

BRITISH INFLUENCE RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW OF THE BALANCE OF COMPETENCES BETWEEN THE UK AND THE EU

British Influence believes that Britain must take a lead in and through Europe in order to maximise its influence on the world beyond, to keep people and markets free and the world as far as possible at peace.

We believe that British policy towards the EU should focus on maximising the EU's global influence, and directing it towards objectives, which are consistent with our own national objectives: a productive engagement in developing EU policies, which benefit the UK.

As Alec Douglas Home argued as Foreign Secretary in 1971, the primary objectives of our foreign policy must be to guarantee our security and independence and to keep our power, prosperity and influence at the highest possible level. To do that, our country has throughout history sought alliances and partnerships. The conviction of the Conservative government which first took us into Europe was that this country could no longer stand alone in the world – and that the only way to preserve our independence for the future was, as Douglas Home put it, “to join a larger grouping”.

The EU, and the UK's role in the EU, can always be improved. As such, British Influence welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Government's Review of the Balance of Competences between the UK and the EU. The review provides an opportunity for a more informed debate on the implications of EU membership for the UK; and for the UK to shape the debate on the future functioning of the European Union as a whole.

Foreign Policy REVIEW

1. In what areas of global affairs does the EU add value or deliver impact or not on behalf of the UK?

EU membership enables the UK to punch above its weight, and ‘maximises’ the UK's voice. Whenever, as is often the case, we can persuade our EU partners to follow our foreign policy objectives, the result is that our position becomes the considered view of 27 countries, with a total population of half a billion people. Europe gives the UK a larger platform, and an amplifier.

For the UK to maintain its power and project its influence it is important for it to remain part of the EU. Successive US Administrations have made it clear that they attach great importance to our staying in the EU, from which vantage point we can work to keep transatlantic relations as a whole in the best possible repair.

If we were to further isolate ourselves from the EU then we would suffer in terms of our influence and our ability to drive the best deals for the UK. We might as well be a boat drifting aimlessly, with no ability to reach any port. This is reminiscent of Harold Macmillan's diary of 9 June 1960: “Shall we be

caught between a hostile (or at least less and less friendly) America and a boastful but powerful 'Empire of Charlemagne'?" and also mirrors the warnings of [Emma Reynolds, the Shadow Minister for Europe](#), that: "*There is a danger, that outside of the EU, the UK would become a medium sized economy perched on the fringes of an economic and geopolitical superpower, whose interest could be at times in competition with that of the UK.*"

Indeed, this viewpoint is shared and further expounded by Lord Hannay, a member of our Future of Europe Forum, who has written: "Britain in the first quarter of the twenty-first century is a middle-ranking power with world-wide interests and world-wide responsibilities. It is the duty of every government to promote those interests and to fulfil those responsibilities. Our capacity to handle these critical foreign policy challenges alone, even if it did ever exist, has vanished."

Certainly, the EU provides the UK with a much heavier clout in global negotiations, not only in trade but also in development and on the environment. Both impact directly upon internal policies such as immigration and security as well as food and energy security.

This is because the EU is one of three centres of global 'mega-trade', the others being the US, India and China, and it acts as a vital counterweight to their dominance, representing the interests of its member nations in the increasingly competitive and challenging world marketplace.

The European Union has very substantial scope for matching this economic clout with political influence but this is as yet underutilised. For these chances to be fully grasped, what is needed is full and determined commitment from the UK, rather than the sceptical semi-detachment from Europe which has marked so much of our recent foreign policy.

The drawbacks of this disengagement are numerous. In addition to trade, there are many areas where the EU pulls more weight collectively, on behalf of its member states, than any individual state.

Particular "value added" from experience comes in the following areas: environment; reduction of poverty; conflict resolution, international trade negotiations – e.g. bilaterally with US, Japan, South Korea, India and China; foreign policy and through the WTO and climate change talks - such as dealing with the threat of nuclear weapons in Iran, security and diplomatic clout, peace keeping/peace spreading efforts and ideology projection, overseas aid and public health issues (e.g. bird flu).

Membership of the EU also allows for a greater ability to influence events and achieve high-level diplomacy throughout its immediate neighbourhood. The recent talks between Serbia and Kosovo illustrate the great power of the EU to, on occasion, achieve the seemingly impossible.

2. What are the comparative advantages/disadvantages of working through the EU in the area you wish to comment on, rather than the UK working independently?

Advantages:

Working together brings greater influence for both the UK and the EU. The key advantage of the EU is size and leverage: its collective weight -- as largest single market, as biggest trade bloc, as largest aid donor, as 27 countries, as 500 million people -- amplifies our voice and gives us influence that on our own we could only dream of.

The European External Action Service, with the participation of seconded British diplomats, has the potential to supplement UK missions in third countries where the UK is not, or is scarcely present. A systematic long-term effort is needed to improve its quality.

Britain has the world's 4th largest military, and 7th largest economy, plus a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, and an independent nuclear deterrent. As such, it certainly has the means to make a leading contribution to European foreign policy co-operation. The EU helps deliver impact for the UK, provided we take the trouble to ensure through active diplomacy that we build the alliances we need to win the key intra-EU arguments.

Disadvantages:

There can be excess of bureaucracy and of having to gain support from many diverse opinion groups. This leads to a slower response time and a "consensus only" mode of operation. The other member states will not always agree with the UK position. Although the positions of the member states tend to be broadly aligned, the degree of consensus required for maximum impact is rarely reached.

3. How effective is the EU at combining its foreign, defence, economic and civil protection policy instruments to deliver best effect in foreign policy? What, if anything, should it do differently?

Coordination between these policy areas remains difficult since they rely on different types of competences and decision-making processes in the treaty.

We see the new role of the EEAS as a supplement to the efforts of the missions of member states. In many developing countries, such as Namibia, the EC Mission is the main focus of the EU's relations with the country in question and strongly supports the role of the member states.

However, there often remains a lack of coherence when member states do not fully commit to a common set of principles and tasks. It is a case of "I

agree with the EU position when everyone else agrees with my position". This often means that the EU is not effective as it could be.

EU foreign policy should in particular concentrate on building economic relations with countries where there is potential for better political relations, and on development and humanitarian aid.

EU member states clearly still feel the need to retain the right to an independent foreign policy to ensure that their national interest can be protected. Therefore, the objective of the EU in foreign policy should be to identify those areas where the interests of member states are sufficiently close for the adoption of a joint policy to be advantageous to all.

This has frequently been the case but there remain serious difficulties in creating, for instance, a Russia policy and a China policy acceptable to all member states.

The EU's foreign policy is still sometimes poorly defined and weakly projected but this is in fact a good reason for the UK to be at the centre of Europe, to add much-needed weight and to drive the EU's foreign and defence policy agenda with its key allies.

One way to visualise the situation is that foreign policy is a seat, while defence, economics and civil protection are supporting legs. France and the UK together should provide the strength of the defence leg.

The lack of commitment of some member states including the UK to EU foreign policy is a cause of regret. The Common Foreign and Defence Policy (CFDP) has not been fully realised. Today in Europe there is a gulf between nations more willing to engage in military conflict or aid military intervention and those nations opposed to it.

That said, we should consider how far matters have come. NATO & the EU now have worked together effectively in the Balkans.

Because while some member states favour inter-governmental military agreements, like Britain and France, and this works reasonably well, one could not always envisage such harmony if and when the EU's defence mechanisms are called into play.

One further issue is that civil protection has tended to be bundled in with humanitarian aid and is yet to provide its maximum visibility. This aspect of EU defence policy will come online with a Crisis Centre towards the end of 2013 and will no doubt showcase strong UK input and expertise.

Overall, the move towards small surgical military interventions has led to a shift towards joint military action by a number of MS in situations such as Mali, with the hope that there are positive outcomes, as in Sierra Leone. This shift could be seen as demonstrative of an EEAS/Council-based cooperation not currently incorporated into the activities (and budget) of the Commission.

Clearly EU foreign policy remains a 'work in progress' but it does have the joined-up ability to demonstrate a more comprehensive approach than that of NATO. A good example is its policy towards the Horn of Africa.

Case Study: Integrated EU foreign policy tools in the Horn of Africa

European Union co-ordinated foreign policy in the Horn of Africa seeks stability, security, peace, prosperity and good governance. Since 2008 the EU has contributed over €400 million in **humanitarian assistance** to help victims of drought and conflict in the Horn of Africa, including refugees and the internally displaced. Broader political and **development activity** has included support to the constitutional process in South Central Somalia, work to strengthen the democratic process in Somaliland and assistance to bolster agriculture and food security. **Trade** links are being developed with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional organisation that includes the Horn of **Africa**. The EU has established three **Crisis Response Missions** under its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The aim is to deliver a comprehensive approach to crisis management, through the use of both military and civilian action to address security, humanitarian and socio-economic challenges. Launched in 2008, EU NAVFOR - ATALANTA was the first EU operation in the Horn of Africa. Working closely with NATO and other countries such as Russia and China, it aims to counter piracy, protect vulnerable shipping and monitor fishing in the area. A second EU military mission was launched in 2010. EUTM Somalia aims to train Somali soldiers based in Mogadishu to help stabilise the city. Approved in December 2011, civilian mission **EUCAP NESTOR** will help strengthen regional navies. The EU is also active in helping shape a **counter-terrorism** strategy for the region.

4. How effective are the EU's delivery mechanisms? Would any changes make them more effective, and if so, which ones and why?

Despite improvements the EU's delivery mechanisms remain labyrinthine and ponderous, with too much centralized bureaucracy and an inability to act quickly or project a common point of view in a rapidly changing situation. This is mostly due to the battle over competences between the EU institutions and the Member States.

One solution to this impasse is that a development of 'core competence clusters' could allow groups of nations particularly adept in certain fields to bypass or streamline bureaucracy. Such an approach could perhaps be developed under enhanced cooperation mechanisms.

Experience so far also suggests that delivery systems have been most effective when EU programmes were managed by competent national agencies, such as the British Council managing the EU 'Youth in Action' programme and ERASMUS in the UK.

There is a need for better coordination on the European level between the EEAS and Commission.

In addition, the Council of Ministers can slow down effective EU coordination during crisis situations. Giving other institutions more power may not be the best option for maintaining broad public acceptance for the EU in the member states. Rather the Council needs to be reformed to operate more effectively and it needs to review its internal functions and processes and optimise them.

5. Would a different division of EU and Member State competence in a particular area produce more effective policies? If so, how and why?

Foreign Policy is one of the *key* areas where Britain stands to benefit most from an amplified voice in an increasingly globalised world and where we must preserve British influence.

It should be noted however that the issue of the division of competences does not need to arise in the CFSP or CSDP fields unless there is felt to be a need for reform: currently they are firmly and indisputably in the competence of Member States and agreement is only possible by consensus.

Complaints about the extension of EU competence in foreign affairs, the so-called, much exaggerated, “competence creep”, are quite often more about communicating whether actions taken are ‘on behalf on the EU’ or “on behalf of the EU and the member states”. In reality there is often little or no difference with specific agreed actions.

A single all-embracing EU foreign policy is not a realistic prospect, not just due to Britain but also to many other countries, including France and Germany. However, as Sir Malcolm Rifkind the former Foreign Secretary recently pointed out, establishing common positions in numerous areas is not only sensible, but happens already and has for a long time been a useful way of promoting British influence.

6. How might the national interest be served by action being taken in this field at a different level e.g. regional, national, UN, NATO, OECD, G20 – either in addition or as an alternative to action at EU level?

All the above are valid mechanisms for promoting and protecting our national interest, and sometimes the best, but it is the EU which most effectively unifies the member states in their approach to foreign policy as a whole.

The high level of European dependence for defence on the USA needs rebalancing, particularly in the EU’s immediate neighbourhood – not due to any strategic fall out over foreign policy objectives but more about resource and regional focus – and this should be addressed at a European level.

The UK must remain able to gather to itself a coalition of the willing for any particular action which is in the national interest. This will involve continued active membership in all those clubs and continued cooperation and coordination with fellow members.

An appreciation of the importance of multilateral relationships to the United Kingdom's national interest is crucial, as the vast majority of UK foreign policy today is conducted on a multilateral basis.

Britain's future use of military force will be overwhelmingly as part of varying constellations of coalitions and alliances. British involvement in the EU must therefore be understood not just in the European context, but as part of its involvement in all kinds of global issues through numerous other international groupings.

7. Are there any general points you wish to make, which are not captured above?

We reproduce here below some general points made by respondents to British Influence's call for evidence:

"A CFSP decided by unanimity of (soon) more than 30 Member States will not work. But countries will not want to be bound against their will on such matters by a majority vote. How to square the circle? Allow decisions by QMV to adopt the "Union" position, which individual Member States who voted against would be allowed to disassociate themselves from. In practice, (1) no one would want to outvote a country like Britain France or Germany, so we are talking mostly of possible and (2) other countries would usually prefer to compromise rather than be isolated"

"Issues which cross borders can only be tackled on a cross-border level"

"Further integration in this field [of foreign policy] would be greatly beneficial, but extremely difficult. Especially now!"

"It is good that these questions are being asked. What is depicted as UK public opinion regarding the EU is too often based on bias or vested interest."

"Aside from trade the base case for UK membership of the EU is the increased status the UK gains from its membership of the EU."

"The EU must strengthen its defence capabilities as an independent regional force separate from NATO, able to respond to situations, in Africa for example, on its own, without help from the US or anyone else and this should be led by the UK and France. If the UK is not at the heart of the EU, this force will be less effective. In circumstances where collective budgeting for defence must be as efficient as possible, it will be a real disadvantage."

"Foreign Policy holds the key to Britain's retained influence and voice on the world's stage. Fighting hard to maximise the national interest by working with other nations best enables us to face threats to our way of life from crime and from globalisation. The European interest is often the British interest and the two shouldn't be seen as competing. Many of the institutional creations that may be seen by some to be creating a European 'state' of identity are merely in my view to create a forum and body where national interests are protected,

heard and supported. Globalisation means we need to work hard working with others to protect the weak through aid or war, to protect ourselves from cross border crime and to protect our future from the threats we will surely face. The EU facilitates this.”