

ADAPTING TO EUROPEANIZATION

The United Kingdom and Emerging European Foreign Policy

by **Andrew Schrumm**

European integration began mainly as a vehicle for national economic benefits, yet over the last thirty years this movement has grown to encompass regional social, labour and security policies. Recent treaties have even expanded the European Union's mandate to include cohesive regional foreign policy. Perhaps more than any other country in this association, the United Kingdom is especially unaccustomed to adapting to supra-national norms. Recognized as a significant world power, the UK has generally pursued its policies as it sees fit. However, membership in the EU has forced the government to make concessions and alter ways in which it arranges itself internally and how it interacts with other states. The forces of 'Europeanization' are changing how the UK manages and operates its foreign policy, yet there remains a strong desire to retain sovereignty over its international agenda. This article will examine the UK's relationship with European foreign policy, how it is changing the organization of UK institutions, and the ways in which Britain has remained defiant in the process of foreign policy integration.

Common Identity

The perception of Europe as a single entity, shaping common political, social and economic activities, has developed over the last two centuries, with accelerated amalgamation over the last fifty years with the economic integration movement. The foundation of a pan-European identity was rooted in religion, as Christianity was the one commonality of (Western) European nations. Europe's boundaries became defined by religion and exploration. The development of the eastern frontier came from the confrontations with Islam through the Crusades, and with

the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Columbus' voyages across the Atlantic and the discovery of the new world in 1492 served as the impetus for the western frontier. Once its territory was defined, and it had mastered the sea, and created trading empires, Europe began to develop its identity beyond religion. From the sixteenth century onwards, several cultural threads were formed between nations.

In the wake of the Second World War, prominent political scientists and economists advocated that the best way to stave off the scourges of war on the European continent was to institutionalize a common regional identity through enhanced economic relations. Western Europe sought a united front to create "a new concert of power" which would stem communist encroachment from Soviet Russia. The concept of a European Federation was a popular one for many politicians. As early as 1943, a draft constitution for the "United States of Europe" was introduced at the 5th Pan European Congress, by Coudenhove-Kalergi and his *Pan Europa* group. Britain was an especially active participant in these debates. In early 1947, Prime Minister Winston Churchill himself advocated for a United States of Europe in the context of cautious integration towards a confederation. Churchill founded and later chaired the "United Europe Committee" in the United Kingdom. Negotiations with France during the war even included suggestions of an economic union with common citizenship. Jean Monnet, then French Prime Minister and later the symbolic architect of the European Union, was instrumental in bringing Britain to the negotiation table. Yet, Britain's initial hopes of inclusion in the European integration process quickly died as it could not reconcile itself with the idea of forfeiting authority over its national foreign pol-

icy to an overarching federation. This and other significant factors contributed to Britain's exclusion of the European Economic Community until 1973.

As a result, the European Economic Community took shape without significant British input, where key policies such as the European Coal and Steel Community agreements and the Treaty of Rome (1957) were already in practice. Possibly as a result of its late entrance, Britain tended to take a backseat approach to EC policies, making noise only when its national sovereignty was perceived threatened. Not until the negotiations of a "Single Europe" in the late 1980s and early 1990s did the UK really attempt to influence EC policies. The result of these negotiations was the Maastricht treaty, a document that enshrines the political as well as economic integration of member-states.

A Foreign Policy for Europe

The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 set out three pillars for the European Union: the Community of Economic Cooperation, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and Justice and Home Affairs (JHA). Each pillar has had significant influence on the Europeanization of member-states, yet the most far-reaching is arguably the CFSP, as it has altered the nature of member-state's interaction with the rest of the world. The CFSP is a conceptually complex arrangement in which member-states are compelled to forge common interests and common policies in the international arena. To this point, the CFSP has been largely ineffectual, yet its expansion is expected. In 2003, the European Security Strategy was adopted under the CFSP policy pillar, and given three policy priorities; the fight against terror; a Middle East strategy;

and, a long-term solution for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Yet, the CFSP's intended strength has been its greatest weakness, as the development of policies all member-states can agree to, even in this selected areas, have been next to impossible. For a CFSP initiative to be adopted, all member-states must agree to it in the Council and adhere to it in practice by aligning all national policies to comply with the decision. The scope of CFSP has been limited to a particular subset of issues, as its nature is so complex. Ben Tonra explains that only in circumstances where a "distinctive European approach or policy is deemed to be helpful and/or necessary" can CFSP policies be developed. Setting such a framework (although it remains vague) has led many to view CFSP as a form of institutional multilateralism, wholly dependent on regional consensus.

However, others see CFSP as a phase of integration that has gone beyond the intergovernmental nature of the European Union as it forces member-states to qualify, adapt, and in some cases recast, national foreign policies. The British government generally views CFSP from this perspective, as it remains unwilling to forfeit sovereignty over their foreign policy. Nevertheless, both British foreign policy and the management of it are undergoing a similar identity shift that is occurring in most EU member-states. Constructivists argue that member-states now view themselves – their governments and populations – as Europeans first, and through their European association as collective international actors. Adaptation has not only become a natural part of the process, it has become a necessity for member-states to be active participants in the European Union. Britain has not been immune from these developments.

The Foreign Becomes Domestic

The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy is increasingly changing the dynamics of member-state relations within the Union and with the rest of the world. Ben Tonra defines this element of Europeanization as "a

transformation in the ways in which national foreign policies are constructed, in the ways in which professional roles are defined and pursued and in the consequent internalization of norms and expectations." This transformation is evident in the nature of the restructuring of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other UK government departments. Since the signing of the Single Europe Act in 1985, the process of adaptation to the European norm has been accelerated in the United Kingdom. What was once a matter of foreign policy has now become a domestic one, and the issues that remain under foreign policy guided by an overarching set of supranational rules. There have been a range of significant changes in the international climate over the last twenty years, yet they have only expedited the European integration movement and cannot be analysed in great detail here.

As a result of the changing nature of relations within and outside of the European Union, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has modified how it creates policy and how it organizes itself. The current structure and role of the FCO has evolved over the past few decades to take on the management of Britain's changing role in the world. The FCO has remained the prime foreign policy maker in the UK, yet policy direction has been increasingly centralized by the Prime Ministers Office. Centralization of government authority is an offshoot of EU membership, as only the head of government gets to sit on the European Council – the body that sets the agenda for the entire Union. David Allen reports that this process has been welcomed by Number 10, as it has enabled the Prime Minister to affect greater influence on both foreign and domestic policy. This has also become necessary in light of the extension of informal networks, where non-governmental groups are progressively more able to affect policy development. Prime Minister Blair has not been shy to centralize power. In fact, he has welcomed it enthusiastically—some have dubbed this as the "Presidentialization" of the United Kingdom.

Although centralization of authority in the head of government is a by-product of EU membership, it has also caused an opposite effect for the FCO. EU membership has blurred the lines between foreign and domestic policy, as most UK government departments are interacting with their counterparts in other nations in situations where the FCO used to do so. This has caused a dilemma – if government departments freely interact with other states, what is the role for the FCO? The Blair government has been supportive of devolution policies, believing that the UK experts on environmental policy shouldn't have to go through the FCO to coordinate policy with the environmental experts in Germany. Under the Labour Party, Downing Street has attempted to create a European presence for itself. Foreign Secretary Cook established a committee with advisors from the PMO, FCO and the Treasury on how UK (Labour) values could be best expressed in European policy. This committee was seen by many in the FCO as a threat to their policy-making authority, where the politicians made all the decisions and the Civil Service was directed to carry them out. It became clear to the FCO that to maintain authority over the UK's European policy it had to restructure itself.

There have been a number of studies on how the FCO should be restructured to meet the demands of EU membership. The resounding recommendation of the Central Policy Review Staff was that in the face of Europeanization, the FCO should reorganize itself along its functions, rejecting the regional and international desk-system, to better coordinate policy both at home and within the EU. They also recommended the merging of the Diplomatic Service and the Home Service so policy specialists could be included in foreign missions. This review was met with great anxiety and was seen as an attack on the Diplomatic Service. The Fundamental Expenditure Review (1995) argued for the preservation of the geographical desk system, as the massive reorganization to an issues-based department would be enormously costly, and that even in an 'internationalized'

climate there is still a need for the geographically-based system.

Recently, there have been a number of significant reorganizations across departments creating the EU Command under the auspices of the FCO, which handles all EU matters and bilateral relations with other member-states. The EU Command has four departments: CFSP, EU Internal, EU External and EU Bilateral. Each department, having its specialization, has reinforced the FCO's role in specific EU policy-making. Of special note is the CFSP department, whose prime concern is to ensure that CFSP is not simply a "top-down" institution and that British concerns are reflected in EU foreign policy. This is no easy task, as Tonra explains that the CFSP is "designed to have a global rather than local echo." The motivation of the policy is to promote European values with a collective political voice in the international system. CFSP is thus not a stage for Britain to assert its views independently, but rather a control over it to adapt to a common European perspective. Many in Britain view CFSP as an imposed continuation of the UK's declining international power, as it emphasises the fact that the UK no longer has the global presence it once did, and now depends on a supranational body to give it international significance.

Maintaining National Identities

The United Kingdom is a collection of national identities. The Scots, the Welsh, and the Irish spent much of the 20th century battling for political rights and minority recognition. In the face of European integration the United Kingdom as a whole has been forced to do the same. Considered a reluctant member of the EU, the UK has continually attempted to assert its national sovereignty. This was evident in the recent drafting of the EU Constitutional Treaty. Britain has generally supported the idea of upgrading the old decentralized system of treaty agreements to a constitutional framework, provided it did not create a federal Europe. Aside from the need to shift the British tradition of not having a written constitution, David Owen

points to a general perception that change is "inevitable, but while [the public] may not be able to define the nature of the state in which they want to live, they know they will recognise when that state no longer exists." It is his opinion that federalism is not in the best interests of the UK – political and economic integration can strengthen Britain, but the forfeit of its sovereignty would come to destroy it. Thus, the UK sought to retain the original classification of "member-state" in the drafting of the EU Constitutional Treaty, and promote the national and the patriotic interest. The debate thereby centered on the treatment of the CFSP as foreign policy is the most influential tool of a nation's sovereignty. The UK advocated for the continuance of the CFSP decision-making in the European Council, where each member-state had one vote and only unanimous votes would be adopted. For it to be a common policy, the UK argued that all member-states must be treated equally and fully agree with it. The UK also advanced the concept of "loyal cooperation" in CFSP. Language from the Treaty of Maastricht was updated for the Constitutional Treaty, requiring member-states to act in the "spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity." For the UK, this means that CFSP is not a demand on its foreign policy, but rather something that it may adapt to. Considered a victory for the UK, foreign policy will remain in the hands of member-states under any further integration. After the May 2005 defeat of the EU Constitutional Referendum, the future of the treaty is unclear, yet in the interim national sovereignty and the status quo remains the norm.

The UK remains unwilling to commit to a strong CFSP. In the debate leading up to the war in Iraq, Blair's government broke from the consensus of continental Europe and joined President Bush's coalition for war. The other major European powers, France and Germany, were both vehemently opposed to the invasion, due to the US's weak case of war. The UK also rejects the suggestions for UN reform advocated by France and Germany which would expand the Security Council and remove Britain's veto. As

the debate over UN reform intensifies, this division between the major European powers rules out any common EU position on the issue. These experiences indicate weakness of and reluctance for a truly common European foreign policy. Such deep differences are not easily reconcilable and point to long-term divisions over CFSP. Some have praised the UK's self-confidence in stepping outside the EU to do something the government felt was necessary. Self-confidence on the international stage has attracted the attention and respect of the United States. A special relationship has formed between the two nations, one which some believe would be impossible if Britain were to conform to a strict European foreign policy. Britain's Europeanization is seen as further confirming its declining global power.

Conclusions

To quote Prime Minister Blair, greater political consensus across the region "is an example of how a Britain strongly engaged in the European Union has much greater political influence than a Britain disengaged from Europe." Europeanization and the Common Foreign and Security Policy are necessary evils for the UK's participation in the EU. The regional integration movement has changed the nature of politics in Europe. Whether Britain likes it or not, it must adapt. Inability to integrate its institutions into the European framework will create greater friction between the UK and the Union. In the long run, the benefits of adaptation will out-weigh the disadvantages, as a leadership role in the EU offers Britain a chance to reclaim some of its eroding global power.

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