law imposes effective, if restricted limits on interstate war,”

7. The genesis of these developments is less important than their effect which has been to start challenging the sovereignty of the state over its internal affairs. A whole host of protocols and initiatives such as the UN Declaration on Human Rights and the International Criminal Court are shifting the standards of accountability with which governments are held responsible within and to the international community. There are signs that a consensus is beginning painfully and controversially to emerge. The report by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty in December 2001 judged that if states failed in their responsibility to protect their citizens, then “the principle of non-intervention yields to the international responsibility to protect”. Conditions for humanitarian intervention are now actively discussed. Tony Blair took the issue head on in laying out the ‘Blair Doctrine’ in Chicago in 1999. In 2005, the World Summit resolution announced that “we are prepared to take action through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII … should peaceful means be inadequate.” A note of caution is necessary here. While these changes represent a perceptible trend, they remain controversial, problematic and reversible and are laying challenges to both Just War doctrine and international law. As Spence points out, it also leads to a dilemma on whether one has a responsibility to assist or a duty to protect. Intervention is “a norm more honoured in the breach than the observance” with the result that it is inconsistently applied and is usually based on the national interests of the intervening nations rather than overriding ethical and moral values.

**THE MEANING OF “SECURITY”**

8. For Western nations, a key consequence of these developments has been an adjustment in the meaning of security. Previously, nations defined security in largely military terms based upon defence and the use of force. Although the Washington Treaty of 1949, which laid the foundations of NATO, made provision for economic, political and technological components, the military component organised for territorial defence was the overwhelmingly dominant arm of the alliance. Since the end of the cold war perceptions of security have broadened. Direct military threats to the territorial integrity of nation states are downplayed and new issues have become defined in security terms. For example, the UK Security Strategy of March 2008 states:

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9 UN General Assembly, 2005 World Summit Outcome, 15 September 2005, Section 139.
“The Cold War threat has been replaced by a diverse and interconnected set of threats and risks, which affect the United Kingdom directly and have the potential to undermine wider international stability. They include international terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, conflicts and failed states, pandemic and trans-national crime. These and other threats and risks are driven by a diverse and interconnected set of underlying factors including climate change, competition for energy, poverty and poor governance, demographic changes and globalisation.”

9. There have been two main consequences of this reinterpretation of security. Firstly, it has increased the tools through which influence, if not power can be exerted. Intervention no longer automatically means the deployment of military power but is characterised by the “comprehensive approach” which emphasises political, diplomatic, economic and social factors as much as military means. Secondly, interdependence and the adverse effects that failing states can have on regional and global stability is causing the international community to re-examine and redefine what it expects governments to deliver and to discuss how to discipline nations failing to meet those standards. The 2005 World Summit went so far as to say that “we are prepared to take action through the Security Council, in accordance with Charter, including Chapter VII … should peaceful means be inadequate.”

10. A necessary corollary to the changing notions of security has been a change in the way that power is interpreted. Nye’s definition of soft power as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments” broadens the concept of power in a way that allows a far more sophisticated range of techniques to be brought to bear ranging from coercion through persuasion and influence. It also sets up immeasurably complex interactions between the instruments available. Scale, military and economic strength, political skill, public and private diplomacy, personality, culture and innumerable other factors are all interwoven to create an impression in the minds of players of the relative strengths and weaknesses of a nation. Thus, a nation that uses its armed forces to forge alliances or support coalition operations can gain wider political influence within the world community. The possession of nuclear weapons by the UK and France is often defended on the grounds that it justifies their seats on the UN Security Council and secures their place at the top table in arms control and proliferation negotiations.

11. A consequence of this growing complexity is that power becomes difficult to measure objectively, not least because the linkages between its components are complex, often ethereal and rarely explicit. Nye shies away from how power might be measured, concentrating, instead, on the factors that contribute to it. What he does point out is how the exercise of one form of power can have paradoxical effects that reduce the overall power of a nation through the adverse effects of other forms of influence. He contends, for example, that the use of military force in Iraq has led to a net reduction in the overall power of the US and its loss of influence over some allies, notably France and Germany.

CHANGES IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

12. Globalisation and the accompanying contextual changes that have occurred have also changed the nature of interaction within the international community. States still retain
sovereignty, the monopoly of violence within their own borders and the right to opt in or out of international business, albeit at some expense. As Garnet argued, states still exist as independent entities but to reap the benefits of globalisation they frequently surrender, voluntarily and temporarily, a degree of independence of action. However, understanding the role, context and nature of the modern state within the international system is crucial to any analysis of their behaviour. Hedley Bull viewed the international system as a society of states displaying “all three of the elements singled out by the Hobbesian, Kantian and Grotian traditions: the element of war and struggle for power among states, the element of transnational solidarity and conflict, cutting across the divisions among states, and the element of cooperation and regulated intercourse among states.” He recognised that an international society of states had developed based on common interests, rules and institutions, drawing his definition of institutions widely as “a set of habits and practices shaped towards the realisation of common goals” and listing them as “the balance of power, international law, the diplomatic mechanism, the managerial system of the great powers and war.”

13. Since 1977 when Bull was writing, the evolution of a more developed normative international legal and moral framework suggests that a liberal tradition is also present in international relations. This does not negate Bull’s analysis but it allows for a wider set of factors to be taken into account. Intervention as a result of domestic popular political pressure and simple altruism are now key components in any intervention decision. Nor should the effect of personal moral conviction of leaders and opinion formers be discounted. To do so would be to deny them any form of personal moral compass. Thus, and this is the basis of any subsequent analysis, understanding the behaviour of states in the modern international system is an amalgam of both the realist and liberalist world views, looked at in a constructivist methodological context.

14. The credibility and capability of a nation’s armed forces, its willingness to use them and its reliability as an ally all add weight to a country’s influence but do not explain how military capability reads across to other forms of power and influence. To elicit political influence requires using forces in non-traditional ways. The most obvious example is defence diplomacy in which exchanges, training and confidence-building military-to-military links have a political purpose of defusing tension between adversaries and cementing alliance relations. However, political influence can go even further. At an alliance level, NATO has used expansion as a political tool to help shape the political course of former Warsaw Pact countries who wish to accede. Of the 5 accession criteria for former Warsaw Pact nations laid down by the 1995 study on NATO enlargement, only one was military in nature while the other four comprised political and governance conditions. Thus NATO aimed to use accession as a carrot for achieving standards of governance and democracy rather than outright military capability. This does not just show the political use that NATO has made of accession, but is an undeclared shift in the nature of the alliance in which quality of political governance has become, almost by default, a defining purpose of membership: a long way from the simple defensive function originally envisaged.

15. There are four further features that are unique to the developed Western nations that shape their defence policy decisions and the structure and use of their armed forces: the complexity of the European security architecture; the differing

20 ibid, p 71.
speeds of development within that architecture; the discretionary nature of participation and the empowerment that alliances provide to smaller nations.

**COMPLEXITY**

16. Western and European security is now provided through an increasingly complex set of relationships including NATO, the EU, the UN and a host of other organisations and bilateral relationships - not all of them military. These structural relationships are further complicated by the different security perspectives and geostrategic position of each constituent nation. It is possible to identify a core group of Western European nations including the UK, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium and Denmark for whom the transition to the modern interpretation of security is most complete. There are also nations on the ‘periphery’ who still have physical security issues of one form or another. Finland and the Eastern European nations still feel the physical presence of Russia. Italy, Spain and Greece have a southern perspective influenced by migration and instability from North Africa. Similarly, Canada and Norway have security concerns to their north, exacerbated recently by the potential opening up of the North West Passage, the oil potential of the Arctic and fisheries protection off their coasts.23

**VARIABLE GEOMETRY**

17. The different speeds at which collective concepts are moving forward within the European security architecture has given rise to what has commonly become known as a “variable geometry”. The EU security strategy published in 2003, lists the key threats as terrorism, WMD proliferation, regional conflicts, failed states and organised crime.24 In contrast, the NATO security strategy (last updated at the Washington Summit of 1999) is clear that Article V and collective defence remains its most fundamental mission although it acknowledges a widening of the security tasks.”25

18. In part, these differing perspectives have allowed a design hysteresis26 to creep into European security structures, particularly within NATO whose capabilities and organisation lag behind the changing circumstances with the result that it is no longer optimally designed for the modern environment. Even strong supporters of NATO such as Harlan Ullman recognise that “most member states have not realigned military capability with the promised commitment to cope with out of area operations”27 and that “NATO must streamline and update its organisation and structure, particularly the supporting committees in Brussels.”28

**DISCRETIONARY PARTICIPATION**

19. Despite collective security agreements, for Western European nations, any involvement in overseas operations is effectively elective, not only regarding participation, but also over the scale and nature of contributions. For the European nations which, as a group are unable to mount complex, large scale operations, participation of any sort is often seen as enough, provided the US is committed to the operation. This still causes tensions as the well publicised disagreements over NATO nation’s contributions to operations in Afghanistan show.29

**SMALL STATE EMPOWERMENT**

20. Larger states still dominate the international order through the scale of their economic, political, military, cultural, intellectual and population resources which gives them an independence of action not available to small ones.30 However, the development of mature, well regulated and disciplined European and trans-Atlantic bodies has

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28 ibid, p 56.
30 Kegley, op. cit., p 593.
created opportunities for smaller states to wield influence disproportionate to their size if they play the system skilfully. This should not be overstated; size still matters, but the rules and conventions of international organisations, the ability to form voting blocks in order to balance larger powers and growing recourse to international adjudication provide significant levers that benefit small states. Membership automatically confers a right to be heard. In the United Nations General Assembly every state has equal status, regardless of its size and power, each with one seat and one vote. In NATO, every member has a seat on the North Atlantic Council. Procedural rules require allies to consult equally between all members and, because decisions have to be unanimous, small nations can hold up decisions and encourage large nations to court them for support. Turkey has effectively blocked military cooperation between the EU and NATO by not agreeing to allow NATO officials to meet or exchange sensitive information with the EU unless Cyprus is excluded from the arrangement. Within the EU, where qualified majority voting applies, small states are at an advantage as the voting system is weighted in favour of the less populous countries.

21. These levers can be moral as well as physical. For example, the Nordic nations have been able to carve out niche roles in influencing peacekeeping outcomes at a political as well as a military level through their development of an image of honest broker - what Professor Spence, quoting Mary Baker Fox, describes as the creation of a ‘rectitude base’. The relationship between a rectitude base and military power shows how one form of power can translate into another in that the acceptability of intervention is often only possible if the interveners have an internationally respected reputation for strong domestic, ethical, political and behavioural values.

22. Having examined the way the international environment is evolving, it is now necessary to turn to the consequences of these changes for the way that states, and particularly the small European states, operate within it.

EUROPEAN SECURITY DYNAMICS

PARTICIPATION AND FREE RIDING

23. Within the modern international environment, one logical option for small states would be to free ride on the back of the security provided by the group. Defence would be seen as a free public good in which “the benefits of the membership were non-rival and non-excludable. Their existence benefits all equally, regardless of the numbers of beneficiaries and without reference to the cost.” However, in their 1999 study into NATO burden sharing, Sandler and Hartley found that a joint product model provided a more satisfactory explanation. This model generalises the free public good model by introducing more factors and widening the benefits of collective defence to include specific national goals including domestic opinion, territorial expansion, coercion of neighbours and countering terrorism, crime and drug trafficking. They showed that between 1956 and 1987, NATO members tended to meet their commitments and maintained their optimum defence levels but between 1991 and 1999, a change in the political economy of NATO occurred which shifted the defence burden from Europe to the USA and, within Europe, from the smaller to the larger powers. Despite this shift, they concluded that the scale of change did not amount to free riding and that the joint product model still applied.

24. Since then, this trend has deepened with the average proportion of GDP spent on defence by the European nations of NATO falling from 2.09% in 1997 to 1.74% in 2006. This shortfall in defence effort applies also to the EU which remains woefully short of meeting the headline goals agreed at the 1999 Helsinki Summit. The EU

31 Garnett, op. cit.
34 Eg, Norway’s role as a peace-broker between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers.
35 Discussions with Professor Spence, July 2008.
Council review of ESDP progress in May 2008 could not avoid noting the shortfalls in force protection, deployability and information superiority. Two things are noteworthy in the EU case. Firstly, leaving aside some key enabling capabilities, the problem is less one of defence expenditure as the willingness of nations to commit already existing forces to the EU pool. Secondly, (and here there is commonality with NATO) the defaults on defence spending commitments are not confined to one or two nations but are a widespread trend. Nations are acting as a herd thus avoiding being singled out for individual criticism and corrective sanction.

25. Whilst the shortfalls indicate a distinct reprioritisation of political choices by European governments, the fact that there has not been a total collapse in defence spending suggests that defence still follows the joint product model and is not yet a free public good. What European nations are doing is to manage the scale and nature of their contributions against a complex set of domestic and international considerations in a way that optimises the balance between the security and political benefits of participation compared to the penalties they pay for underachievement.

DRIVING FACTORS

26. Traditionally, nations have avoided free-riding because, ultimately, they do not trust their allies to defend them. This may still apply to nations on the periphery but it does not apply to nations in the European core. But three other reasons can be identified that encourage participation: the desire to exercise power and influence, personal ambition and support to the industrial base.

POWER AND INFLUENCE

27. The first and most fundamental factor that sustains a small state’s defence effort is the desire of the leadership to optimise its power and influence. To be taken seriously, a state has to be seen as a credible and committed participant. Without this, its influence will remain limited and it will tend to be ignored outside the official procedural decision making processes. In some cases, exclusion can be formal. Nations can be stripped of voting rights or even a seat at the table if they fail to meet their commitments. Article 46 of the Treaty of Lisbon dealing with the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU states that

“If a participating member state no longer fulfils the criteria or is no longer able to meet the commitments … the Council may adopt a decision suspending the participation of the Member State concerned.”

28. In other cases, exclusion can be informal and a nation penalised either by having its views ignored or being left out of the informal discussions and working groups that shape solutions in advance of formal alliance decision making procedures. Andreatta and Hill point out that in 1994, Italy, following years of “managing to ensure its security while not paying the full economic and political costs that this entailed” found itself excluded from NATO’s Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia despite its proximity to the crisis and the adverse economic and political effects it was suffering. It was only after considerable protest and threats of non-cooperation that it was finally admitted in 1996. Menotti assesses that as a result of this exclusion Italy changed its behaviour, becoming a more proactive and committed participant in NATO to avoid future humiliations and give it the right to exercise the influence to which it felt entitled.

PERSONAL AMBITION

29. An often overlooked reason that small states remain committed to defence burden sharing is personal ambition. Often the only way for large


43 The Contact Group originally comprised UK, France, Germany, USA and Russia.

personalities from small countries to strut upon the world stage is through appointments in international organisations. Thus, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer is a considerably bigger beast as the Secretary General of NATO than he was as the Netherlands’ Foreign Minister. Luxembourg and Malta have the same number of EU Commissioners as France, Germany and the UK. In May 2008 The Economist reported that the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, was actively lobbying for positions as either the first permanent President of the European Council or at NATO in preference to his current post, suggesting how attractive these appointments can be to politicians and officials from smaller nations. The report suggests that Rasmussen has adopted an internationalist tinge to boost his bids, including hosting a climate summit in Copenhagen in 2009, launching an international commission to create jobs in Africa and renewing the drive to take Denmark into the Euro. Being seen to be an enthusiastic internationalist and to make national policy decisions to prove it will tempt individuals to shape the policies and outlook of their nations towards the international institutions they aspire to lead.

30. Personal interests also affect policy at lower levels of officialdom. International institutions provide far greater and often more interesting career opportunities than would be available at a purely national level. The GE/NL Corps gives the Dutch a one in two rotation at Corps command when the size of their army cannot field a division. Before its abandonment, the Multinational Division Centre (MND(C)) provided Belgium and the Netherlands with a one-in-four shot at Divisional command. NATO has a large civilian administrative, executive and technical component and many people have built whole careers in these institutions.

DEFENCE INDUSTRY

31. It is difficult for nation-states to sustain a significant defence industrial base or to pursue foreign arms sales unless it maintains capable armed forces that are using the arms manufactured in that country. The link between the two was recognised explicitly by the UK and France in the 1998 St Malo agreement when they declared that “Europe needs strengthened armed forces that can react rapidly to the new risks, and which are supported by a strong and competitive European defence industry and technology.” National governments also keep some industrial capacities artificially maintained to protect capabilities that they consider vital to national security. For example, the UK and France maintain nuclear expertise within their research and industrial establishments. Within the EU, ESDI has an important commercial component. Quite apart from the collaborative commercial opportunities they represent, The European Defence Technological and Industrial Base strategy, the European Defence Research and Technology strategy and the European Armaments strategy, all embedded within the European Defence Agency, are seen as vital to the creation of an independent European security capability.

32. Whilst most significant defence manufacturers are now organised around multinational companies and consortia, many multinational firms are still regarded as having national roots, not least through stock exchange listings, national regulatory and legal frameworks and employment opportunities. Taylor points out that national European Governments have remained particularly protectionist of these companies and have avoided handing full control of defence procurement policy to the EU. They have done this by “steering their co-operative efforts to bodies outside the EC/EU, notably the Western European Armaments Group… a majority of EU governments remain committed to the principle of juste retour in collaborative projects, and to restricting national competitions to preferred (usually national) suppliers. All European Governments seem to want at least balanced trade on their defence account.” While it would be an exaggeration to claim that strategic defence policy

45 Viviane Reding (Luxembourg, Information, Society and the Media), Joe Borg (Malta, Fisheries and Maritime Affairs).
50 ibid, p 8.
51 ibid, p 133.
decisions are made on the basis of preserving the defence industrial base the evidence shows the link between national military spending and domestic defence industry and the distortions national industrial considerations have on force structure and procurement decisions.

**POLICY AND DESIGN CONSEQUENCES**

33. The effects of these factors shapes the way that European nations use their armed forces and the capabilities they maintain in three main areas: the way forces are used on operations; the patterns of use in peace; and the force capabilities themselves.

**OPERATIONS**

34. Given the risks involved in participating in discretionary operations, states need tangible incentives to participate over and above the coercive sanctions described earlier. A distinction must be made between those states in the core and those on the periphery. Those at the core tend to participate to be seen as good partners, influence the course of events and boost their global standing. The British establishment at the time of both Afghanistan and Iraq were clear that the justification for British involvement was a combination of self-image as a global player, a member of the UN Security Council, the accompanying responsibilities and its desire to influence and, in some cases, constrain, the US.

35. By contrast, peripheral have a more direct security need in that they see support for international operations as being a price they pay in the hope that the West, and particularly the US, will protect them should any of the threats on their borders materialise. There is a second benefit in that their more developed partners often provide training and equipment assistance to allow them to participate which enhances the effectiveness of their fighting forces. Georgia’s announcement in March 2007 that it would contribute a Brigade to operations in Iraq displayed both of these characteristics, simultaneously enhancing its relationship with the US (which was anxious to maintain partners within the multinational coalition) as a balance against Russian domination and delivering considerable training and equipment assistance to the Georgian Army.

36. We are therefore faced by a situation where governments are now committing their national forces to operations for reasons that may not serve a direct national interest but secure indirect benefits that the leadership of that country values. This explains the problems in generating and then sustaining effective contributions to operations. For many states, the benefits they are seeking can be obtained through contributions framed on the basis of minimum risk and cost, hence the national caveats on deployments and the difficulties often experienced in filling some key capabilities.

**PEACE-TIME USE**

37. The elimination of a conventional threat to Europe, the elective nature of operations and the imperatives of deepening international cooperation means that states have found a new use for their armed forces in time of peace by integrating them with the forces of other nations as a way of deepening political alliances, often at the expense of military capability. The Franco-German Brigade and the Eurocorps are amongst the oldest and best known examples. Overtly political in purpose, the Eurocorps has been described as “hatched by Kohl and Mitterand in defiance of good sense” and the Franco-German Brigade is widely regarded as having little or no military utility. 52

38. It is now widespread practice for NATO nations to offer their forces to peacetime standing reaction force formations commanded by multinational headquarters, especially at the Corps level of command. Nations also enhance their influence by double-hatting units and most forces are assigned to more than one formation or organisation. Small nations are particular beneficiaries of force assignment and have been amongst the most enthusiastic integrators. As will be seen in the next section, whole components of their forces are bound into operational relationships with other nations often on a double, and even triple assigned basis to enable them to forge strategic political defence relationships with multiple partners.

39. It is noteworthy that in using armed forces in this way, military effectiveness is of secondary importance to the political relationships and

fighting power impacts on it only to the extent that it might damage the credibility of the contribution. This leads into consideration of the effect that political dynamics have on force capabilities and design.

CAPABILITIES

40. There have been practical military benefits from the way forces are used in peacetime by the Western powers, particularly over interoperability, but at another level, European military structures are characterised by the design hysteresis described in Part 1. Because governments are managing their defence programmes in a political context, they invest only in so far that international political benefit accrues. Investment in high-end capability intervention forces is a reflection of the kudos they feel they will gain from these sorts of operation.

41. There is too, a lack of consensus on how to proceed within alliances which not only slows decision making but leads often to safe, easy but obsolescent solutions. Peter von Ham summed the issue up by saying “the main problem with NATO is that maintaining the status quo is more risky than reform….. Today some key NATO players worry about bringing their different perspectives together in one new strategic concept. Some want to be a truly global NATO; others fear this could detract from the construction of a strong European approach.”53 Many nations take advantage of the variable geometry to retain other lower level, less capable forces as a shop-window capability, often with considerable underinvestment, because they can pass these off as relevant contributions to the overall defence effort. Despite the disappearance of a threat to the territorial integrity of Europe, the European member-states of NATO still maintain over 2,220,000 regular Service personnel and 2,600,000 reservists in their armed forces54 but of these the European Defence Agency estimates that only around 378,000 are deployable abroad.55 Germany maintains armed forces totalling just over 245,000 - the third largest in the EU - and yet the EDA lists it as having, in 2006, no deployable forces.56 Investment in military capability shows a similar picture. In 2006 the European defence budget of €201 billion compares poorly against that of the US at €491 billion. The US invests €102,489 per soldier in equipment and R&D compared to the European an average of €20,002.57 All this suggests the European states are less committed to hard edged intervention than the US. As Van Ham observes, “the continuing acrimony over funding and force generation for NATO-led operations exposes the crumbling consensus within the Alliance, especially in the case of ISAF.”58

42. One solution to burden sharing put forward by Vuitel is that small nations should role specialise.59 In fact, this is not what they are doing. In part governments still feel that ultimately, national security cannot be entrusted elsewhere but equally, the wider the suite of capabilities, especially of combat forces, the greater the political utility and flexibility.

CASE STUDIES

43. In order to test the thesis set out, two European states in different strategic positions will be examined in detail; the Netherlands and Lithuania. The Netherlands sits firmly within the security core of Europe whereas Lithuania is on the periphery.

THE NETHERLANDS

44. The Netherlands has an extremely outward looking foreign policy and has put membership of international organisations at the heart of its international relations. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs website sums up their approach thus:

“The Netherlands pursues its foreign policy largely within the framework of multilateral organisations such as the UN, the EU and NATO. It takes part

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56 ibid, pp 7, 28 and 31.
58 op. cit, p 31
59 op. cit, p 69
regularly in the peace keeping operations of these organisations. The Netherlands also seeks to maintain good bilateral relations with its neighbouring countries, France, Germany and the United Kingdom, the Scandinavian countries, the Benelux partners Belgium and Luxembourg, and the other EU and NATO member states. In addition, the Netherlands has strong ties with the USA and is helping the countries of central and Eastern Europe make the transition to democracy and the market economy.”

45. The statement also has a moral tone adding that their foreign policy “is inspired by the wish to promote peace, freedom, prosperity and the international legal order.” Threats are seen in the broad, global terms that characterize current security thinking and should be addressed by “embracing an internationally oriented approach.”

46. Their armed forces have been through several reorganisations and budget reviews since 1993 when the decision to move to an expeditionary capability was made. This was partly to ensure they were organised to support the evolving requirements of expeditionary operations but also because of severe budgetary pressures and cuts as other domestic priorities intervened. The Netherlands defence budget has fallen from 2.5% of GDP in 1990, dipping below the NATO 2% threshold in 1997 and has sat at 1.5% since 2004. The armed forces have been downscaled from 91,000 in 1991 to an expeditionary force totalling 45,608 in 2008.

Table 1: Netherlands Armed Forces

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Formations/ equipment</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Army</strong></td>
<td>18,266</td>
<td>2x Mechanised Brigades 1x Air Mobile Brigade</td>
<td>Assigned to NL/GE Corps and ARRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10,401</td>
<td>4 diesel submarines 4 destroyers 4 frigates 10 minesweepers 2x LPD</td>
<td>Integrated with Belgian Navy. Assigned to UK/NL Amphibious Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Navy</strong></td>
<td>3,100</td>
<td>76x F16 (5x squadrons) Transport 10x Transport aircraft 24x Apache 11x Chinook</td>
<td>C130 and Fokker 50 and 60.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Air Force</strong></td>
<td>10,141</td>
<td>Transport 10x Transport aircraft 24x Apache 11x Chinook</td>
<td>C130 and Fokker 50 and 60.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


47. These headlines mask the continued hollowing out of the Armed Forces through a constant stream of efficiency measures and rationalisations, the latest of which is taking out further numbers of tanks, artillery and F16 fighter aircraft and logistic units. Procurement plans for key equipments have also been postponed or shelved, including Tactical Tomahawk procurement and the introduction to service of 4 newly acquired naval patrol ships.

48. Throughout these cuts the Netherlands has resisted the temptation to role specialise and has striven to maintain a balanced capability, albeit with some gaps in enablers and strategic capabilities. The wide suit of capabilities has allowed the Netherlands to develop a number of strategic partnerships with individual NATO and EU partners. This ensures their place within larger multinational formations and provides a way to cover gaps in its orbat by relying on their partners to provide. They announced in June 2008 a partnership arrangement under NATO auspices with the US, Sweden, Finland, Hungary and Lithuania that will give them access to pooled use

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61 ibid, homepage.
64 ibid, p 65.
66 Netherlands Defence Policy Statement. op. cit, p 29.
of three C17s for strategic airlift. Most importantly, partnerships develop strategic political relationships with other nations. Thus, the Army is linked to the Germans through the GE/NL Corps, the Air Force to the USA through their purchase and operation of F16s, the Marines to the UK/NL Amphibious force and their Navy is integrated with the Belgians to form a single, bi-national force. They also participate in and have assigned (on a double-hatted basis), units to the ARRC and during the 1990s, were one of the 4 national forces that formed up the MND(C), taking the Divisional Commander slot on the first rotation.

49. The Netherlands have been very active participants in international operations both within NATO, the EU and ad hoc coalitions. They currently have contingents deployed in Afghanistan (1500), Bosnia (70), Lebanon (149) and Chad (100). Until February 2005 they provided over 1600 personnel to the Coalition force in Iraq. Their participation strategy has been one of providing small but robust, high value contributions to operations such as their contributions to Iraq in 2003 and in Afghanistan since 2005. As a consequence of their professionalism and reliability, they are respected both at a military and political level and the quality of their participation enables them to influence planning at a both the tactical and strategic alliance/coalition levels. The ability to influence through participation is a deliberate strategy. The Netherlands MOD Defence Policy statement is explicit when it says “we should not shirk our responsibility, not even if that means taking considerable risks. This commitment, which also has a military aspect, moreover, also gives us a moral right to speak in an international context.”

50. The Netherlands security strategy includes foreign aid as part and parcel of its security toolkit, grouping it with its defence spending commitments as a means to enhance its image as a serious player. The Defence Policy statement, an MOD document, makes great play of Holland’s development aid budget of 0.8% of GDP and its commitment to bringing forward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. This contribution has brought international recognition and kudos. The US Department of State Country Profile notes that “in August 2006, the Centre for Global Development, in conjunction with Foreign Policy magazine and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, ranked the Netherlands number two in the world for its government’s policies in support of development.”

DEFENCE MANUFACTURING

51. The Netherlands has a number of industrial defence manufacturers including shipbuilding and aerospace sectors. While there is no explicit policy connection between industrial support and the size and structure of the Armed Forces, the MOD has recently developed, in conjunction with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and in consultation with defence industries, a Defence Industrial Strategy partly aimed at supporting international exports. The Defence materiel organisation also maintains structural capital spending programmes in R&D some of which are tied to wider domestic programmes such as the ‘Enterprising, Innovative Netherlands’ project. But like the rest of its defence policy, Dutch R&D is rooted in international co-operation and the Netherlands is an enthusiastic participant in the European Defence Agency and EU and NATO bilateral or multilateral programmes. Dutch participation in the Joint Strike Fighter project typifies this approach. The MOD Defence Policy statement is clear about the economic motives behind its involvement in the project and that the $800M so far invested “in the long term will yield a much greater financial volume in the form of orders for Dutch companies. The outlook, in which the Ministry of Economic Affairs in particular is active, is favourable.”

PERSONAL AMBITION

52. Dutch presence in senior positions in international organisations was examined in the previous chapter. There is a further angle to this in the Netherlands’ case. They provided the

68 Netherlands MOD, Facts and Figures about the Armed Forces, op. cit, p 19.
69 op. cit. p 4.
leadership of the NATO Response Force during the first half of 2008, will command of the amphibious task force for NRF12 in 2009, and lead the EU Battle group during 2011. This will impose costs as nations are expected to underwrite operations that their nationals are commanding, not least because responsibility for success or failure is, to some degree, laid at the door of that nation. In accepting leadership of these activities, the Netherlands is committing itself to significant material support as a price for that lead.

LITHUANIA

53. Lithuanian Defence policy is dominated by the hegemonic presence of Russia and its desire to integrate into the rest of Europe in order to gain the economic and security benefits of European integration. Its strategy, therefore, has been two pronged: firstly, to be an active and meaningful participant in international organisations, notably NATO and the EU on the basis that allies will reciprocate if Lithuania’s security is threatened. The 2006 Lithuanian Defence White paper encapsulates this stating: “Membership in NATO brings more security but also more challenges: our nation is now committed to ensure the security and welfare of our Allies, just as our Allies will defend Lithuania.”

54. The second prong is to form close bi-lateral associations with nations it perceives share common security interests, notably the Baltic States, Scandinavian nations and the USA. The Defence White Paper is surprisingly explicit in terms of the informal deal with the US; it envisages providing political and practical Lithuanian support for the US war on terror, counter proliferation efforts and democratisation agenda in return for military aid, defence funding, training and education and operational support.

55. These objectives have meant that Lithuania has had to accept NATO security preoccupations, even if they do not reflect their own immediate perceptions. Thus, whilst concerned about the threat to its stability from Russia, heightened by the recent resurgence of Russian assertiveness and tension over the Kaliningrad Oblast, Lithuania officially endorses the NATO and EU security perspectives, stating that “Lithuania’s security interests have become the security interests of NATO and the EU”. The differences between NATO and Lithuanian perspectives have led to some minor inconsistencies in their declared defence policies. The revised National Security Strategy of January 2005 lists globalisation challenges and international terrorism first in the list of threats and even goes so far as to say that Lithuania may become “a potential target of international terrorism”. In the 2006 Defence White paper, these threats are placed 5th and 6th in the list of priorities below “regional instability” and “activities of foreign intelligence services.” The Lithuanian MOD’s Military Strategy is even more candid, conceding that “the internal conditions are not favourable for a terrorist network to appear.” This concession finally works its way full circle in the 2005 guidelines for the development of the Lithuanian Armed Forces which places the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lithuania as the first priority ahead of regional and global stability and, lowest of all, countering terrorism.

56. Lithuania has compartmentalised the benefits it sees from the EU and NATO. While political stabilisation and reform are often cited as benefits of both NATO and EU membership, they are clearly seeking economic benefits from the EU and security guarantees from NATO. NATO is the lynchpin of its security strategy and its military contributions to operations reflects this emphasis. Lithuania sustains its contributions to international operations at the level of one mechanised infantry battle group at any one time but this is penny-packeted in contributions across the globe with a firm bias to NATO and US coalition operations. It makes meaningful contributions to NATO operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo and to the US-led coalition in Iraq, but these contrast markedly with its participation in UN activities in

77 ibid, p 15.
Afghanistan and Georgia and with the EU in Bosnia which are effectively symbolic only.83

57. Lithuania has had to make strategic choices over the range of capabilities they have developed. The strategy has been to invest in a small but modern suite of light and medium weight land force capabilities with the Air Force designed for mobility support to Land Forces rather than independent strategic air operations. The Navy has been designed for a niche contribution to alliance operations in the Baltic. BALTRON is a small mine hunting force assigned to NATO but with an emphasis on operations in the Baltic itself. Although available for wider NATO operations, it also fulfils a national function, finding and disposing of the vast amount of leftover mines and ordnance that currently litter the Baltic.

Table 2: Lithuanian Armed Forces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Formations/ equipments</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>7800 Regular 4700 Reserves</td>
<td>1x infantry brigade (Iron Wolf Brigade) National Defence Voluntary Forces Includes 1900 conscripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>450 Minehunters</td>
<td>Assigned to BALTRON with Latvia and Estonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>8x light transport aircraft in mixed fleet 9x Mi-8 Hip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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58. Paradoxically, investment in reaction forces gives Lithuania more flexibility to decide its armed force structures and defence budgets. Role specialisation allows for cherry picking of capability, scale and cost. The small-scale contributions it can make to operations means that its participation is always going to be as important politically as it is militarily. Thus, its 2006 defence budget was 1.2% of GDP in 200684 but this has elicited little comment or criticism from its partners. Partly this is because allies recognise Lithuania’s economic position, partly it is because it can credibly argue that its spending has been going up in real terms by 15% per year at the same time as its GDP has been growing, but equally, its active support to operations deflects criticism and buys goodwill from allies seeking international support and legitimacy for international intervention operations.

COMPARISON

59. Comparison of the Netherlands and Lithuania shows both similarities and differences. Both are enthusiastic participants in international organisations which they actively support by contributing to operations. Both are playing to several security agendas at the same time, including NATO, the EU and, bi-laterally with close neighbours and the USA. Both are committed to developing and maintaining armed forces for expeditionary operations rather than territorial defence but are also managing their defence expenditure against other political and practical budgetary demands which are forcing them to accept capability gaps. Finally, both are looking to turn their contributions into political influence by using their forces to enhance their influence through peacetime alignments as well as in their more traditional uses in conflict.

60. There are also differences which arise from a combination of political culture and geostrategic position. The Netherlands, in the core of Europe, feels no threat to its territorial integrity whereas Lithuania on the periphery feels the hegemonic influence of Russia. This results in a qualitative difference in the nature of the engagement. The Netherlands participates in global, collective security operations because of the kudos and political influence it brings whereas Lithuania feels a real need for physical security which it seeks through defensive arrangements with allies. To secure this, it needs to be seen as a loyal and reliable ally whom its alliance partners feel morally obliged to protect. The irony is that Lithuanian defence expenditure is, proportionately, smaller than that of the Netherlands. Discussions over real or percentage increases aside, this is mainly because Lithuania is so small, the measure

83 Lithuanian deployments are: Bosnia (EU) x1, Afghanistan (UN)x1, Georgia (UN)x2, Afghanistan (NATO)x195, Iraq (US Coalition)x150 in 2007, Kosovo (NATO)x30. The Military Balance 2008, op cit, p 137.

84 ibid, p 443.
of what is sufficient is not the size of the contribution, but what is considered to be sufficient by its allies.

61. Political culture and a nation’s vision of itself also reflects back into the role it elects to play in world affairs. The Netherlands sees itself as an international player with a moral liberal agenda and it contributes actively to sustain that vision. Lithuania, as a newly emerging democracy, is still absorbing and adapting its political and social values as part of its integration into the EU and NATO. It is not yet confident enough to project its own values abroad, choosing instead to parrot those of its Western allies. Despite this, its security strategy leads to the same participatory outcomes as the Netherlands.

62. The most telling issue, however, is the importance both nations attach to membership of international organisations. They do so because they see them as being to their advantage. They are empowered by them, both to achieve security goals and enhance national status. In this sense, although they might surrender some autonomy as a price, they still behave very much as individual actors within the international community, intent on pursuing national interests.

CONCLUSIONS

63. The way small states operate in the modern world provides several insights which have wider relevance for our understanding of the international system. Firstly, states of any size are weakened by not participating actively in international institutions and alliances. The system is symbiotic and synergistic in that large and small nations alike benefit through interacting. Small states are favoured by the democratic nature of international institutions and the formal rules which privilege them as unitary actors alongside their larger counterparts. Larger states still exert influence akin to their size and resources but they tend to do so through informal mechanisms outside the formal rules and processes.

64. Secondly, the motives behind participation in the global international system differ. These are complex but are a combination of geostrategic position, the way the political class and domestic support base sees the nation’s place and role in the world, economic and political considerations and the role of individual personalities. Thirdly, to maintain influence, free riding is not an option. What you bring to the party affects how much influence you can wield. The relationship between contributions and influence are not set at absolute measurable levels but are, instead, relative to expectations within the group. Fourthly, in certain circumstances, the quality of the armed forces is not necessarily as important as their political value. This explains the design hysteresis that afflicts much of the European military structure. If there is no risk that national forces will be committed to operations, then forging peacetime strategic relationships with partners requires little, if any additional investment but considerable political gain.

65. Finally, the way in which small states have found a voice in international affairs alongside large powers suggests that the anarchic, simple world envisaged by the classical realists, in which states operate as unitary actors in a competitive zero-sum-game environment and where conflict is a normal state of affairs, is an oversimplification. This does not necessarily mean that the realist world view is dead. States are still behaving as unitary actors but the rules have changed. Developments in institutional, moral and legal frameworks reflect a move to a world order in which a liberal, interdependent tradition and philosophy has a stronger sway. The effect has been to change the way in which states pursue their ambitions and interests as they take advantage of the new rules and avoid sanctions if they transgress. To use a cricketing analogy, it is as though the laws on catches and run-outs had just been introduced to the sport. The principles of cricket would remain basically unchanged but the new rules would fundamentally alter the way the game is played, affecting field placings, bowling and batting strategies and captaincy tactics. The new methods of dismissal would also enhance the importance of fielders who are no longer in as limited and supporting a role. In the same way, the new international order does not represent a victory for either the realist or the liberal wings of international relations theory. Rather it suggests that there is an interaction between the themes contained in both that explains the far more sophisticated environment within which international issues are now settled.

66. It is to Clausewitz and his famous dictum that we should finally look. States still engage in war, albeit they tend now to fight non-state actors
rather than each other. War remains a continuation of politics by other means but politics has moved into new territory. Rather than limit the role of the armed forces to periods of conflict, politicians have now found ways to extend their influence by using their forces during peace as a tool of diplomacy, influence and power. The characteristic of this new role is that a shot never has to be fired, the forces need have only limited military utility and the enemy need exist in name only. The system does the rest.
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