

What Are Armies For?

You may think it's obvious: armies are for defence. As **Lt Smash** said:

I'm here because my seven-year-old nephew has nightmares about terrorists.

And indeed that is what the US armed forces are ultimately for: they are the means by which Americans prevent bad people from coming to hurt American children, and adults. Likewise that is what the British armed forces are for, and also – quintessentially – the **Israel Defense Forces**.

But, of course, that has not been the function of most armies in history, nor of most armies in existence today. Some have exactly the **opposite function**: to go and hurt someone else's children, to loot, enslave and conquer the people of some other country. But that is not the core function of most armies either. Most commonly, the core function has nothing to do with the wars that they may or may not fight; it is to do with the internal functioning of their own country: the armed forces are the means by which the rulers keep themselves in power. In many cases this really does just come down to the crude business of **murdering the ruler's rivals and their supporters**, but often there is a complicated synergy between external war-fighting and the war against internal opposition.

OK. But now, how can we explain the purpose of **this** army?

“Old Europe” threw down the gauntlet at the feet of Britain, the United States and the Atlantic Alliance at a mini-summit yesterday, unveiling plans for a new Euro-army with its own military headquarters.

France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg - described by some in the US as the “Axis of Weasel” - vowed to press ahead with a full-fledged defence union, brushing aside warnings that the move would entrench the European Union's bitter divisions over Iraq and could lead to the break-up of Nato.

Much has been written ridiculing these moves, pointing out the glaring contradictions in the overt justifications presented by the Weasel nations. For example, the sole and defining policy difference

between the military doctrines of the Weasels and those of the Good Guys is that in a certain class of cases where the Good Guys would fight, the Weasels will not. But what is the point of forming a separate military alliance for the sole purpose of *not* fighting? Actually, it's even worse than that, because the situations in which they would not fight are going to be all situations that are even remotely conceivable in practice. So they could, apparently, achieve the same effect by dismantling their armed forces.

Yes, armies have other legitimate uses – peacekeeping, disaster relief, military bands and formation flying at air displays – but note that the Weasels are already well provided-for in those respects. There is already a European Rapid Reaction Force that “operates under NATO operational command” (for now). So ... perhaps it is necessary to have a parallel Weasel-operated command structure just in case there should ever be an earthquake and the evil US President chooses to veto the dispatch of NATO troops to help.

Oh wait, that never happens ...

But anyway, this new entity is not like that. It is supposed to be a genuine war-fighting force:

While superficially similar, the new force is a different animal. It will be a fully-integrated Euro-army, and seems intended for combat in the future.

What sort of combat? Um...

There will be a “joint European protection capability” against weapons of mass destruction,

That may sound refreshingly robust. Until you remember that according to the military doctrine under which this force will operate, pre-emption is the ultimate crime. Worse than tyranny. Worse than mass murder and mass torture. Worse than fomenting terrorism. And worse – in particular – than any mere *danger* of weapons-of-mass-destruction attack. Therefore, by “protection capability”, they are referring strictly to forms of ‘protection’ that can be implemented **after** the attack has taken place. So actually we're back to disaster relief again. Plus, no doubt, special teams of soldiers with analytical equipment, to determine which of the many claims of responsibility to believe, so that the Weasel governments can know whom to appease next, or whether it is yet time to surrender outright.

No seven-year-olds were protected in the making of this army.

They're also proposing

a “solidarity clause” binding EU states to face all forms of risk together as elements to be included in the new European constitution.

We don't know whether to laugh or cry. Will this clause be more binding or less binding than the one in the Nato Charter requiring the members to assist Turkey recently? Does anyone remember the

“solidarity” displayed by Belgium in the first Gulf War, when it refused to sell ammunition to Britain? And again, given the doctrine under which all this is being done, “facing all forms of risk together” means no more nor less than that in future conflicts, Britain would be forbidden to fight on the right side without France's explicit permission (which, given that **war is always an acknowledgement of failure**, would never be granted), while the Weasels would continue to be entitled to do the **wrong thing** with impunity.

Yet we come back to the question: why do they need a *new army* to do all this? The thing is useless *as* an army, but it is almost as expensive as one – in fact more expensive if one includes the wilful ruin of irreplaceable stores of goodwill and friendship that it entails. What purpose is so desperately important that it justifies all that? It isn't to keep evil away from their seven-year-olds. It isn't to visit evil upon other people (it will do so, indirectly, but that is not its purpose: it isn't for raping and pillaging). Nor is it to have an excuse to chase down the leaders of the French and German opposition parties and torture them to death in secret cellars. What is it for?

It isn't *for* anything. To understand it, we need look no further than Lee Harris' classic analysis of **Al Qaeda's Fantasy Ideology**.

It was not aimed at altering the minds of other people or persuading them to act differently. Its whole point was what it did for him.

And what it did for him was to provide him with a fantasy – a fantasy, namely, of taking part in the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors.

[...]

A fantasy ideology is one that seizes the opportunity offered by such a lack of realism in a political group and makes the most of it. This it is able to do through symbols and rituals, all of which are designed to permit the members of the political group to indulge in a kind of fantasy role-playing.

So it's not what the new army will do that counts for anything. It is the very act of proposing it, of achieving the role-playing **semblance** of standing up for their **ideology**, not against any real threat (those, they deal with differently of course), but against – inevitably – the United States. And against the rest of the Anglosphere, and Israel. Against anyone, in short, whose reason for acting, and for having armies, is both real and good.

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Was the cold war so long ago that you can't remember it?

What history teaches is this – that people and governments have

never learnt anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it.

The point of a European military is to keep the US power in check.

The point of the US military is to protect our vast amounts of wealth, much of which is built on exploitation of other countries.

You are starting off with the assumption that the US is, always has been, and always will be a benign force, which acts only for the good of everyone in the world.

You can't actually believe that, can you?

We are not the worst there has ever been, but we have done a lot of bad things.

We are the only country to ever nuke another.

We sponsored military coups of democratically elected leaders. We actively exploit many other countries which have less than us to begin with.

We use 25% of the world's energy, while having only 5% the world's population. We produce as much pollution as China, even though we have far superior technology and 1 BILLION less people, less than 1/4th the population.

And our corporations are literally invading the entire world. There are McDonald's even in communist China.

Considering that we went into Iraq - with the 2nd largest known oil reserves in the world - virtually unopposed is why Europe wants a real military.

We used to have the USSR to keep us in check.

The founding fathers of our country recognized the value of checks and balances, because absolute power corrupts absolutely.

While in many ways we (citizens) benefit from our country taking over the world, they (political and economic leaders) see us as "other" just as much as foreigners, which makes us ultimately a legitimate target. We should all be concerned. For this reason, I support the Europeans in this.

Think of it this way: It can be very cushy living in a mob family, but it can be very dangerous as well. If the rival family finally takes out the boss, it's over, and you can go back to being a regular person.

by [Jay Aziza](#) on Wed, 12/20/2006 - 18:06 | [reply](#)

Good and Evil

1. "Nuke another" country
To stop evil.

2. "Staged coups"
Yes.. Often for good purposes but sometimes creating evil.

3. "Use 25%, of the world's energy"
But our technology has created more than 25% of the world's wealth. Proof: They are living longer and supporting much larger

populations.

4. "Our corporations ... (e.g. "McDonalds")...(are)..invading the entire world."

Tell them to stop asking for Big Macs.

by a reader on Wed, 12/20/2006 - 23:47 | [reply](#)

Deductions From History

Jay Aziza wrote:

What history teaches is this – that people and governments have never learnt anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it.

Now, what are the principles *deduced from history*?

-- Cyrus Ferdowsi, <http://libiran.blogspot.com>

by [Liberal Iranian](#) on Fri, 12/22/2006 - 02:16 | [reply](#)