

## CFSP WATCH 2003

### NATIONAL REPORT GREAT BRITAIN

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#### 1. Basic views of CFSP/ESDP in your country.

- The UK sees itself as a leading player in European and global foreign, security and defence issues. The relative decline of British power since 1945 has compelled the UK to co-operate in multilateral forums and use the EU in particular to pursue its global interests and responsibilities. For this reason Britain often views CFSP/ESDP instrumentally as a means of promoting her interests, and therefore UK involvement in CFSP has been seen more as a case of adaptation rather than a break in foreign policy priorities.
- This has created a contradiction. In continuing to possess and seeking to retain an independent capability in foreign and defence affairs the UK finds itself unwilling to accept any limitations in CFSP/ESDP. Such 'Europeanisation' of UK foreign policy and decision making as has occurred has not changed the fundamentals of UK foreign policy.
- A sensitive concern has been to avoid jeopardising the 'special relationship' with the US. There remains a strong assumption that the US, not the EU, is Britain's preferred partner (Washington being just 'across the pond'). This is especially so in such areas as defence and intelligence. But in deciding whether or not to support the US or the EU the UK has shown a willingness to 'pick and choose' according to which policy is being discussed. Understandably the UK has been described as 'Janus faced' and 'impaled on the horns of the diplomatic dilemma' of choosing between the US and the EU.
- Another enduring commitment has been to NATO which has been seen as the only 'reliable' and effective security provider for Europe. The UK expresses regular concerns that moves towards EU defence capabilities may lead to the undermining of NATO.
- In comparison to European integration in general, the UK has not shown an attitude of aloofness towards EPC/CFSP/ESDP and has been involved from the beginning. Furthermore, the UK has been closely involved in European security and defence since 1945. Problems arise when co-operation becomes formal and structured within the EU and begins to take on 'supranational' overtones.
- There is a deep suspicion of supranational/federal policy making. As a consequence there is no appetite for ideas that seek to move foreign or defence policy from the intergovernmental to the supranational. The debate often centres on the domestically contested concept of sovereignty.
- The presentation, wording and symbolism of involvement in the EU are crucial. The British press has constantly forced successive governments to be on the defensive against claims that sovereignty is being surrendered to 'Europe'. Recent media debates about the European constitution highlighted the fact that the EU would have such national characteristics as a 'Foreign Minister' or a 'President'. This is also fed by the much wider debate on membership of the Euro. In general there has been a long-standing inability to communicate the depth of engagement in the EU, and foreign policy is no exception.
- Compared to some other EU Member State populations the British public has been seen to be more supportive of their country taking a lead role in foreign

affairs. This reflects a number of factors such as history, empire, pride in the armed forces, strong links and concerns for areas beyond Europe. At the same time there is ambivalence and sometimes a fickle attitude towards the UK playing a lead role. These concerns surround fears of imperialism, 'not our problem/war', and a desire for the government to concentrate on domestic affairs (Blair has been criticised for being a very peripatetic PM). This ambivalence is also evident in



is seen positively as a partner, ally, linked by strong cultural, historical, economic, and demographic links.

- The Commonwealth remains an important aspect of UK foreign policy. Strong emotional, symbolic, population and economic links remain and continue to be developed.
- The general public supports the idea of UK leadership in CFSP, but on British terms and with an option to go it alone. The problems and opportunities of globalization leave the UK aware that it must work with the EU, but at the same time not reject the pursuit of multi-lateral solutions beyond the EU. The EU appears as the main, but not the only forum in which foreign and security policy is to be dealt with.
- Sovereignty remains a contested notion. No British government can be seen to give up British sovereignty 'to Europe'. Strong suspicion of supranational and federal ideas.
- Human rights are an enduring concern. The arrest of General Pinochet was widely supported. The Labour Government did commit itself to 'an ethical foreign policy' which it has not been seen to live up to...
- Concern about terrorism, failed and rogue states. Belief that they cannot be addressed through aid and economic packages alone. At the same time a recognition that a stick does not always work and that these problems are a complex mix of development, governance, crime, security and military issues.
- Development and aid remain strong concerns, but should be tied to foreign policy.
- The Euro – this plays into every aspect of the debate on British membership of the EU. Noub Tc 3o two6 Twradictory. Belief that they cannot82ewh. Nolowof Generand security p

## **2. National perceptions and positions with regard to CFSP/ESDP issues**

### **Perceived success and/or failure of CFSP/ESDP**

- On Iraq, HMG has been keen to emphasise the UK was not alone. It was in a



because most offers were of troops and not of much desired specialised equipment or units.

**External Representation: What is the position of the UK on the appointment of a European foreign minister and a President of the European Council? Is the UK in favour of double hatting?**

- HMG currently supports the ideas for both a Foreign Minister and a President of the European Council.
- The UK was initially suspicious of the idea for an EU Foreign Minister that would merge the High Representative and Commissioner for External Relations.

- On QMV HMG has taken an increasingly hard line. It did state that it would consider extension of QMV on a case by case basis stressing that any future decision to move to QMV would have to be made by unanimous agreement in the Council. But HMG has increasingly 'red lined' extension to CFSP (along with tax and defence, but not in JHA).
- For presentation reasons (see above) HMGs have generally played down the increasing amount of QMV in CFSP. This has created the usual contradiction of being keen to make CFSP more effective (avoiding vetoes) while being unwilling to face the consequences.
- UK has been reflecting upon ways to strengthen and enhance constructive abstention, and the possibilities of developing enhanced co-operation. But it has expressed opposition to structured co-operation in defence and is very unwilling to see a separate collective defence commitment that could encourage action outside



Capabilities and Acquisition Agency to improve the development of Member State capabilities for ESDP.

- HMG is keen to see that the European Capabilities, Development and Acquisition

United Services Institute and the Centre for European Reform. On European issues, which also include discussion of CFSP, see the ESRC 'One Europe or Several?', UACES (University Association for Contemporary European Studies) and the British Foreign Policy Research Centre. There are also a great many think tanks and organisations conducting work on CFSP and the EU, such as the Federal Trust or Demos. Finally, the main campaign and political organisations relating to the EU focus on the issue of the Euro, although CFSP is discussed. Such organisations include Britain in Europe (pro EU), UK Independence Party, Global Britain (just two of the 60+ anti-Euro/EU groups).