



BATTEN IN BRUSSELS

WHO FEARS THE EUROPEAN UNION?

"We cannot withdraw from the defence obligations of the treaty without withdrawing from the Union."

THE European Constitution (sorry Lisbon Treaty) looks very likely to be ratified by Parliament and only a mini-miracle will achieve a referendum for the British people. We are very likely, shortly, to find ourselves living in a new political state named the 'Union'.

A very serious aspect of this is what the Union will mean for Britain's defence policy. As a member of the European Parliament's security and Defence Committee for the last three and a half years I have had a useful insight into how European Union politicians think about this issue.

At a two day conference on 'European Security' in Brussels last November some of my worst fears were confirmed.

The opening discussion included a question and answer session and a member of the audience asked the question, "Will there ever be a European Army?" Elmar Brok, a prominent German MEP replied, "Well of course, but that will be in the future".

Another participant, Peter Altmaier, Parliamentary State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, answered, "Yes, but we must not speak of a European Army, that panics the British and worries NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation)".

The EU's intention is gradually to amalgamate Britain's armed forces into European armed forces by means of harmonised defence equipment policies, common command and control structures, and common communications systems - such as the Galileo satellite system.

This process is being developed by means of EU military operations under the guise of humanitarian relief and disaster recovery operations.

Currently they may be small and not very effective but that is not important; what is important is that they allow the common structures to be developed and tested.

The presentations at the conference in Brussels were quite frank in presenting a range of security and defence scenarios

which could only be solved, so we were told, by more and more EU integration in the realms of the military, intelligence gathering, and policing. This conference made it plain how big business will play a vital role in this process.

The conference was sponsored by companies from the defence and security industries and many of the projects discussed would depend on contracts to provide the latest military and telecommunications equipment and solutions. Big business will supply the expertise and the EU will supply the money to make their militaristic dreams come true.

But these dreams also need the political means to achieve them. This is where the European Constitution (sorry Lisbon Treaty) comes in.

The Treaty creates the post of High Representative (known as the EU Foreign Minister in the failed Constitution) who shall, "represent the Union for matters relating to a common foreign and security policy". "He or she will conduct political dialogue with third parties on the Union's behalf and shall express the Union's position in international organisations and at international conferences." Britain will have clearly lost sovereignty in matters relating to foreign affairs.

The Treaty also makes provision for a Common Defence Policy leading to a Common Defence". What pray is a "common defence" if not a common set of armed forces with a common command and a common political direction?

This is not the same as the current arrangements under NATO, which is clearly only a treaty obligation freely and voluntarily entered into, and from which we can withdraw if we wish. We cannot withdraw from the defence obligations of the treaty without withdrawing from the Union.

The Constitution (sorry Lisbon Treaty) will abolish the United Kingdom's veto over control of the European Defence Agency, which is responsible for harmonising Britain's defence procurement policies in line with EU defence programmes.

What equipment and systems the armed forces have and with which other countries armed forces they are or are not compatible, is clearly essential to an independent defence capability.

The loss of veto jeopardises our relationship with the United States, which has been essential for our defence policy since the Second World War.

As I write this article I am listening to the Westminster Parliamentary debate on the ratification of the Constitution (sorry Lisbon Treaty). The Government is arguing that the Treaty is not the Constitution, that black is white, and that there will be no serious defence and security implications.

The British Government can insist all it likes that the EU has no plans to take control of Britain's foreign policy, defence policy and armed forces, but those of us who spend some of our time among the true believers of the European Union in Brussels and Strasbourg know that is exactly what is planned.

At that Conference in Brussels one of the speakers said, "Who fears the European Union?" What a telling question.

No one will fear the European Union until it has its own armed forces. It can never have a credible foreign policy until it can back up that policy with the threat of force. And it wishes to be feared on the world stage.

During the Second World War Stalin was advised that the Pope disapproved of certain of his actions. With his gift for immediately going to the heart of a problem he replied, "And how many divisions does the Pope have?" The European Union intends to have its divisions.

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