

**Franco-British Council**

**The Future of the European  
Union: French and British  
Perspectives**

**Report of a seminar**

June 2003

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## **The Future of the European Union: French and British Perspectives**

**Report of a seminar held in the Banque de France  
Paris**

**26 June 2003**

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## **Introduction**

On the initiative of its two co-presidents, Jacques Viot and Lord Radice, The Franco-British Council organised a seminar in Paris on 26 June 2003 entitled 'The Future of the European Union: French and British Perspectives.' The three themes of the discussions were: an assessment of the consequences of the Iraq crisis, Franco-British convergences and the progress of European institutions.

### **I. Assessment of the consequences of the Iraq crisis**

In his introduction, Stanislas de Laboulaye studied the impact of the Iraq crisis on French foreign policy. Since the end of the Second World War, French diplomacy has worked within the framework of international institutions: the UN, the Atlantic Alliance and the European Union. Admittedly, France's attitude has not been without ambiguity. Although never totally at ease within the triple framework which limited her freedom of action, France has nonetheless been conscious of the benefits these institutions could bring to her.

The Iraq crisis, continuing a change that began at the time of the end of the Soviet Union, revealed the weakening of these international structures. The first victims of this were the UN and the system of collective security. The United States adopted a unilateralist posture. Forced to accept recourse to the Security Council, the US refused to be subject to the Council's constraints, whereas France was able to take advantage of its position as a permanent member of the Council.

The second victim of the crisis was the Atlantic Alliance, in which France could not claim to play a key role. The Alliance became less important, since its mission was closely linked with the cold war.

Finally, the European Union, involved in a process of enlargement of its activities and its composition, became less united than in the past.

The Iraq crisis revealed the divergence of the views between France and the United States with regard to these three bodies.

Within the UN, France wanted a debate on the threat posed by Iraq, with military intervention taking place only if legitimised by the Security Council. France had to confront America's wish to forge ahead.

Within NATO the desire on the part of America to short-circuit the Alliance had already been evident several times, particularly in Afghanistan. By calling for NATO military aid to Turkey with the prospect of conflict with Iraq, Washington wanted to anticipate the principle of armed intervention and confirm that war was inevitable, an idea that France challenged. The acute crisis resulting from this was only dealt with through the involvement of the 'Defence Planning Committee' of which France is not a member. However, at the same time, at the European Union-NATO meeting on 3 April, France reaffirmed her desire not to withdraw from NATO.

The European Union was deeply divided. The Iraq crisis showed up the political differences of the member states, divided between those who are inclined towards an

Atlantic reflex action (letter of the 8 and support of the 10) and those who wanted a renewal of the Franco-German relationship as the motor of Europe. At no time was there a common EU debate on the crisis. The political weakness of the Union was obvious. The CFSP and its High Representative came out of the crisis in a weakened state. It is apparent that the European Union will only have credibility, particularly when facing the United States, if it develops its military capability.

As a result of this, M. de Laboulaye's conclusion was that the international judicial order derived from the UN should be supported, with emphasis on its role of legitimation and as a vehicle of international solidarity. Within the framework of this global solidarity, the merits of a multipolar world should be affirmed, and Europe's credibility in foreign and defence policy should be restored, whilst ensuring that European actions in the field of defence are compatible with the development of NATO.

Timothy Garton Ash, speaking on Iraq for the British side, emphasised his agreement that Iraq was not so much the cause of the crisis as the catalyst for the divergences between France and Britain. These divergences, concealed by 'multilateralist' speeches by the French and British leaders, would need a new Entente Cordiale. The Entente had not been born out of a past history of harmony but of confrontations conjured up by the symbolic name Fashoda.

At the present time the gulf between France and Britain is narrow, but it is deep, as it dates back seven centuries, reappearing when our two countries are in conflict. And the conflict is indeed between France and Britain. It was not President Bush who wanted the vote on a second resolution after 1441; Tony Blair asked for it and France refused it and said that she would oppose it. In fact, the crisis showed that there are two visions of Europe, one British and one French, particularly as regards relations with the United States. It was said in France that Tony Blair was against the Europe of Jacques Chirac, and perhaps vice versa. In any case one can see the reappearance of a neo-gaullist vision of Europe. What is more alarming is that for the first time since the end of the war, an American administration is wondering whether it is good to have a strong Europe, and whether it is not better for the United States to have a weak, divided Europe, which would give more power to American diplomacy. The temptation on the part of Washington to divide and rule, and to choose its partners to form an ad hoc coalition for each set of circumstances, would be disastrous.

A question now arises for Franco-British relations. In the context of enlargement, what will the European identity be? Over the centuries our identity has been forged through opposition to the Turks and Islam. Must it now be forged through opposition to America? This is a temptation encouraged by the present American administration, but it is leading to the division of Europe. Europe must think of itself as a partner of the United States and not as an adversary.

More should have been done in Europe to take into account the shocking impact of 11 September, and to understand the Americans. More should have been done to define our common interests in the zone stretching from North Africa to central Asia, to appear as a partner, and, to this end, to give ways and means to Xavier Solana (military staff etc.).

Militarily the Americans are very powerful; Europe is weak. It is only possible to build European defence on a Franco-British base. A military hard core without the United Kingdom makes no sense. We must return to the spirit of Saint-Malo. We must also take into consideration the power derived from trade, development aid and so-called 'soft power.' This dimension is very important for the transatlantic dialogue.

Finally it is not only indispensable to choose a precise political line, but also to determine the modes of action. However admirable the proposed reforms may be, in reality on matters touching on sovereignty, only an agreement of the main powers can implement them. This agreement should include Britain, France, Germany and the United States.

Was it not significant, asked Timothy Garton Ash in conclusion, that there had been no meeting of the four - with Washington - since July 2002?

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The comments of the two presenters provided the themes for the discussion which followed.

The historical analysis was accepted; that the Entente Cordiale was more important for what came out of it than for its immediate consequences (Lord Hannay).

Rather than a *directoire* of large European states within the Union, Lord Hannay would prefer a structural link between Europe and the United States. The partnership between the two sides of the Atlantic must be institutionalised. A *directoire* must be the expression of a reality. For this reason he prefers not to refer to the meeting of the four on 29 April between France, Germany Belgium and Luxembourg.

The idea of a *directoire* of the main powers of the Union is gaining ground, but André Fontaine questioned whether this was the answer. What was the *directoire* to do? he asked. Was not the essential problem that of relations with the United States? France and Britain ought to be trying to prevent the relegation of NATO to lesser tasks.

Timothy Garton Ash gave his opinion on the question of the *directoire* in his conclusion. It would not be acceptable to have a *directoire* which was more or less secret. The notion of a hard core has its enthusiasts, but it has two faults. Firstly, that if there is a hard core, the United Kingdom will be excluded from it. Secondly, if the hard core is open to all EU members, how could one avoid countries like Slovenia and Slovakia, and in the future Romania and Bulgaria wanting to join? This is not the way to settle the problem of the Union's common policy. The Union needs a clear and unequivocal link with the United States. Why not use the 'quad' (France, Britain, Germany and the United States)? Otherwise nothing would stop Europe being reduced to only the lowest common denominator of the wills of the Member States, and certainly not the partner of the United States.

The speakers emphasised the necessity of Franco-British agreement in order to define a European defence and give back meaning to the idea of the CFSP.

Heather Grabbe underlined the progress made by Xavier Solana in security matters. People have become aware of the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. Similar advances were being made in the field of analysis and intelligence. According to Dr Grabbe, Britain, which had previously shown shortsightedness in this area, does not attach sufficient importance to the perspective of a hard core of which she would not be a member.

How can the security of the European Union be assured? Should one not start by recognising that some states have more means and responsibilities than others? Sir Brian Crowe believes so. It is necessary to have a common policy on the basis of Franco-British resources. Therefore means should be given to Xavier Solana, but definitely not a military staff.

Another theme of this session was that despite the EU's comparative lack of military capacity, it could make a considerable contribution in the field of 'soft power', in terms of aid, trade and culture, as mentioned by Timothy Garton Ash in his introduction. However, several speakers put these assets into perspective. Alain Bienaymé, whilst emphasising the present economic dimension of the transatlantic relationship, observed that for ten years the European economy had diverged from, and then disconnected itself from, the American economy. Europe also suffers from an ageing demographic profile and from deficiencies in research. Jim Rollo agreed with this analysis, noting the weakness of European commerce. France and Britain, two great commercial powers in the Union, are in disagreement on the common agricultural policy, which at the present time is hindering attempts to help developing countries.

Summing up the themes of the first session, Stanislas de Laboulaye challenged the use of the words 'gaullism' or 'neo-gaullism' to explain France's attitude during the Iraq crisis. It would be more appropriate to say that France had sought to bring out a European position. France was not convinced of an approach to the region's problems that started with Iraq. It would have been better to make progress towards a solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Had we not been approaching a significant advance in Taba? The French and the British were convinced of this.

They were by and large agreed on the analyses of the Middle East situation, but differed on defining a line of action. Moreover, the French often had the impression that there was a red line - the relationship with the United States - which was impossible to cross.

Also, France wanted to give Hans Blix and the UN a chance. The unanimous resolution 1441 clearly showed that the majority of states were attracted to this approach. But after January 2003 the Pentagon rather than the Department of State was in charge of the direction of American policy. The Pentagon caused the crisis in NATO because it excluded a peaceful solution from the start. France had to exercise its right of veto to demonstrate its determination to exercise its responsibilities and not to abandon countries subjected to outside pressures.

On the subject of the *directoire*, Stanislas de Laboulaye wondered about the consequences of enlargement on the functioning of the Council of Ministers. Is the Council still capable of making decisions? Are these decisions discussed in advance

secretly by the Council's secretariat, the presidency and the representatives of a few large European countries? If this is the case, can one talk about Community spirit?

## **II. Convergences between France and Britain**

In his introduction, Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres emphasised the differences between French and British attitudes to the United States, which were caused by the September 11 attacks. When President Bush established a link between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, we were not sufficiently aware of the extent of the shock which these events represented for the Americans. A better analysis should have been made of the reasons for the terrorist movement. The analysis from London was very close to that of Paris on this crisis, as well as on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, North-South relations and the importance of the religious factor. When France refused to intervene in Iraq, this gesture was interpreted as a refusal to join in the fight against terrorism.

Among the convergences between Britain and France was the fundamental agreement that national will is, and will remain, an essential driving force for Europe. There was also agreement on the priority given to the defence budget, particularly the increase in resources for the French army. The two countries also have in common respect for pluralism, shared political culture and awareness of the challenges to be taken up. Britain and France are critical democracies, not at all 'messianic.' Acting together will enable them to be more effective.

On the subject of relations with the United States, M. Donnedieu de Vabres dismissed any idea of 'visceral' anti-Americanism of which France has sometimes been accused.

He observed that the new members of the Union generally have great reservations about any idea of a *directoire*. They are even surprised that the Fifteen have to reach a decision about their entry into the Union, as they are so convinced of their right to enter. However, it will probably be advisable to allow some states, who want to move faster and further, to do so. To avoid hostile reactions, he suggests that the Commission for Foreign Affairs of all the Member States should meet and possibly authorise an avant-garde group to move ahead, but without giving the impression of excluding anyone.

Quentin Peel from the British side said that the points of convergence are more numerous and more important than people realise. The perception that each of our countries has of the other is clouded by stereotypes and prejudices. A case in point is that Dr McShane, the Minister for Europe, recently said that France was 'gaullist', an idea that several speakers strongly disputed here today.

In fact, what unites the two countries is the same thing that divided them in the past. Are they not two old states, two old colonial powers? Indeed, they are no longer great powers, even though they are nuclear powers (but could they really make use of their weapons?) and they are both permanent members of the Security Council, rather by accident.

According to public opinion in the majority of countries, most countries worldwide give priority to their relations with the United States. Many of them are critical of American policy. This is true of France, but also of Germany, Spain, Turkey and

many European countries. Only Britain and Italy have a positive opinion of the role of the United States. Out of seven NATO countries included in an American survey, five wanted greater independence from the United States, the two others being the United Kingdom and ... the United States. Yet the French and the British share the same position on the fight against terrorism and differ from the Americans on the analysis of the religious factor. Convergences can also be seen on globalisation, GMOs and particularly on nationalism, which is weak in both countries, in contrast with countries like Russia and even the United States, where it remains much stronger.

The two countries also have an almost identical vision of the institutional balance in the Union, with a preference for the Council and less importance given to the Commission and the Parliament. Work on the Convention revealed agreement for enlargement, regarded in London as meaning a larger but less restrictive Union. France had more awareness of the weakening of the Council and is more ready to have recourse to qualified majority voting, including on matters of foreign policy.

The most marked divergence arises on the subject of Germany. Britain remains very hostile to the special relationship of France and Germany. The EU foreign policy is problematic: the two countries are deeply divided over Iraq, but convergences exist on the Balkans and particularly on Africa where the two countries have a clear interest in co-operating (Rwanda and visits of British and French ministers to Ghana and the Ivory Coast).

Defence policy is dependent on agreement between France and Britain. However there is still strong mutual mistrust. It is thought that France wants to weaken NATO. A remedy must be found. Perhaps this will take the form of an American decision to abandon NATO. In other words, the British will only be won over to European defence if America puts an end to NATO.

The relationship with the United States is, in fact, the touchstone of the convergences between France and the United Kingdom. The British will have to make a choice. Up to now the UK has not been prepared to choose between Europe and the American Alliance. At present this would not be possible, as Tony Blair is in a very weak position, and a weak government cannot take such decisions. In any case, Quentin Peel concluded, there will be no common foreign policy as long as France and Britain have not given up their permanent seats on the Security Council.

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A wide-ranging discussion followed, in which divergences on agricultural policy were brought up again, this time by David Curry. In his opinion the effects of the CAP indicated incoherencies in European policy, and made dialogue with the United States on commercial exchanges difficult. Nevertheless, news of an agreement by the Agricultural Council on the CAP seems encouraging, if recent information is confirmed.

Some speakers again alluded to the expressions 'gaullist' and 'neo-gaullist' to describe French policy. According to Siôn Simon, there is not a great deal of difference between the behaviour of France in 1963 and today. Sir Brian Crowe said

that the expression 'neo-gaullist' was a way of defining an attitude, particularly towards the United States, rather than a reflection of a substantial policy.

Convergences on institutional problems were mentioned by several members. The theme of the future of the European Council, which had been raised in the first session, was referred to by Angus Lapsley, who wanted dialogue between France and Britain on this point. According to the Constitution prepared by the Convention, the President of the Council, elected for two and a half years, would have more authority, as would the Foreign Minister.

Quentin Davies said that anyone looking at France and Britain from the planet Mars would see striking similarities, as the countries had common interests, including in the field of defence. In both countries there is public support for defence. Areas for practical co-operation should be found, for example in Africa. France, which some have accused of being against Western interests, played an essential role through the Saint-Malo agreement in enabling the Helsinki Summit to relaunch European Defence, and also through the 'motor' of the Franco-German partnership. All the same, the Iraq crisis will make it difficult, at least for some time, to talk of a common policy.

Françoise de La Serre, recalling the closeness of the two states, hoped that convergences in values would lead to convergences in objectives and proposals, particularly as public opinion in both countries is largely favourable to this. This development would be very important for the CFSP and common defence policy. The dialogue between France and Britain should reveal whether there is really an agreement between the two countries to implement this foreign policy, and also should define what kind of foreign policy it is. Can one hope for a total relaunch of the CFSP, or should one be content with joint activity in sectors in which our positions are close?

What means do we have at our disposal? A choice will have to be made between the route of institutional reforms, which has been the rule up to now, and the defining of a real strategic concept, like the one that the European Union seems to be working on.

General Rannou spoke about this concept of strategic doctrine, emphasising how close the two countries are on the doctrine of deployment, so that the two armed forces might, if necessary, very quickly co-ordinate their operational activities. Progress remains to be made in the field of intelligence and in research, in which Europe lags behind the United States.

Recalling that he had previously said he was against the creation of a military staff around Mr. Solana, Sir Brian Crowe pointed out that his intention was to avoid duplication. He felt that the main issue was to develop a joint attitude to the United States.

Convergences in cultural and educational matters between Europeans, and in particular between the British and the French, should allow the European Union to play an international role. Anne Corbett recalled that from the time of the Treaty of Rome, culture and education have been elements of European policy and have been a means of drawing citizens closer together. The European Institute in Florence was

formed in 1957. At the time it was regarded as a way of strengthening European identity. Now there is a will to promote a European university policy. Dr Corbett mentioned the effective role of the Commission in providing proposals and impetus, noting that the results would probably not have been achieved if the Union were only an intergovernmental grouping.

At the end of this session Maurice Fraser read out a list of convergences which he had drawn from the work of the seminar (see annexe I).

### **III. Measures to Advance the Progress of European Institutions**

In opening this theme, Lord Hannay emphasised that he was presenting a British viewpoint, but not that of his government, which had not yet clarified its own point of view. Within the UK internal discussion about the Convention was still continuing. However, one had to maintain a sense of proportion. The text on the Convention is certainly important, but it is not the most important text for the building of Europe. It is less important than the Treaty of Rome, the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty, but probably more important than the Amsterdam and Nice Treaties. It is not a revolutionary document. M.Giscard d'Estaing's aim was to maintain a certain balance between the institutions of the Union and, at the same time, strengthen them by giving them new powers to act.

One of the most important suggestions of the Convention is to keep the collegiate character of the Commission, and in order to do so, it is proposed to reduce the number of its members. For Lord Hannay this is an extremely important point. There is no reason why each state should have a seat on the Commission. Many states in the Union are happy to have a seat on the Commission because of the supposed benefit they will gain from it. There should be no 'return' gained by individual states, as the Commission is a collegiate organisation representing the interest of Europe.

Lord Hannay considers the proposal to give more powers to the European Parliament legitimate. It should be forbidden from becoming involved with the Union's foreign and security policy, since this is not its role. He is uncertain whether the powers of the President of the Council should be strengthened. He tends to favour the formula of the Convention, but much will depend on the mandate given to the President of the Council. On this point confrontation between the large and small states should be avoided.

The speaker thought that qualified majority voting was no longer the essential issue which had provoked so much discussion in the past. For some matters - especially immigration - the Community option might be preferred to the intergovernmental approach, which evidently does not work.

In the field of foreign policy, the proposals of the Convention in favour of a Foreign Minister for the Union are interesting. There will have to be agreement on how he will be enabled to act. His position as Vice-President of the Commission must not make him the 'servant' of this collegiate organisation. The Iraq crisis has shown that if Europeans are divided, they are marginalised. So it is necessary for the post of Foreign Minister to remain under the control of the governments. It is also necessary for the person holding this post to act in liaison with the United States.

The proposal to create an armaments agency is an excellent idea. Europe must have more resources for defence. But there is no question of attempting to act as a 'balance' to the United States, still less as a challenger or a rival. Such a thing would be absurd, said Lord Hannay. The resources we must have will be there to serve European policy effectively. The matter of whether this should be done with or without the United States is a separate issue. But it should be understood that the British will ensure with the utmost vigilance that the European Union will not serve to weaken NATO.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights is problematic for the British: it is a very sensitive area.

The procedure envisaged for leaving the Union is a formula that would be difficult to accept. One can hardly imagine democratic countries refusing to grant the right to another such country to leave the Union.

Lord Hannay said in conclusion that the idea of disregarding a ratification at the suggestion of the European Council is unthinkable. It must be made clear that the British government will only accept the treaty on condition that ratification takes place. We want a Europe of States and not a United States of Europe. It would be advisable to adopt the Constitution without any changes for some years - perhaps fifty - so that people know where they stand as far as the limits of the Union's powers are concerned, and thus work can be done on solid foundations, and not on constantly changing ground.

Pierre Ménat, speaking for the French side, talked about the perspectives opened up by the Convention. Although agreeing that the Convention was probably not the most important document for the building of Europe, he said that it contained a number of innovations and modified the existing balance of institutions. There would be a process of evolution which would continue with the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), and afterwards, as the third chapter of the process, with ratification by all the Member States. History has shown us that one cannot predict the reactions of the peoples concerned, especially if, as was likely, referendums are organised to authorise the ratification of this new treaty.

One of the first and notable changes envisaged by the Convention is the end of the three pillar structure and the disappearance of the 'European Community'. If the text of the Convention is approved, there will be a single grouping of institutions. The Union will inherit the Community. For this reason it will become a subject of international law and will have an international legal personality. As a result, procedures will be simplified and rationalised. Instead of fifteen legal institutions there will be six. 'Directives' will be 'European laws'.

The European Presidency will be strengthened through the length of the President's mandate and through his authority. Only experience will enable us to judge whether this innovation brings benefits. The Member States, including the Benelux countries, are for this proposal

From now on the President of the Commission will be elected by the European Parliament. This is a written confirmation of a procedure which has already been used. Joint decision making of the Council and the Parliament will be considerably extended. In this case, the fields of the Union's activity will increase from 37 to 80.

Policies are the subject of the third part of the text on the Convention, which has yet to be approved (as at 26 June 2003). France is not in agreement with some of the points in the proposed document. One example is the European policy on cultural objects, as it is questionable whether this matter falls exclusively within the sphere of action of the Union.

France remains vigilant in the field of foreign policy. In fact, the Foreign Minister is at the same time subordinate to the Council and the Vice-President of the Commission. It remains to be clarified how the Minister will be able to reconcile the mandate of the European Council and the collegiality of the Commission.

Progress has been made in economic matters, particularly through the recognition of the 'Euro' Council. On the other hand, France and Britain are not in agreement on the common social policy. As for the 'closer co-operation' already envisaged at Amsterdam and Nice, the Union would authorise a group of Member States, within the framework of the Treaty, to propose and implement actions which are in accordance with their vision of Europe. This is similar to the formula used in the case of the Euro.

France and Britain are in almost complete agreement on the institutional problems. The differences come mainly from policies. In brief, France is on the whole favourable to extending common policies and to the rule on qualified majority voting, whilst the United Kingdom is more reticent in both cases.

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In the course of the discussion that followed, Jean-Louis Quermonne said that the creation, as proposed by the Convention, of a Foreign Minister for the Union was an important innovation. This Minister would be Vice-President of the Commission, and thus be a member of a powerful collegiate organisation, whilst also, through the mandate of the European Council, being responsible for the implementation of a European Foreign policy along lines defined by the Council. This dual role could open up interesting perspectives for the institutions. The Minister will be able to use means derived from the responsibilities of the Commission for 'soft power' activities (trade links, development aid, cultural and technical co-operation and aspects associated with policies to strengthen 'the Europe of knowledge').

Chris Bryant understood and approved of the reform of the Presidency of the European Council. His experience in Brussels made him favour continuity, a quality which was lacking when the Presidency was rotated every six months. However, it was important to know what the priority of the Presidency would be. He wanted a strengthening of the Commission, and deplored its weakening over the past years.

Contrary to an accepted idea, Mr Bryant does not believe that there will be a greater risk of veto with 25 members rather than 15. The Convention had made a lot of

progress on the qualified majority. Pressure to override the veto would be greater when the Union was enlarged.

Tom Jenkins was surprised that there had been no mention of the ‘democratic deficit’ from which the EU suffered. He wondered about the future of the European Council, which some thought would not survive. He reassured those present that the trade unions had a positive attitude to the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Mme de La Serre returned to the issue of ‘closer co-operation’, saying that the progress made in the Convention to allow this to go ahead was one of the most important achievements of the group chaired by M. Giscard d’Estaing. She was pleased about the authorisation procedure, which should allow co-operative activities to take place if some states judged them appropriate.

Lord Howell remarked that plans for the future of the European Union showed up differences in attitudes between the British members. The plan on the constitution, which will have to be approved by the Intergovernmental Conference, is not, as might be assumed, just a tidying up of existing texts, but a matter of very important changes of which the peoples of Europe ought to be aware. The intention was to draw the institutions closer to the peoples. But is not an attempt being made to adapt the peoples to the institutions? National capacities for action have already been considerably reduced, and one now wonders who does what in the areas in which sovereignty is shared. It is already difficult to determine this. Lord Howell’s conclusion was that ‘the British like the European idea but refuse to be in a straitjacket.’

The co-chairmen, Lord Radice and Jacques Viot, were pleased with the high standard and realistic nature of the discussion. It was agreed that a report would be written on the basis of these exchanges, which would be sent to the governments of both countries and would be widely circulated.

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The seminar showed that the members were broadly agreed on recognising the convergences of the two countries, peoples and governments on the future of Europe, and the fact that they shared the same spiritual and democratic values.

According to the French members, this convergence was apparent during the first part of the Iraq crisis, but after the decision by Britain in favour of military intervention, there was serious divergence between the two countries. However, hope was expressed that existing convergences would facilitate choices concerning institutions and allow further progress by the European Union.

The British members did not refute these analyses. During the seminar they seem to have justified American policy more than the French did, emphasising the impact of September 11 and the terrorist threat; in short, in their attitude they were midway between Washington and Paris. They were cautious in their attitude to common policies, giving an impression that the setting up of the CFSP and European defence were matters to be deferred for better days.

A theme running through the entire seminar, and affecting the response of the members, was that of the relationship with the United States, which is perceived differently in London and Paris. The British insisted on the idea of a Euro-Atlantic structure, which they regarded as indispensable. This would involve dialogue between four countries (France, the UK, Germany and the US), and more demanding formulas, a *directoire*, priority given to NATO etc.

The French members were less inclined to take up this suggestion. They seemed to be seeking a re-ordering of the world system in which Europe would not be an adversary of the United States, but an independent partner, able, on occasion, to oppose unilateral attitudes.

## **British Section Record of Discussion**

Initiated by Lord Radice and former Ambassador Jacques Viot, a meeting was held in Paris on Thursday 26 June to assess the state of the Franco-British relationship. Despite recent differences in views over the Iraq crisis, it was confirmed that there were infinitely more shared values than the few dividing issues. What follows is a summary of the areas of agreement.

### **Shared perspectives**

- Britain and France have a common analysis of threats to international security. We share the analysis of the risks posed by Iran and North Korea's nuclear programmes.
- We strongly support Xavier Solana's work on a common threat assessment. His mandate approved at Thessaloniki represents an important step forward.
- We agree on the urgent need to address the threats posed by terrorism, nuclear proliferation and Weapons of Mass Destruction.
- We note France's active support for NATO's role in post-conflict Iraq.
- We note France's readiness to participate in NATO Reaction Force operations.
- We welcome the solid co-operation amongst the Allies in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia.
- We strongly support the creation of a more credible European defence capability if the EU is to be a serious partner for the US.
- We believe that Europe can also bolster the international security effort through 'Soft Power'. Britain and France should define what the instruments of soft power might be in practice, including in the contexts of aid, trade, migration flows etc. We need better tools for building up as well as pulling down.
- Britain, France and Germany, with the US, need to give a stronger lead on questions of global collective security, whilst maximising support amongst smaller EU states.
- Britain and France need to work on a sharper definition of European interests in the 'near abroad', including North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia.
- We believe that pacifism cannot be a realistic option in a dangerous world.
- Britain and France should not get too bogged down in theological differences. Better to concentrate on concrete areas of action. Military collaboration between

the two countries is already very close, notably between our navies. Our Air Forces could, according to military experts, be integrated operationally wherever needed.

- Britain and France have been working closely together in the Balkans. We welcome the current military co-operation in the Congo, which has opened the way to a wider European role.
- We believe that developing military co-operation should now mean more intelligence sharing, collaboration on research and development and, above all, stronger political leadership. We welcome the agreement in the European Convention discussions on the need for a new European armaments agency.
- We see Franco-German understanding as being in the overwhelming interest of the EU as a whole as a pre-condition of a stable and prosperous Europe.
- We believe that work should begin on more efficient consultation and problem solving mechanisms between Britain and France.
- We need to work hard to restore our transatlantic relationship. This means understanding, inter alia:
  - The profound psychological blow which 9/11 dealt to the United States.
  - That this has reinforced the overwhelming imperative for effective international action to combat terrorism.
  - The dangers in setting up opposing poles as a world vision and that the safest course lies in hard-edged multilateralism.
  - That we need a better process for managing the US – Europe dialogue, perhaps through a formal organic link to develop shared analyses before private debates become public arguments.
- We welcome the preparatory work on a new treaty for the European Union, and the broadly converging approaches of Britain and France designed to promote a united Europe of states rather than a United States of Europe.

**Maurice Fraser**

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*Financial Times*

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***SEMINAR PROGRAMME - Thursday 26 June, 2003***

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Welcome and introduction by Ambassador Jacques Viot and Lord Radice

**Session I: Assessment of the consequences of the Iraq crisis**  
introduced by Stanislas de Laboulaye and Timothy Garton Ash

- for the role of the United Nations
- for transatlantic relations
- for NATO
- for the Common Foreign and Security Policy

Debate

**Session II: Areas for co-operation between France and Britain**  
introduced by Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres and Quentin Peel

- common values (democracy; human rights; respect for the law)
- common membership of the EU
- pursuit of enlargement
- EU foreign policy (in the Middle East, in the Balkans and in Africa)
- creation of a common defence policy

Debate

**Session III: Review of measures designed to develop European Institutions** introduced by Lord Hannay and Pierre Ménat

- improvement of the current balance between institutions (role of the Council, of the Commission, of the European Parliament)
- appointment of a President of the European Council and European Foreign Minister
- reinforced co-operation

Debate

Conclusions

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