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Assessing the UK presidency: A Second Pillar Perspective

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Prime Minister Tony Blair's stated goal for the presidency was that the United Kingdom should 'lead in Europe.' Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said in the autumn of 1997 that the UK 'now has a government with a secure majority and a strong leader able to seize the opportunity to shape the direction of Europe.'¹ Any assessment of the overall effectiveness of any given presidency must rest upon its overall performance in relation to its intended goals. The goals outlined for the UK presidency, discussed in more detail below, were extremely ambitious but not unduly so when compared to those of the succeeding Austrian presidency.²

What follows is part of a wider project considering the UK presidency of the EU, from 1 January to 30 June 1998. Separate assessments will be made regarding first and third pillar activities. The second pillar activities of the presidency are of particular importance or, in the case of the UK presidency, perhaps of most importance. Certainly, any cursory glance at the work programme of the presidency indicates a strong concentration on second pillar activities. This suggests that the second pillar, due to its intergovernmental and relatively unbureaucratic nature, may be an area in which the presidency feels able to leave its mark. The first pillar agenda was however daunting since the presidency set out to act as pilot for European Monetary Union (EMU), to address employment issues, as well as the enlargement process with Central Europe and Cyprus. Britain's well known difficulties with the former, notwithstanding 'New' Labour's efforts, perhaps drew an undue amount of critical comments to the detriment of the presidency's achievements in other areas. The third pillar, Justice and Home Affairs (JHA), also featured an ambitious agenda with collaboration amongst the EU customs authorities as the platform of a concerted anti-drug drive.

¹ Alan Osborn, 'UK assumed EU presidency,' *Europe*, Dec./Jan. 1997, p.11.

² Austrian Chancellor, Viktor Klima, saw the Austrian Presidency's goals to speed up the development of the European Union, employment, making Europe 'as fit for employment as for the euro,' and care of the environment and security. See Robert J. Guttman, Interview with Austrian Chancellor, *Europe*, June/July 1998, p.11.

One of the obvious problems besetting any assessment of the UK presidency, or that of any other country, is how can one reasonably measure performance? The duration of the office, a mere six months, means that a good deal of the agenda will be inherited by an incoming presidency from previous Presidencies. The term in office is sufficiently short to prohibit most major initiatives from having any chance of coming to fruition. It would though be incorrect to portray the presidency merely as a ‘caretaker’ or managerial post where the seat is kept warm. However, given the limited time period, the question of what can reasonably be expected of a presidency has to be posed. Additional questions should be raised regarding any kudos or opprobrium that may befall a presidency if a major initiative launched under a previous presidency succeeds or fails. Lastly, without hopefully being pedantic, the term in office of the presidency is specific but should the record of the presidency as part of the Troika be included in the assessment? In other words, should the presidency be assessed over an eighteen-month period? The difficulty of measuring the presidency proper, the six month term, has been summarised by Adriaan Schout when he observed that ‘the outcome depends on 19 Councils and one or two summits.’³

The expectations befalling any given presidency may well be shaped (where applicable) by past presidencies. In this regard the British presidency of 1992 may well have encouraged a somewhat sceptical attitude towards Britain’s ability to lead Europe or its ability to steer a neutral line. More generally Britain has been portrayed as the awkward partner in the community. The agenda of the January-June 1998 UK presidency has to be set in the context of the Prime Minister’s drive to distance himself from the Conservative legacy regarding Britain’s role in Europe with the ‘new cooperative approach to Europe.’⁴ Accordingly, any assessment of a presidency should be made with an eye on the intended audiences. In Britain’s case the presidency was very much linked to Labour’s domestic agenda and to the continued disarray within the Conservative Party where the ‘Europe’ question continues to be highly divisive. The success of the presidency therefore needs to be measured by the domestic reaction to the presidency as well as at the European or even international levels.

Let us now turn to the more specific issue of assessing a presidency’s performance *within* a pillar – in this case, the second. The second pillar, addressing the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is the most intergovernmental of the EU’s three pillars. The

³ Adriaan Schout, ‘The presidency as Juggler: Managing Conflicting Expectations,’ *EIPASCOPE*, No.1998/2, p.5.

⁴ *UK Presidency: Half Time Report*, <<http://presid.fco.uk/achievements/>>

history of CFSP and its predecessor, the European Political Cooperation process, is replete with examples of thwarted attempts to apply the *acquis* of the Community to external affairs. The second pillar is also often portrayed as somewhat ineffective but, paradoxically, it may well be due to its intergovernmental nature and its relatively weak structures that intergovernmental affairs are somewhat easier to secure agreement on, especially if the outcome is non-binding declarations or common positions. This might suggest that a presidency determined to leave its mark may well concentrate on the second pillar for results. The political preferences in Britain continue to lean towards the maintenance of a distinction between the ‘intergovernmental’ and ‘Community’ aspects of any European treaty.⁵

The public expectations for the presidency may also differ between the pillars. With regard to the second (and perhaps third) pillar, the world of diplomacy, summits and multilateral agreements are somewhat distant from the public, especially in the post-cold war setting when the preoccupation amongst many industrialised democracies is upon their domestic agendas. The expectations of the public may be presented as a central paradox for the EU since, as *Time* magazine commented, ‘citizens expect the Union to be more forceful in some ways – foreign policy and crime prevention, for instance – but not to meddle in national politics while being so.’⁶

So, how should assessment of the UK presidency’s achievements or shortcomings in the second pillar be tackled? One approach, adopted by Adriaan Schout, is to start with an understanding of the tasks of the presidency as a rough yardstick. Schout suggests that the presidency’s task involves juggling three balls – the political role (leadership), neutrality, and national interests.⁷ Each of the ‘balls’ could be considered as ‘elements of success’ to be used in an assessment exercise. The three balls, which together comprise a ‘task environment,’ are open to the challenge of whether such conceptual clarity can be applied to the presidency. For instance, Britain has historically had an awkward relationship with the Community and one could therefore question the extent to which Britain could be *perceived* as neutral (as distinct from efforts to *portray* itself as neutral). Basic differences in economic and political weight also have to be considered. Intuitively one would expect the big four (at least) to advance a more conspicuous national interest agenda than a smaller state, especially if the latter was a net beneficiary of the Community’s munificence. As an example, Chancellor Kohl mentioned

⁵ For instance, the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, giving effect to the Treaty of Amsterdam, did not include Article 1 of the Amsterdam Treaty relating to amendments to the Treaty on European Union. See *Hansard* (Lords), 28 Jan. 1998, Col. 277.

⁶ James L. Graff, ‘A Likeable Scapegoat,’ *Time*, Vol.151 (26), 29 June 1998,

⁷ Schout, p.4.

burden-sharing *en passant* at the June 1998 Cardiff summit, marking the conclusion of the UK presidency. However, it would not be surprising if Germany used its leverage within the Union when it assumes the presidency in the first half of 1999 to put this on the agenda based largely on national concerns.⁸

While it would not be appropriate at this juncture to open up the question of the realist versus liberal paradigms, the underpinning assumptions about the balance between neutrality, national interest and the provision of leadership, are very much connected to national perceptions and anticipated performance of the presidency. Thus, if an observer were more inclined to a realist outlook, a rigorous defence of national interest would be deemed a positive outcome whereas, to the liberal spectator, the lack of neutrality and impartiality would presumably lead to a differing assessment.

One obvious way of approaching the assessment issue would be to consider the *declared intent* of the incoming presidency against the actual results achieved. Such an approach cannot be completely free of value judgement, but it does at least have the advantage of being based on goals that were set by the presidency itself.

Goals and achievements – a self-assessment

In line with the observation that any assessment of the UK presidency should be measured against declared goals, two speeches have been selected in order to ascertain what the goals were (the remarks though are limited to those pertaining to the second pillar) and whether they were met. The speeches were both given by Robin Cook, President of the Council of Ministers and British Foreign Secretary, at the beginning and end of the UK presidency respectively. The first speech was given to the European Parliament on 14 January and the second to the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London on 25 June.

⁸ Germany pays some 1.26% of its GDP to the EU's budget which accounts for around 26.3% of the Union's total budget. Germany receives only 13.6% of the Union's outlays.

GOALS (We will...)	OUTCOME (We have...)
<p>(14 January Speech to EP, Strasbourg)</p> <p>... make the EU a more effective voice in the World, so we will be working to improve the performance of our CFSP</p> <p>... We have two important objectives for the British presidency. First, [on enlargement] to get the actual negotiations off to a flying start. Second, to help those who have further to travel ...</p> <p>... contribute to the peace and prosperity of all the people of [Cyprus].</p> <p>... strengthen relations between EU and Turkey.</p> <p>... restore people's faith that the EU can speak and act for them in the world.</p> <p>... launch an EU Code of Conduct on arms exports, to establish agreed standards for all exports by EU members.</p> <p>... implement the new EU Joint Action on landmines.</p> <p>... a coherent approach to human rights, and make sure that it has a real impact by working on its partnership and dialogue with other countries.</p> <p>... aim to reach agreement on the EU mandate for negotiations on a successor to the Lome Convention.</p> <p>... help implement the peace agreement in Bosnia.</p> <p>... improve the EU's aid effort in the [Balkans].</p> <p>... make a positive contribution to the Middle East Peace Process.</p> <p>... find out how we can help [Algeria].</p>	<p>(25 June Speech to RIIA, London)</p> <p>... stopped being so paranoid about federalism and so scared of clever continentals.</p> <p>... taken the process forward at an impressive speed, but our influence on the process will not end with our presidency.</p> <p>(Not mentioned)</p> <p>(Not mentioned)</p> <p>... (quoting Demos survey) 68% in EU favour a Europe-wide approach to foreign policy.</p> <p>... agreed the EU Code of Conduct on arms exports... For the first time European nations have agreed detailed tests on human rights before they agree an arms export.</p> <p>... helped negotiate the convention banning landmines.</p> <p>... re-invigorated [Europe's] dialogue with China on human rights ... some political prisoners have been released. [EU] Ambassadors have visited Tibet.</p> <p>(Not mentioned)</p> <p>...there has been slow but steady progress -- better, in fact, than we could have hoped for a year ago... In Kosovo, we have helped ensure that Europe has taken a strong and united stance...</p> <p>... Europe gave immediate and practical support to the new moderate government in Republika Srpska</p> <p>(Not mentioned)</p> <p>(Not mentioned)</p>

What does the self-assessment tell us? Three points seem to stand out. First, many of the areas in which the UK presidency declared that it wished to make an impact were in fact issues that had already been subject to varying degrees of attention by previous Presidencies. Second, many of those areas where progress was made concerned topics that happened to come to fruition under the UK presidency (such as the Convention on Land Mines, or the Code of Conduct on Arms Exports) although some credit should be attributed to sufficient progress being made to bring agreements to fruition. Third, those areas that were not mentioned unsurprisingly concern not only intractable problems (Cyprus in particular) but ones on which there is a good deal of EU sensitivity or involvement. Such ‘hot potatoes’ are difficult for any presidency to address and may in fact be more of an indictment of the limited scope and powers of the existing CFSP institutions.

The self-assessment exercise also contained some significant accomplishments that did not appear in the list of goals for the UK presidency. Robin Cook, in his June speech, reflected that, ‘One of the most important achievements during our presidency was the understanding we reached with the US Administration on extra-territorial sanctions. We headed off a potentially catastrophic trade row.’ The reference to Congress’ Helms-Burton legislation illustrates two further considerations for any presidency assessment. First, the ability of the presidency to react to situations that erupt during the term in office is an important indicator and assessments should not therefore be based solely on static (declared) goals and accomplishments. Second, relations with third parties may decisively influence the effectiveness of the presidency – in this case the close working relationship between London and Washington was an important asset for the EU in its negotiating position. Indeed, in these cases it might be reasonable to expect a substantial outcome given the ability of the presidency to exploit its special links (‘leadership’) for the benefit of the Union.

The dangers of over-assessment (or perhaps over aggrandisement) were also illustrated during the presidency with the publication of a ‘half time report’ in which forty-five achievements were listed for the first three months of the presidency. The self-promoting report was framed in the context of the Prime Minister’s pledge in his Waterloo station speech to show ‘real leadership in Europe.’ In what the Prime Minister described as the ‘People’s Agenda’ he claimed in the report that, ‘Our new relationship with Europe is good for Britain and, I believe, good for Europe.’⁹ The actual list of achievements emphasises the

⁹ *UK Presidency: Half Time Report*, <[http:// presid.fco.uk/achievements/](http://presid.fco.uk/achievements/)>

benefits to the British citizen and less so those to Europeans. The lack of a working definition of ‘achievements’ meant that even hosting a (scheduled) meeting merited accolades. Of the seven achievements directly in the second pillar area, scepticism is also warranted.

Half-time report: Europe and the Rest of the World	
ACHIEVEMENT	COMMENT
<p>BOSNIA: EU assistance with 2 new packages backing up the peace process. 4 million pounds for new Republika Srpska and framework regulations simplifying aid to Bosnia</p> <p>KOSOVO: leading role in co-ordinating the response to events. Swift agreement on aid by Robin Cook and Tony Lloyd.</p> <p>IRAQ: Co-ordinated EU reponse to the weapons crisis, rapid agreement to an effective implementation of the action plan on immigration from Iraq</p> <p>ALGERIA: quick reponse to further terrorist killings including sending of ministerial troika in January.</p> <p>M/E PEACE PROCESS: injected new impetus into the peace process, including visits on behalf Robin Cook and Derek Fatchett.</p> <p>CHINA: united EU approach to China agreed Upon (23 Feb.) providing a basis for real progress on human rights.</p> <p>ASIA: Fatchett visited Asia as EU special emissary on the financial crisis. UK presidency Prepares for ASEM II in London on 2-3 April.</p>	<p>An achievement but much was scheduled prior to Britain’s assuming the presidency.</p> <p>Hardly a swift reaction and unclear what the purpose of the aid will be in light of the growing humanitarian problems</p> <p>The reaction to the weapons crisis was anything but co-ordinated. Britain, alone, supported the U.S. threats of military action.</p> <p>True, but the killings go on.</p> <p>Also true, but the question of whether Cook’s impromptu actions and remarks were sanctioned by the EU remains.</p> <p>Whatever effect the EU may have had was soon eclipsed by the U.S. visit.</p> <p>The meeting was scheduled and happened to fall under the UK Presidency.</p>

The full list of achievements may be consulted at <http://presid.fco.gov.uk/achievements/45things.shtml>

The self-assessment exercise is a useful exercise since it moves us nearer to an understanding of what the UK presidency was *trying to do* and what *it thought it accomplished*. There is though also an apparent need for additional assessments based on internal and external input.

Internal Assessment of the UK presidency in the Second Pillar

Any internal assessment of the UK presidency is inevitably coloured by party politics, perhaps moreso in Britain than in many other EU member states. As a result it may not provide an accurate assessment of the presidency although it certainly adds flavour to the more general assessment considerations.

Mike Gapes (Labour) reflected upon the somewhat artificial nature of the expectations piled upon the Labour presidency, either by the party itself or by the opposition, when he stated:

It is ridiculous to think that any six-month presidency of an organisation such as the European Union, comprising 15 states, can make a massive difference to the process. With a bad presidency, things can go badly wrong; with a good presidency, things can be dealt with efficiently. What needs to be done can be done, and the agenda can be taken forward – which is what the British presidency has done, in a number of important ways.¹⁰

A Conservative opposition MP denounced the presidency as a ‘flop of a presidency.’ Those areas in which the presidency had achieved ‘little or nothing’ were identified as jobs, enlargement, human rights and CAP reform.¹¹ It was seen as the ‘style-without-substance presidency.’ The French Finance Minister was quoted as saying that, as a result of the presidency, Britain has been relegated to the ‘second division.’ The agenda announced at Waterloo station, launching the presidency, was seen as ‘overblown.’ Martin Walker, writing in *The Guardian*, was quoted with approval when he wrote, ‘Fair Europeans ... conclude that the main problem was the inflation of expectations.’¹² Marc Champion, of *The European*, was also quoted with his assessment of the UK presidency as ‘bruised by a mix of hubris and political naivety.’ In reference to the Brussels summit, where the infamous agreement on the compromise arrangement for the appointment of the first president of the European central bank was brokered by the presidency, the Austrian Chancellor was quoted as saying, ‘We

¹⁰ Mr. Bill Gapes, *Hansard* (House of Commons), Col. 1256, 11 June 1998.

¹¹ Mr. Michael Trend, *Hansard* (House of Commons), Col. 1275, 11 June 1998.

have now learnt ... how not to organise a summit.’¹³ The critical remarks of the President of the European Parliament, the Prime Ministers of Luxembourg and Italy, were also noted.

William Hague, Leader of the Opposition, summarised the UK presidency as one of ‘disappointment, missed opportunities and poor diplomacy.’¹⁴ Hague claimed that it was ‘absolutely clear from the European Council’s conclusions’ that, ‘little or no progress has been made on the central objectives that the Prime Minister himself set for the UK presidency of the EU.’¹⁵ The Brussels summit was described as an ‘utter shambles’ and the presidency generally as ‘an object of derision across the continent.’ The *Financial Times* was quoted with approval saying that, ‘The most dispiriting aspect of the summit ... was its failure to inject momentum into the reforms – financial, agricultural, and institutional – essential to proceed with the enlargement to the east.’¹⁶ The reforms of the structural funds and of the internal institutions of the EU, which were both regarded as essential prerequisites to enlargement, were left to the Austrian presidency. On unemployment, Hague commented that ‘the presidency has achieved nothing of substance.’ While on the environment, which had been described by the Prime Minister as a theme of his presidency, Hague quoted the Friends of the Earth who assessed the Cardiff summit as ‘not much greener than a multi-storey car park.’¹⁷ The legacy of the Cardiff summit, according to Hague, was to teach the incoming Austrian presidency how not to organise a summit.

The Prime Minister responded with a number of quotes from various non-British press sources, such as a German one, who complimented the Labour Prime Minister by observing that ‘Britain has presided over two truly historic steps forward towards European unity during the British EU presidency: the founding of monetary union and the launch of enlargement.’¹⁸ The Spanish press saw the presidency as ‘competent and professional,’ while Sweden praised the change in the UK presidency and the ‘will and ambition to actually achieve something positive and not to only delay and criticise.’¹⁹ Contrary to the Leader of the Opposition the Prime Minister argued that, ‘we achieved all that we said we would as a UK presidency. We did launch monetary union, and we did get enlargement off to a flying start ... as for the common agricultural policy, as a result of the conclusions of the

¹² Ibid., Col. 1276.

¹³ Ibid., Col. 1277.

¹⁴ Mr. William Hague, *Hansard* (House of Commons), Col. 370, 17 June 1998.

¹⁵ Ibid. Loc cit.

¹⁶ Ibid., Col. 371.

¹⁷ Ibid. Loc cit.

¹⁸ The Prime Minister, *Hansard* (House of Commons), Col. 373, 17 June 1998.

¹⁹ Ibid. Loc cit.

Agriculture Council – chaired by Britain – there is already agreement to reduce prices to consumers by more than £1 billion a year, rising to £2.5 billion later.²⁰ On the environment the Prime Minister reminded the House that ‘we have implemented the Kyoto package’ and ‘we have got Europe to agree on how to implement it.’ While EU-US summit got us a way around the extraterritorial sanctions of the US – ‘something that other people in the EU have been trying to do for years.’ On the Brussels summit the Prime Minister admitted that the ‘negotiation was very difficult, but the result was right.’²¹

The party political assessment, unsurprisingly, reflected the prevailing political divisions of the day and the different political philosophy vis-à-vis the EU held by the Labour and Conservative parties. The use by the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister of press extracts in support of their assessments of the presidency also shows that there was little agreement on the effectiveness or otherwise of the presidency. The record of the debates does however show how ambitious the presidency was in its objectives and how adverse criticism was almost inevitable given the lofty goals established by the presidency.

The blanket Conservative criticism also gives rise to the issue of what is actually feasible in a six-month presidency. A realistic assessment is buried somewhere in the midst of the hyperbole but it should be borne in mind that the UK presidency had an important domestic agenda, namely redefining Britain’s relations with Europe. Blair’s conspicuous move away from the Europe of “Mrs No” towards one where Britain became a major actor involved laying out an agenda for a Labour led transformation of British relations with Europe. Vehement Conservative criticism was only to be expected. More generally, the assessment of the effectiveness of any presidency must be considered from the domestic vantagepoint as well and not merely at the European level. Indeed, in Britain’s case the domestic perceptions of the presidency were every bit as important as the external feedback.

External Assessment of the UK presidency in the Second Pillar

The following goals are contained in a ‘Work Programme’ drawn up by the presidency and, again, it should be borne in mind that the concern here is with those goals

²⁰ Ibid. Loc cit.

²¹ Ibid., Col. 374.

pertaining to the second pillar.²² The reader should be aware that the division of tasks into pillars is not only somewhat artificial, but poses the inevitable problem of how to address horizontal issues (such as EU enlargement) that cut across the pillars. The format will be to list the goals, using the original text and then to formulate assessment questions from the original text. The questions will, at a later stage, be examined more thoroughly.

i) General:

The UK will build on the commitment in the Amsterdam Treaty to a more coherent and effective common foreign policy.

(Did the presidency lead to a more coherent and effective common foreign policy?)

The UK presidency will work on establishing the Planning and Early warning Unit (PEWU) and discussion of how to implement the other measures agreed at Amsterdam to improve the operation of CFSP.

(Was the PEWU established?)

ii) Asia and Europe

The UK will host the second ASEM in London in April. This will be a means to forge stronger economic, political and cultural ties between two economic power-houses...

(Were stronger ties forged? If so, what evidence is there?)

There will be a EU/Japan Summit in Tokyo in January; and the UK presidency will also look to continue and develop constructive dialogue with China on a full range of issues, including political and security interests; human rights; international trade and investment; and global challenges such as the environment.

(Was the 'constructive dialogue' with China developed? If so, how?)

iii) Transatlantic relations

The UK presidency will host a summit with the US in May which will be an opportunity to underline the importance of the transatlantic relationship in all

²² UK presidency of the Council of Ministers of the European Union: Work Programme, Jan. 1998
<<http://presid.fco.gov.uk/workprog/>>

areas. There will also be a summit with Canada, building on a joint action plan agreed in 1996.

(In what ways were relations with North America reinforced?)

iv) ACP/EU

The UK presidency aims to agree the EU mandate for the negotiations with the 71 ACP countries on a successor to the Lome Convention. The main progress will be on measurable progress towards the elimination of poverty ... The priority work on aid and development will be moving towards a clearer commitment to international development targets, with the goal of eliminating world poverty.

(What progress was made to the commitment to international development targets? What measurable progress has been made towards the elimination of poverty?)

v) Arms Exports: Common Standards

The UK presidency proposes to work on an EU code of conduct setting high common standards to govern arms exports from all Member States.

(What code was established and did it establish common standards?)

vi) Human Rights

The UK presidency will adopt a practical approach designed to make existing policy more effective ... this will include helping countries implement universal standards through co-operation and support, work on new Development Regulations on Democracy and Human Rights and the new trade incentives under the GSP.

(Did the UK presidency make existing policy more effective?)

vii) The Mediterranean and South East Europe

The UK presidency will make every effort to find a way to make (Cyprus' accession) involve both communities ... in a manner acceptable to both.

(Did it?)

[The UK presidency] want to see real progress in negotiations (on Capital Markets and Energy) with Egypt, Algeria, Lebanon and Syria to accompany

the agreements already reached with Morocco, Tunisia, Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority.

(What progress on negotiations was made?)

viii) Former Yugoslavia and Albania

The UK presidency will continue to work to develop relations with the countries of the region (Bosnia, Croatia, FRY, FYROM, and Albania) in the framework of the EU's regional approach... The presidency will aim to ensure that the EU plays an effective and useful role in achieving full implementation of the peace agreements in Bosnia; to this end it aims to include agreements on improvements to the EC assistance effort.

(Did the presidency secure improvements to the EC assistance effort?)

The presidency will also aim to use EU influence to secure greater progress towards democracy in the FRY and a solution to the issue of Kosovo.

(Did the presidency secure greater progress towards democracy in the FRY and make progress in a solution to the issue of Kosovo?)

ix) Eastern Europe

The EU/Russia Summit in March will provide an opportunity for a wide discussion on key international issues, and to build on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). We also hope to bring into force the EU/Ukraine PCA, and to pursue initiatives under the EU/Ukraine Action Plan.

(In what ways was the PCA reinforced and what new initiatives arose in the context of the EU/Ukraine Action Plan?)

x) Middle East and MEPP

The UK presidency will ... seek to maintain the pressure on the parties to the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) to make progress, working closely alongside the EU Special Envoy Moratinos. We will use our influence within the Middle East, in Israel and in Washington to try to make sure that the current talks under US auspices make real progress.

(Was progress made?)

xi) Africa

The UK presidency will promote coherent action on democracy and good government in Africa, particularly in the Great Lakes Region (working closely with the EU's Special Envoy, Ajello), Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

(Did the presidency promote coherent action on democracy and good government in Africa?)

xii) Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

The UK presidency will work to strengthen the non-proliferation regimes, in particular by promoting early agreement on a verification and compliance Protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention, and of agreements to implement strengthened nuclear safeguards.

(Did the UK strengthen non-proliferation regimes and promote early agreement on a protocol to the BWC?)

xiii) UN Reform

Under the UK presidency, the EU will continue to lead in supporting UN institutional reform ... we will also work for a solution to the UN's financial crisis, based on full payment of dues and reform of the scales of assessment based on capacity to pay.

(Did the UK presidency demonstrably contribute to UN reforms or the alleviation of the UN's budgetary crisis?)

The Work Programmes, like those of any other presidency, are largely 'inherited' or on-going projects. Indeed, the use of the phrases, 'continue to lead', 'strengthen,' 'continuing priority,' and 'making existing policy more effective,' suggest that the limited six-month presidency allows for little innovation. The external relations aspects of the previous presidency, that of Luxembourg, were largely the same as those of the UK presidency.²³ The similarities in emphasis accorded to a given issue are also striking which suggests two conclusions. First, the incoming presidency's programme is largely determined by a number of long-term issue areas that call for attention (Former Yugoslavia, Albania, Cyprus, reform

of the UN, human rights or disarmament) or those that impose regular obligations upon the EU (such as regular summits with Russia, the U.S., or ASEM). Second, similarities in the external relations aspects of successive Presidencies might also suggest that a rudimentary group of 'European' interests have been established and these are then passed from presidency to presidency. The Work Programme is however only the visible part of the agenda and much time is spent reacting to events as they occur. A declaration or statement can be found for virtually every day of the presidency (see Appendix) on such diverse topics as East Timor, detainees in Belarus, Kosovo, municipal elections in Mozambique, Indian nuclear tests, the situation in Nigeria, Cambodian elections, settler activities in Jerusalem, and so forth.

Within the second pillar the failure to appoint a 'High Representative,'²⁴ due largely to French disagreement on the powers and role of the post, also saw a lack of progress in the design and composition of the PPEWU which falls under the High Representative. The need to make an appointment was nevertheless agreed upon during the UK presidency and the appointment will be made at the Vienna summit in December 1998. The appointment raises the interesting question of whether the expectations of the presidency in the second pillar area might change as a consequence. Alternatively, the High Representative's role, which it to assist the presidency, may complicate the presidency's task especially if the appointment is made from one of the larger countries.²⁵ Although this is not of direct relevance to the UK presidency it will be from the beginning of next year.

In so far as CFSP is concerned it would appear that the assessment of the UK presidency (or maybe that of any other) has to be made on the basis of at least three factors:

- the self-assessment method
- the presidency's ability to achieve declared goals (the Work Programme)
- the ability to react to situations that arise.²⁶

²³ For the Programme of the presidency of the Council of the European Union, see <http://www.uepres.etat.lu/uepres/presid/prog-eng.txt>

²⁴ See Article 18.3, Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union.

²⁵ Felipe Gonzalez was, until recently, a front runner but his alleged involvement in the 'dirty hand' reprisals against suspect ETA terrorists has raised questions regarding his suitability.

²⁶ This, in turn, raises the issue of whether a declaration or statement constitutes an effective or sufficient 'reaction.' Would the presidency's failure to make a declaration or statement on a given issue, that may be quite beyond the CFSP's ability to influence, be deemed a shortcoming?

To complicate matters further, the assessment exercise, as applied to the three pillars, is intended not only to ask how effective the presidency was but also to answer two further questions:

- To what extent are lessons arising from the successes/failures of a presidency relevant for other Presidencies?
- How and why were given courses of action adopted?

It is the last question that demands the most intrusive research since the concentration will be upon the internal workings of the presidency at the level of the national bureaucracies. This is perhaps the most problematic aspect of the research question since the interministerial processes may not be transparent and indeed may be resistant to intrusive questioning. Finally, the concentration upon the presidency, and upon a pillar within it, may lead to the familiar problem of losing sight of the wood for the trees. The presidency is but part of a broader agenda and the priority accorded to it will depend very much upon other internal and external factors. For instance, the considerable attention given to the Peace Talks in Northern Ireland by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary may well have distracted them from complete engagement (and perhaps consultation!) in CFSP matters.

Summary

This preliminary discourse has attempted to develop a number of approaches to assessing the presidency. It seems clear that any such exercise should involve several layers of assessment but, so far, I have reservations about how ‘scientific’ any findings might be. The observations in this brief overview owe more to impressionism!

The number of potential case studies presented above poses the issue of manageability. The sheer volume of material is impressive, if also daunting. On the question of methodology, let me raise a number of points (which have also arisen in informal discussions with MDB):

- i) Upon what basis should cases be selected (how many)?
- ii) What common analytical tools can we agree upon so that the results from the individual pillar case studies are coherent?
- iii) How should we address horizontal issues, such as EU enlargement, which do not belong in any one pillar in particular?
- iv) How do we make our approach scientific and avoid value judgements?
- v) To what extent can we attribute the outcome of a given policy/initiative to any given presidency, given the limited potential to launch and complete a major project within the six-month period in office?
- vi) When is a presidency not a presidency (should we include the Troika as part of the assessment exercise)?
- vii) Given the amount of material that may have to be sifted through, what timetable is realistic for completion of the various stages of the exercise?

Appendix

Declarations and Statements

(reverse chronological order)

30 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: EAST TIMOR</u>
29 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: ANGOLA</u>
26 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: BURUNDI: PEACE TALKS</u>
25 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: CAMBODIAN ELECTIONS</u>
24 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: TONY LLOYD TO VISIT NIGERIA</u>
24 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: EU TROIKA AMBASSADORS VISIT TO EAST TIMOR</u>
24 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: CROATIA: REFUGEE RETURNS</u>
22 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: JERUSALEM: ISRAELI GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS</u>
16 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: GUINEA-BISSAU</u>
16 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: NIGERIA</u>
12 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: NIGERIA</u>
12 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: SETTLERS' ACTIVITIES IN EAST JERUSALEM</u>
11 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: BURUNDI: PEACE PROCESS</u>
9 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: NIGERIA: DEATH OF GENERAL ABACHA</u>
8 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: TAJIKISTAN</u>
4 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: ETHIOPIA/ERITREA BORDER DISPUTE</u>
4 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION COUNCIL SUMMIT, 4-5 June</u>
2 June	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: ABKHAZIA</u>
29 May	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: DANISH REFERENDUM RESULT</u>
29 May	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: MOZAMBIQUE: MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS</u>
29 May	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: NIGER</u>
27 May	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: NIGERIA: HUMAN RIGHTS</u>
21 May	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: SOEHARTO RESIGNATION</u>
21 May	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: ROMANIA: AMENDMENTS TO CRIMINAL CODE</u>
15 May	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: ETHIOPIA/ERITREA BORDER CLASHES</u>
13 May	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: KOSOVO: MEETING OF PRESIDENT MILOSEVIC AND DR RUGOVA</u>
13 May	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: INDONESIA</u>
13 May	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: TURKEY: SHOOTING</u>

	<u>OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST</u>
11 May	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST</u>
5 May	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: SITUATION IN NIGERIA</u>
1 May	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: SITUATION IN SUDAN</u>
29 Apr	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: LATEST MASSACRE IN ALGERIA</u>
24 Apr	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: KOSOVO</u>
24 Apr	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: NIGERIA: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND SENATE ELECTIONS</u>
24 Apr	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: TIBET: HUNGER STRIKE</u>
24 Apr	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: RWANDAN EXECUTIONS</u>
20 Apr	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: NIGERIA: ADOPTION OF ABACHA AS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE</u>
17 Apr	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO: WITHDRAWAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS ENQUIRY TEAM</u>
16 Apr	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: AFGHANISTAN: THREAT OF FURTHER FIGHTING</u>
27 Mar	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: ESTONIA: ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY</u>
23 Mar	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: KOSOVO: EDUCATION AGREEMENT</u>
23 Mar	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: CROATIA: EU STATEMENT</u> <u>Full text of paper passed to Dr Granic, Croatian Foreign Minister</u>
20 Mar	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: KOSOVO</u>
20 Mar	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: NIGERIA: VISIT BY THE POPE, 21-23 MARCH</u>
18 Mar	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: ZAMBIA: LIFTING OF STATE OF EMERGENCY</u>
18 Mar	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA: HARASSMENT OF THE MEDIA</u>
13 Mar	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: ATTACK ON REFUGEE CAMP IN THAILAND</u>
4 Mar	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: IRAQ: SCR 1154</u>
3 Mar	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: KOSOVO</u>
2 Mar	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: BELARUS: EU CALLS FOR CLEMENCY FOR DETAINEES</u>
2 Mar	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: BURMA: REPORTED ARREST OF STUDENT ACTIVISTS</u>
27 Feb	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: SPEECH BY CROATIAN PRESIDENT</u>
24 Feb	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: ALBANIA</u>
20 Feb	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: SIERRA LEONE</u>
20 Feb	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: IRAQ</u>
19 Feb	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION ON IRAQ: STATEMENT BY DEREK FATCHETT</u>
19 Feb	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN AZERBAIJAN</u>
15 Feb	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: CYPRUS ELECTIONS</u>
14 Feb	<u>Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: SALMAN RUSHDIE: 9TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FATWA</u>

- 13 Feb Communiqué: Ministerial Meeting EU-Mexico (English/Espanol)
Communiqué: Ministerial Meetings between EU, Mercosur, Chile and Bolivia
(English/Espanol)
Communiqué: EU-Andean Community (English/Espanol)
Communiqué: EU-Rio Group (English/Espanol)
- 4 Feb Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: EXPANSION OF
ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK: STATEMENT BY MR FATCHETT
- 30 Jan Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: ZAMBIA: EXTENSION
OF STATE OF EMERGENCY
- 27 Jan Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: BOSNIA: REPUBLIKA
SRPSKA: EU presidency OFFERS AID TO NEW GOVERNMENT
- 26 Jan Press release issued by the presidency: ROBIN COOK OPENS THE EU'S DOORS TO
THE PUBLIC
- 20 Jan Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: TURKEY: BANNING
OF REFAH PARTY
- 20 Jan Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: EU/TROIKA MISSION
TO ALGERIA
- 19 Jan Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: NEW GOVERNMENT
OF REPUBLIKA SRPSKA
- 15 Jan Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: MONTENEGRO:
STATEMENT BY MR LLOYD
- 15 Jan Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: EU TROIKA VISIT TO
ALGERIA
- 13 Jan Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: EU TROIKA VISIT TO
ALGERIA
- 9 Jan Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: EXPANSION OF
ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK
- 8 Jan Statement by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: EU TROIKA VISIT TO
ALGERIA
- 6 Jan Statement by the European Union: OUTCOME OF KENYAN ELECTIONS
- 5 Jan Declaration by the presidency on behalf of the European Union: MASSACRES IN
ALGERIA

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