

The Development of British Defence Policy: Blair, Brown and Beyond. By David Brown, ed. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010)

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Recommended Citation

Roche, Edward M.. "The Development of British Defence Policy: Blair, Brown and Beyond. By David Brown, ed. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010)." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2012) : 191-194.

DOI:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.9>

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol4/iss4/10>

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Book Reviews

***The Development of British Defence Policy: Blair, Brown and Beyond.* By David Brown, Ed. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010. ISBN 978-0-7546-7489-4. Index. List of Tables. Pp. 239. \$114.95**

This book comes well-heeled. David Brown, Stephen Deakin, Stuart Gordon, and Martin A. Smith, all contributors, hail from Sandhurst. Michael Codner is from the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies. Anthony Forster is from Durham University, Steven Haines from the University of London, Trevor C. Salmon from the University of Aberdeen, Alistair J.K. Shepherd from Aberystwyth University, and James Sperling is from the University of Akron. Almost all are professors, and all have outstanding career experience and numerous publications.

The book starts with the 1997 elections in Britain. Tony Blair was swept into power. As the Labor Party recently has been booted out, we can say this book is an analysis of U.K. defense issues during the most recent Labor governments led by Blair and Brown.

The theme of the book is to define various balances and then define how the essence of policy has changed. One of the first balances to come into focus is the so-called "Special Relationship" between the U.K. and the United States. The

"...Second World War ... len[t] Anglo-American relations an emotional resonance unique among the war-time allies, but it laid the foundation for the extraordinary post-war levels of military cooperation in the areas of nuclear technology and intelligence sharing. (p. 31)"

Generally, the Blair government shifted policy towards Europe, but without sacrificing the U.S.-U.K. relationship. Britain "is unable to achieve its foreign policy goals outside Europe without the support of the United States" (p. 32) and it uses NATO as a channel for influencing the U.S.. The "European turn" in policy, as evidenced by the Franco-British St. Malo Declaration, was one of the first signals of Blair's desire to have the U.K. at

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the center of defense policy in Europe. Blair insisted on unanimity in decision making, which meant that the U.K. had an effective veto. The conclusion is that the orientation towards Europe "is a genuine and permanent change." (p. 57)

The book also has coverage of the "Blair Doctrine," which can be summarized as liberal interventionism and military activism: "The British are by instinct an internationalist people" (p. 72). In this vein, there is detailed coverage of British military activity in Iraq, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Kosovo. The book concludes that this liberal interventionism has come to an end because of the disaster in Iraq. The U.K. has turned back to a more classical definition of military intervention, in particular whether or not it is in the direct national interest, which was the policy since the Treaty of Westphalia.

British defense policy also changed as a result of terrorism. Bush and Blair had a similar approach of holding responsible countries that "harbor" terrorists. There are so many organizations to choose from: the FARC, the ETA, Hezbollah, Hamas, the Taliban, and others. Then there are terrorist states, such as Libya, North Korea, Iran, Syria, Cuba, and Sudan. In this regard, U.K. policy was parallel to the U.S. view. One success mentioned is the cultivation of a relationship with Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) organization, which led to the push into Waziristan. Apart from that one success, relations in Afghanistan and Pakistan have yielded no positive results. There is on the horizon no dramatic change in policy on terrorism.

The Good Friday Agreement in Ireland gets a separate chapter, and the analysis is generally congratulatory and positive. We can look forward to a "great thaw" in that trouble spot (p. 118). The chapter on how the government and military work together has an extensive analysis, but predictable conclusion: "[T]here is a striking paradox; the very complexity that makes [working together] necessary is also the reason why it fails" (p. 136). The unwritten message is that government should get out of meddling into military affairs.

As in the United States, the U.K. has gone down the strange and wasteful road of privatization of military services and the development of numerous public-private partnerships. The U.K. seems to have fallen into the same trap as the United States, that is, considering outsourcing as a reasonable solution if "there is a sound basis for doing so" (p. 147). Here, it seems, the writer takes an uncharacteristically strong position:

"Being managerial can lead to accusations of not caring sufficiently about people... the ethos of managerialism and the ethos of military virtue may ultimately prove to be at odds with each other. (p. 150)"

This is a message that should come to the United States, which has lost billions on one private-sector bamboozle after another, with no end in sight.

The writing style of the book is uniformly clear, but also dense, and with a marked tendency to understate almost every conclusion. As such, the book does not present any strident views, but only hints at them. Occasionally throughout, readers will find sentences that somehow seem uniquely British in style. Each chapter has a very large number of references, and it is clear that all of the papers are well researched, and every conclusion is documented—almost over-documented. *The Development of British Defence Policy* is a book by the British, for the British, and the subtleties perhaps can be understood completely only by the British.

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