

Understanding Adaptation: UK Foreign Policy and the CFSP 1990-2001

Abstract

The emergence of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the European Union (EU) has raised the prospect of first 12, then 15, 25 and now 27+ states sharing common positions on the world stage. In recent years, a number of analyses have appeared which explore the impact of the developing CFSP on the member states. Many of these analyses, have concluded that the process of adaptation is more substantial among the minor member states than the major ones (Tonra 2001; Larsen 2005). However, this conclusion has seldom been subjected to detailed empirical analysis. This paper undertakes an in-depth empirical examination of the United Kingdom (UK) to answer the central research question of 'to what extent has the UK adapted to the CFSP of the EU?' The paper therefore offers a comprehensive picture of adaptation in a member state which is not only major, but is also commonly perceived as an "awkward partner" (George, 1994), and which has a "special relationship" with the United States (US). It thereby bridges IR, EU and UK foreign policy literature, applying the theoretically-informed analytical framework to the examination of the developing relationship between EU and UK foreign policy.

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Introduction

A number of analyses have been carried out regarding the relationship between European foreign policy and the minor member states of the EU, which have arrived at varying conclusions. On the one hand, Tonra's analysis of the Europeanisation of foreign policy in Ireland, Denmark and the Netherlands finds that the 'reflex condition' has led to an apparent shift in identity and something more collective.¹ He argues that the CFSP determines the foreign policy agenda for small member states. On the other hand, Larsen finds that while in some cases EU and national foreign policy are effectively part of one foreign policy system, in other cases the two are very much distinct from one another.²

Although those studying the minor member states come to different conclusions, they are united on one point: that the process of adaptation to the CFSP will be less prominent in the major member states. Jørgensen argues that '[l]arger member states are likely to adapt less, simply because the "European" dimension is relatively smaller'.³ This assumption features frequently in the literature on the member states and the CFSP.⁴ It has not, however, been subjected to extensive empirical examination. Those who have attempted to analyse the relationship between European and national foreign policy in the major member states have tended to focus on the effects at the administrative level,⁵ or on attitudes to the development of capabilities at the EU-level,⁶ or on one individual policy area.⁷ In order to gain a clearer picture of the process of adaptation, however, a wider and deeper analysis is necessary. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of the institutional development and policies of the CFSP on the major member states through an analysis of UK foreign policy. The central research question is therefore: to what extent has the UK adapted to the CFSP of the EU?

1. The Theoretical Approach

The CFSP and its predecessor, European Political Cooperation (EPC) have attracted a great deal of attention from scholars. Although a wide variety of issues have been examined, the literature has been broadly concerned with two key questions: to what extent is the CFSP a success;⁸ and 'of what is the CFSP an example?'⁹

¹ Tonra, B. (2001) The Europeanisation of National Foreign Policy: Dutch, Danish and Irish Foreign Policy in the European Union. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 268-270.

² Larsen, H. (2005) Analysing the Foreign Policy of Small States in the EU. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 11-12.

³ Jørgensen, K.E. (1997) 'PoCo: The Diplomatic Republic of Europe', in Jørgensen, K.E. (ed.) Reflective Approaches to European Governance. Basingstoke: Macmillan, p. 177.

⁴ See, for example: Manners, I. and Whitman, R.G. (2000) (eds.) The Foreign Policies of the European Union Member States. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Nuttall, S. (1992) European Political Cooperation. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Øhrgaard, J. (2004) 'International Relations or European Integration: is the CFSP Sui Generis?', in Tonra, B. and Christiansen, T. (eds.) Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 26-44; Smith, M.E. (2000)

'Conforming to Europe: the Domestic Impact of EU Foreign Policy Cooperation', Journal of European Public Policy, 7:4, pp. 77-94; White, B. (2001) Understanding European Foreign Policy. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

⁵ White, B. (2001).

⁶ Hill, C. (1996) 'United Kingdom Sharpening Contradictions', in Hill, C. (ed.) The Actors in Europe's Foreign Policy. London: Routledge, pp. 68-89.

⁷ Holland, M. (1995a) 'Bridging the Capabilities-Expectations Gap: A Case Study of the CFSP Joint Action on South Africa', Journal of Common Market Studies, 33:4, pp. 555-572.

⁸ For example: Hill, C. (1993) 'The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe's International Role', Journal of Common Market Studies, 31:3, pp. 305-328; Hoffmann, S. (2000) 'Towards a Common Foreign and Security Policy?', Journal of Common Market Studies, 38:2, pp. 189-198; Holland, M. (1995b) European Union Common Foreign Policy. From EPC to CFSP Joint Action and South Africa. London: Macmillan.

In order to answer both, or either, of these questions, a number of authors have concerned themselves with the relationship between the member states and the CFSP.¹⁰ Their argument is that an analysis of this relationship and member state attitudes towards the CFSP may help to explain its effectiveness, or lack thereof.

These analyses have often drawn differing conclusions. For example, Hill and Wallace argue that 'two decades of European Political Cooperation have transformed the working practices of West European foreign ministers and ministries'.¹¹ Nuttall has labelled this process "socialisation", and argued that it has led to a 'reflex of consultation'.¹² In contrast, authors such as Pinar Tank argue that 'considerations of national interest have consistently undermined attempts at joint action'.¹³ The assumptions of the latter, and others, fit the rationalist schools of thought, whereby actors participate in the CFSP in order to maximise their own interests. For the former analysts, the process of socialisation they describe can best be captured through social constructivism, or sociological institutionalism. This holds that institutions – broadly defined as norms, values, rules of behaviour, and ways of doing things – have an effect on the actors involved in them.¹⁴

Both rationalist and constructivist approaches are problematic, however, as rationalist explanations cannot account for the "coordination reflex" identified by a number of authors and CFSP practitioners, while constructivist approaches run into difficulty with the ongoing divisions amongst the member states. This paper instead takes an approach to the CFSP based at the rationalist end of the constructivist approach, labelled rational choice historical institutionalism.¹⁵ This approach assumes that member states form preferences both exogenously and endogenously. Foreign policy results from both rational calculations and the path dependent "logic of appropriateness" developed through social interaction.¹⁶ Although some would argue that combining various strands of the new institutionalism is problematic,¹⁷ the "founders" of the new institutionalism argue that "[p]olitical actors are constituted both by their interests... and by the rules embedded in their identities and political institutions... and the relation between the two is often subtle."¹⁸

2. The Analytical Framework

⁹ For example: Carlsnaes, W. and Smith, S. (1994) (eds.) European Foreign Policy. The EC and Changing Perspectives in Europe. London: Sage; Jørgensen, K.E., Christiansen, T. and Wiener, A. (1999) 'The Social Construction of Europe', Journal of European Public Policy, 6:4, Special Issue, pp. 528-544; Peterson, J. and Sjørnsen, H. (1998) (eds.) A Common Foreign Policy for Europe? Competing Visions of the CFSP. London: Routledge.

¹⁰ Hill, C. (1996) (ed.) The Actors in Europe's Foreign Policy. London: Routledge; Hurd, D. (1981) 'Political Co-operation', International Affairs, 57:3, pp. 383-393; Larsen, H. (2005); Manners, I. and Whitman, R.G. (2000); Nuttall, S. (1992); Tonra, B. (2001); Von der Gablenz, O. (1979) 'Luxembourg Revisited or the Importance of European Political Cooperation', Common Market Law Review, 16, pp. 685-699.

¹¹ Hill, C. and Wallace, W. (1996) 'Introduction: Actors and Action', in Hill, C. (ed.), p. 6.

¹² Nuttall, S. (1992), p. 312.

¹³ Pinar Tank, G. (1998) 'The CFSP and the Nation-State', in Eliassen, K.A. (ed.), p. 20.

¹⁴ Checkel, J.T. (1999) 'Social Construction and Integration', Journal of European Public Policy, 6:4, Special Issue, pp. 545-560.

¹⁵ Rosamond, B. (2001), p. 118. See also: Falkner, G., Muller, W.C., Eder, M., Hiller, K., Steiner, G. and Trattnigg, R. (1999) 'The Impact of EU Membership on Policy Networks in Austria: Creeping Change beneath the Surface', Journal of European Public Policy, 6:3, pp. 496-516.

¹⁶ March J.G. and Olsen, J.P. (1989); March, J.G. and Olsen, J.P. (1998).

¹⁷ The ontologies of rational choice, historical and sociological institutionalism are different from one another.

¹⁸ March, J.G. and Olsen, J.P. (1998), p. 10.

For the analysis of adaptation, an original analytical framework has been developed. For reasons of space, only three elements of the framework are outlined here. The first concerns the subject of study: the CFSP. There are two common understandings of what is meant by the CFSP. For some, it is a process of institutional development at the EU-level, while for others it is seen as a cluster of policies.¹⁹ In order to gain a detailed picture of adaptation, however, it is necessary to examine both these aspects of the CFSP. While the rhetoric surrounding institution-building may indicate negativity or resistance for reasons of national interest, there may well be more adaptation within individual policy areas, away from the media spotlight of Inter-Governmental Conferences and Councils.

The second aspect of the analytical framework concerns the concept of adaptation. Many analysts term this process Europeanisation, and indeed the terms Europeanisation and adaptation are often used interchangeably.²⁰ It is also used as frequently to refer to a process of institutional development at the EU-level as it is to discuss the impact of those processes at the national level, sometimes even within the same volume.²¹ In addition, although many authors argue that Europeanisation does not necessarily lead to convergence, there is nevertheless an understanding that the process results in convergence around the EU norm or median.²² Expectations of convergence both bias and limit research on the relationship between EU and member state level developments and policies. The framework therefore employs the term adaptation which, although commonly associated with Europeanisation, highlights that the process under consideration is the impact of EU-level developments at the member state level. It also allows for a more nuanced understanding of the process occurring, as the concept of adaptation employed here argue that it can take one of the following three forms: convergence, diversion or leadership. A state adapts when it reacts to EU initiatives, in whichever form that response may be.

Thirdly, the framework offers a comparison of two different British Governments. The period of analysis – 1990-2001 – covers two distinct periods: John Major's Conservative Government (1990-1997), and Tony Blair's New Labour Government (1997-2001). The divisions over Europe and the strongly anti-European sentiments of several members of Major's party helped bring about the Conservatives' downfall. Blair's Government, on the other hand, has been seen as significantly more pro-European than its predecessors. Examining adaptation across these two Governments therefore offers insights into both the validity of the Euro-sceptic and pro-European labels commonly applied to the two parties, and into the extent to which the attitude of a Government towards the EU influences the degree and nature of adaptation.

3. Adaptation in the UK

Adaptation to the CFSP and ESDP did not take place in a vacuum. UK adaptation to European integration more generally established certain preferences in the UK's relationship with the EU, which influenced its adaptation to the CFSP. These focused on curbing increasing European integration, with both the Conservative and Labour Governments attached to subsidiarity, minimising the authority of the Community

¹⁹ Jørgensen, K.E. (2004). For examples of the institutional development understanding of the CFSP, see: Nuttall, S. (1992); Peterson, J. and Sjursen, H. (1998); Soetendorp, B. (1999).

For a case study approach, see: Holland, M. (1995b); Smith, K. (1999) The Making of EU Foreign Policy. The Case of Eastern Europe. London: Macmillan.

²⁰ Larsen, H. (2005); Tonra, B. (2001); White, B. (2001).

²¹ See for example: Hocking, B. and Spence, D. (2002); Manners, I. and Whitman, R.G. (2000).

²² Tonra, B. (2001); White, B. (2001).

institutions, reversing the trend towards a federal Europe, and enlarging the EU, thereby favouring widening over deepening. At the same time, both Governments were strong supporters of increased integration where it was seen to be in the UK's interests, and both expressed a desire to place the UK at the heart of Europe, leading European integration and ensuring its compatibility with British interests. These preferences featured consistently across both Governments, suggesting that Blair's supposedly more pro-European stance did not impact the UK's fundamental priorities.

3.1 UK Adaptation to the Institutional Development of the CFSP

As with European integration more generally, the UK's preferences towards the CFSP related to maintaining the intergovernmental structure of the CFSP, and curbing the powers and role of the Community institutions. For Major, the 'most significant' decision taken at Maastricht was 'the agreement to cooperate in a legally binding but intergovernmental framework in... foreign policy, and defence policy'.²³ He also highlighted the need for the UK to check 'the encroachment of the Community institutions' within the CFSP.²⁴ In November 1997, the Labour Government was also keen to emphasise that it had opposed measures which would 'effectively undermine the whole pillar structure',²⁵ and stressed that control of the CFSP would remain 'very much in the hands of the Presidency and the Council'.²⁶

Consistent with these preferences, the UK adapted through leadership in this area. Leading up to Amsterdam, Major's government put forward a number of proposals aimed at strengthening the CFSP institutions. They wished to reinforce the Presidency, and provide 'better back-up for the Council'.²⁷ They also proposed 'upgrading' the CFSP Unit of the Council Secretariat, and welcomed the expansion of the Council Secretariat's role.²⁸ The Labour Government also supported expansion of these intergovernmental institutions, supporting proposals to create the Political and Security Committee (PSC), made up of senior officials from the member states who would discuss foreign and security policy.²⁹

There was, however, convergence on the part of the UK around certain issues related to the institutional development of the CFSP. Within the limits defined by the UK's preferences, there was convergence on issues of external representation, the expansion of the scope of the CFSP, and decision-making.

Henry Kissinger is often credited with raising the concern that there was no single phone number to call when one wished to speak to "Europe".³⁰ At Maastricht, the UK

²³ Major, J. (18 December 1991) Commons Hansard. Column 277. It is possible to argue, however, that the agreement was given such prominence in order to divert attention from the lack of agreement on the issue of Economic and Monetary Union at Maastricht, which left the UK isolated, having decided to opt out of the single currency.

²⁴ Major, J. (18 December 1991) Commons Hansard, Column 277.

²⁵ House of Commons Session 1997-98 Paper 333. European Legislation Committee. Amsterdam Treaty. Minutes of Evidence, Wednesday 12 November 1997. Doug Henderson. Reply to Question 29.

²⁶ House of Commons Session 1997-98 Paper 305. Foreign Affairs Committee. First Report Treaty of Amsterdam. Minutes of Evidence, Tuesday 4 November 1997. Robin Cook. Reply to Question 86.

²⁷ Hurd, D. (21 June 1995) Commons Hansard. Column 365.

²⁸ Foreign and Commonwealth Office (1996) A Partnership of Nations. Command Paper 3181. London: HMSO. Annex C. Functioning of Common Foreign and Security Policy: Role of the Council Secretariat, p. 31. Paragraphs 4-5.

²⁹ House of Commons Session 1999-2000 Paper 68-i. Foreign Affairs Committee. Helsinki European Council. Minutes of Evidence, Wednesday 30 November 1999. Robin Cook. Reply to Question 83.

³⁰ Allen, D. (1998) 'Who Speaks for Europe? The Search for an Effective and Coherent Foreign Policy', in Peterson, J. and Sjursen, H. (eds.) A Common Foreign Policy for Europe? London: Routledge, pp. 41-42.

was clear that the EU should be represented by the rotating Presidency on the world stage. At Amsterdam, the suggestion was made that the EU should have a Mr/Ms CFSP, someone who would be the face of the Union's external relations.³¹ In March 1996, Rifkind admitted that the UK was open to the idea of a figure to represent the CFSP externally. He contended, however, that that person should be 'an official and not a politician'.³² With the change of Government, however, came a change of heart. Cook argued that Mr/Mrs CFSP would have the 'authority and status'³³ and be able to act 'in a more political role'.³⁴ He also pointed out, however, that the Presidency would remain responsible for the management of the CFSP, and that the post of High Representative was there as an 'extra resource',³⁵ accountable to the Council.³⁶

The scope of the issues covered by the CFSP was a further area where there was clear convergence on the part of the UK. At Maastricht, Hurd argued that the principle of the CFSP had to be 'one of agreeing and acting together *if we can*'.³⁷ At the time of Amsterdam, Rifkind argued that it was in the UK's national interest that the European Union should speak and act together 'where our objectives are the same'.³⁸ Under Labour, however, the discourse on the subject changed substantially. Blair argued that it was necessary to ensure that the EU could speak on the 'key international issues of the day'.³⁹

There was also some convergence on the issue of decision-making within the CFSP, although both Governments were determined to retain the veto. At Amsterdam, Rifkind argued that the debate was going 'in a welcome direction' as it recognised that 'individual member states should retain the veto'.⁴⁰ When Labour came to power, they were equally attached to the veto, with Cook arguing that part of the Government's negotiating objectives was to make sure that the veto remained.⁴¹ He acknowledged, however, that the treaty had tried to ensure that the veto would not be used 'lightly or frivolously'.⁴² The veto had clearly become the exception rather than the rule.

There was also convergence around the principle of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV). Initially, the Conservatives were opposed to the idea of QMV, even for the implementation of policies already agreed unanimously. The UK clearly converged on the issue, however, as Maastricht provided for the Council to decide unanimously the decisions that may be taken by QMV.⁴³ Major admitted that he had told the Council that 'we should consider the case for majority voting on its merits'.⁴⁴ By the end of 1996, the Government had further shifted stance, and was 'prepared to look at

³¹ Lodge, Juliet (1997) The Member States of the European Union and the Inter-Governmental Conference. Working Paper. Leeds: Centre for European Studies, University of Leeds in conjunction with the Representation of the European Commission in the United Kingdom.

³² House of Commons Session 1995-96 Paper 306-i. Foreign Affairs Committee. Special European Council, Turin, 29 March 1996, and the Intergovernmental Conference. Minutes of Evidence, Monday 18 March 1996. Malcolm Rifkind. Reply to Question 95.

³³ Ibid. Minutes of Evidence, Tuesday 4 November 1997. Robin Cook. Reply to Question 86.

³⁴ Ibid. Robin Cook. Reply to Question 87.

³⁵ Ibid. Memorandum submitted by the FCO. Paragraph 22.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Hurd, D. (21 May 1992). Emphasis added.

³⁸ Rifkind, M. (12 March 1996). Column 787. Emphasis added.

³⁹ Blair, T. (13 November 1998).

⁴⁰ Rifkind, M. (12 December 1996). Column 434.

⁴¹ House of Commons Session 1997-98 Paper 305. Minutes of Evidence, Tuesday 4 November 1997. Robin Cook. Reply to Question 95.

⁴² Ibid. Minutes of Evidence, Tuesday 4 November 1997. Robin Cook. Reply to Question 95.

⁴³ Treaty on European Union (The Maastricht Treaty).

⁴⁴ Major, J. (11 December 1991). Column 860.

ideas' concerning QMV for policy implementation.⁴⁵ This convergence continued under Labour, with Cook acknowledging that action under common strategies could be taken by constructive abstention.⁴⁶

The preferences of the UK's relationship with European integration were evidently carried over into and dominated its relationship with the CFSP. The intergovernmental preferences of the UK influenced its willingness to converge, and resulted in leadership adaptation as well as convergence. These preferences resulted in numerous attempts to curb the competencies of the supranational institutions. There was convergence on expanding the scope of the CFSP, and on issues of external representation and decision-making, but again within the limits of intergovernmentalism. The UK therefore demonstrated a mixture of fixed preferences, leadership, and convergence, with limited differences between the Conservative and Labour Governments.

3.2 UK Adaptation to the Institutional Development of the ESDP

The development of a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and UK adaptation within that is a particularly interesting area to examine, as the UK is one of the strongest supporters of NATO and a role for the US in European defence. However, the election of Blair's Labour Government in 1997 and the St Malo agreement are often identified as bringing about a significant turnaround in European defence.⁴⁷ There is little doubt that Blair's Government was fundamental to the development of the ESDP. What is important to determine, however, is whether Blair's efforts reflected adaptation on the part of the UK, and, if so, what kind.

As with adaptation to the CFSP, the UK retained clear preferences in the defence debate. Intergovernmentalism and unanimity in decision-making featured strongly, as did the idea of NATO primacy, and an aversion to the EU having defence (rather than security) capabilities.

In the early 1990s, despite the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Soviet threat, the UK argued that collective defence through NATO was 'essential for Britain.'⁴⁸ With that in mind, Hurd contended that mutual defence and other significant military issues would never be 'matters for the Twelve.'⁴⁹ The UK agreed that Europe needed to take more responsibility for its security, but contended that it must do so in ways that would be consistent with NATO.⁵⁰ The 1997 election which brought Blair's Labour government to power did little to change the UK's stance. Blair argued that 'nothing must ever be done that would undermine that transatlantic alliance.'⁵¹ The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, also contended that NATO was 'the foundation of our and other allies' common defence.'⁵²

⁴⁵ Rifkind, M. (12 December 1996). Column 435.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Minutes of Evidence, Tuesday 4 November 1997. Robin Cook. Reply to Question 86.

⁴⁷ See, for example: Forster, A. (2000) 'Britain', in Manners, I. and Whitman, R.G. (eds.) The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 44-63; Smith, J. (2005) 'A Missed Opportunity? New Labour's European Policy', International Affairs, 81:4, pp. 703-721; Wallace, W. (2005) 'The Collapse of British Foreign Policy', International Affairs, 82:1, pp. 53-68.

⁴⁸ Hurd, D. (8 November 1990) Commons Hansard. Column 150.

⁴⁹ House of Commons Session 1990-91 Paper 77-i. Foreign Affairs Committee. European Council, Rome. Minutes of Evidence, Wednesday 5 December 1990. Douglas Hurd. Reply to Question 24.

⁵⁰ Major, J. (20 November 1991) Commons Hansard. Column 276.

⁵¹ Blair, T. (9 July 1997) Commons Hansard. Column 941.

⁵² Cook, R. (17 July 1998) Commons Hansard. Column 682.

By the end of 1998, the UK had begun to change its position on European security, and Tony Blair took the lead in re-launching the European defence debate.⁵³ In December 1998, the British and French Governments issued a Joint Declaration on European Illustrating British preferences, however, the declaration explicitly recognised that NATO was 'the foundation of the collective defence of its members.'⁵⁴ Furthermore, the declaration argued that Europe would act only where NATO as a whole was not engaged.⁵⁵

In an echo of the debate over the CFSP, a further consistent preference for the UK was an aversion to Community involvement in European defence. Shortly after Maastricht, Major argued that the UK had succeeded in ensuring the issue of defence policy was 'beyond the reach of the Commission and the European Court.'⁵⁶ The Labour Government also objected to Commission involvement in the area of defence. Even after taking a leading role in the European defence debate, the Government argued that it would not be right 'for the European Commission or European Parliament to have a direct role in defence matters.'⁵⁷

Linked to these issues was the UK's preference for intergovernmentalism, unanimity and national sovereignty for decisions to implement operations in the area of security and defence. Prior to the Maastricht European Council, Major contended that decisions in the area of defence would be taken 'by unanimity.'⁵⁸ At the time of the Amsterdam IGC, Rifkind contended that the nation state remained 'the fundamental entity for cooperation in the field of defence'.⁵⁹

Retaining national sovereignty in defence policy was obviously as important for Labour as it had been for the Conservatives. Prior to Amsterdam, Blair argued that the Government would aim to ensure an outcome which would retain 'national control' in defence.⁶⁰ As the debate evolved, the Government consistently reinforced its position, reaffirming that they saw the European security initiative as 'strictly an intergovernmental arrangement within the Union'.⁶¹

On these three related issues of the primacy of NATO, Community involvement, and decision-making, the UK was therefore consistent in its preferences throughout the period of analysis. However, there was convergence on the part of the UK on certain issues relating to defence.

The first of these was the idea of a role for the EU in security. Returning from Maastricht, Major emphasised the British enthusiasm for strengthening European security co-operation, arguing that the UK's proposals had been for 'stronger European security and defence co-operation'.⁶² By early 1995, there were further subtle signs of convergence. Rifkind argued that the UK wished to work with its partners to develop 'a European capacity to act together in peacekeeping and other crisis management tasks',⁶³ but within the WEU rather than the EU. Over time, however, Government attitudes began to shift further towards the EU. In 1996, the

⁵³ This will be discussed in more detail below.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Major, J. (11 December 1991) Commons Hansard. Column 861.

⁵⁷ Robertson, G. (27 November 1998) Commons Hansard. Column 510.

⁵⁸ Major, J. (4 November 1992).

⁵⁹ Rifkind, M. (1995), p. 180.

⁶⁰ Blair, T. (14 May 1997) Commons Hansard. Column 68.

⁶¹ House of Commons Session 1999-2000 Paper 68-ii. Minutes of Evidence, Wednesday 7 June 2000. Robin Cook. Reply to Question 136.

⁶² Major, J. (18 December 1991) Commons Hansard. Column 277.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 181.

Government argued that the WEU would need to develop its planning, command and control and other capacities for mounting 'effective EU-led missions.'⁶⁴ In addition, they were concerned with promoting proposals for 'closer co-operation between the WEU and the European Union on defence matters.'⁶⁵

The Labour Government initially carried on from where the Conservatives left off. Blair highlighted that the UK 'perceived a common defence policy in relation to Europe', but this was to be carried out through the WEU.⁶⁶ Following the St Malo declaration, Government thinking shifted significantly.⁶⁷ Blair argued that he had launched the initiative on European defence to enable the Europeans to take on security tasks through a 'common European effort'.⁶⁸ He further contended that it was his hope that the Cologne European Council would 'give the European Union a direct role' in security.⁶⁹ There was, however, no question of the EU developing capabilities for the collective defence of Europe.⁷⁰ The word defence was used only to 'get across what we are talking about', but for the UK, defence and security were distinct, and the EU was to be allowed a capacity only in security.⁷¹ The significant convergence demonstrated by Labour was therefore strictly qualified by the UK's preferences.

The second area of convergence was the issue of the relationship between the WEU and the EU. At Maastricht, there were suggestions that the WEU should be merged into the EU as its defence arm.⁷² Initially, there was immense hostility to the idea. By early 1991, however, the Government acknowledged that strengthening the WEU was 'linked to the process of political union'.⁷³ However, the UK intended the WEU to act as a 'bridge between the Twelve and NATO', indicating again the Government's loyalty to NATO, but nevertheless showing acceptance of the 'developing links with the Twelve'.⁷⁴

At Amsterdam, the Conservative Government argued that the merger would occur 'over our dead bodies'.⁷⁵ At the same time, however, they were keen to develop a 'reinforced partnership' between the two organisations.⁷⁶ To that end, they proposed that WEU bodies would meet back-to-back with the Heads of State and Government of the EU and that the WEU Secretary-General be invited to attend European Council meetings,⁷⁷ demonstrating some convergence. Labour's stance initially echoed the resistance displayed by the Conservatives. Following the Amsterdam negotiations, Cook emphasised that the UK had kept the European Union and the WEU 'quite distinct and separate organisations'.⁷⁸ However, Labour did allow for the WEU and

⁶⁴ FCO (1996), p. 37. Paragraph 29. Emphasis added.

⁶⁵ Rifkind, M (16 November 1995) Commons Hansard. Column 138.

⁶⁶ Blair, T. (9 July 1997). Column 943.

⁶⁷ See, for example: Robertson, G. (7 December 1998); Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean (7 December 1998) Lords Hansard. Column 709; Blair, T. (14 December 1998) Commons Hansard. Column 607; Robertson, G. (28 January 1999).

⁶⁸ Blair, T. (8 March 1999) NATO, Europe, and our Future Security. Speech Given at the NATO 50th Anniversary Conference, Royal United Services Institute. London.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

⁷⁰ See Section 4.1.1.

⁷¹ House of Commons Session 1999-2000 Paper 264. Minutes of Evidence, Wednesday 16 February 2000. Geoff Hoon. Reply to Question 40.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁷³ Hurd, D. (28 February 1991) Commons Hansard. Column 584.

⁷⁴ Hurd, D. (6 March 1991). Column 204.

⁷⁵ House of Commons Session 1996-97 Paper 148-i. Foreign Affairs Committee. The Intergovernmental Conference. Minutes of Evidence, Thursday 5 December 1996. Sir Stephen Wall. Reply to Question 27.

⁷⁶ FCO (1996), p. 36. Paragraph 26.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* Paragraph 28.

⁷⁸ House of Commons Session 1997-98 Paper 305. Minutes of Evidence, Tuesday 4 November 1997. Robin Cook. Reply to Question 97.

the EU to cooperate on the Petersberg tasks, indicating the beginnings of convergence on the part of the Labour Government.

By the time of St Malo, the UK had begun to converge even further on the merger of the WEU and the EU. In June 1999, Cook admitted that there was an 'obvious question mark' as to whether the WEU was still necessary, as there were things which could be 'done better in the European Union'.⁷⁹ By mid-2000, the UK position had changed even more substantially, with Hoon arguing that, as the WEU approached 'the end of its sensible working life', its committees and organisations, including the Satellite Centre and the Institute for Security Studies, would be 'transferred into the European Union'.⁸⁰ However, the UK was not willing to incorporate the collective defence clause contained in Article V into the EU, as this would undermine NATO

A further related issue was that of developing a military capability for the EU. For the Conservative Government, any military capability was to be kept within the WEU. Hurd acknowledged that the UK was considering allowing the Europeans to develop the ability to provide a 'European military response', but argued that any issue on which the Europeans wished to do so would be referred 'to the WEU'.⁸¹ Again, the election of the Labour Government brought little initial change. Cook argued that one of the reasons the Government had resisted the merger of the WEU into the EU was that it would transform the European Union into a 'military and defence organisation', which was not something the Government wished to do.⁸²

With the St Malo declaration, it became clear that the Government had begun to change its stance. The declaration argued that the Union needed the capacity to take action 'backed up by credible military forces'.⁸³ There were, of course, qualifications as to what the UK was prepared to consider. They remained keen, however, to develop European capabilities within the limits of national sovereignty, strengthening the EU's foreign policy 'by backing it with a credible capability for military action'.⁸⁴ To that end, the UK was instrumental in developing the permanent military committee and staff within the European Council.⁸⁵

In addition to this convergent adaptation to the institutional development of the ESDP, the UK also adapted through diversion and leadership, with the Conservatives favouring the former, and Labour tending to employ the latter. One of the key diversionary responses of the Conservative Government to the suggestion of a security and defence capability for the EU was to put forward proposals to strengthen the WEU as an alternative. In the early 1990s, discussions were just beginning on the need to strengthen European capabilities and the appropriate structure to encourage that. Initially, the Government was clear that the answer would be found 'within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance'.⁸⁶ They suggested building up the WEU as the 'European pillar within the alliance', but made little mention of the EU within that context.⁸⁷ Major admitted that the Government had put forward proposals with

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ House of Commons Session 1999-2000 Paper 264. Minutes of Evidence, Wednesday 16 February 2000. Geoff Hoon. Reply to Question 20.

⁸¹ House of Commons Session 1990-91 Paper 77-ii. Minutes of Evidence, Wednesday 12 June 1991. Douglas Hurd. Reply to Question 84.

⁸² House of Commons Session 1997-98 Paper 387-i. Foreign Affairs Committee. The Luxembourg European Council. Minutes of Evidence, Monday 1 December 1997. Robin Cook. Reply to Question 54.

⁸³ St Malo Declaration.

⁸⁴ Blair, T. (14 December 1998).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Hurd, D. (8 November 1990). Column 151.

⁸⁷ Hurd, D. (28 February 1991).

the Italian Government to 'build up the WEU' in order to ensure that Europe's defence policy would develop in a way that was 'consistent with our existing obligations and arrangements through NATO.'⁸⁸

The Government also admitted to tactics of diversion prior to the Amsterdam IGC. In March 1995, Major contended that there was 'no question of the WEU being integrated within Community competence.'⁸⁹ He added that it was 'precisely to make sure that that is the case' that the UK had put forward proposals for stronger European defence cooperation on an intergovernmental basis.⁹⁰

In addition, the Conservatives displayed diversionary adaptation by promoting the ability of the WEU to utilise NATO assets to carry out European-led operations. In May 1992 they began setting out proposals to that end. The WEU was to be able to call upon 'NATO-assigned forces' or national forces, depending on its operational needs, to carry out military operations.⁹¹ In putting forward these proposals, the UK hoped to avoid the need for 'elaborate separate structures',⁹² and divert the focus away from the EU.

By 1994, the Government had developed its proposals within NATO, with the concept of the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF). These were forces which would be available 'purely and predominantly for European operations.'⁹³ The Government hoped that they would therefore 'meet the requirements of the European security and defence identity.'⁹⁴ They were particularly enthusiastic that the CJTF concept would provide the WEU with a capacity for action which was 'separable from NATO but, crucially, not separate.'⁹⁵

The Government further welcomed measures taken within NATO in 1996 which would allow for European-only operations using NATO assets, NATO headquarters, and American members of NATO staff.⁹⁶ However, Major's second Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, argued that the new arrangements increased the importance of ensuring that the WEU was 'not subordinated to the European Union' as it was 'not a suitable body to oversee the WEU's task.'⁹⁷

In contrast to the tactics employed by the Conservatives, Labour favoured leadership adaptation, taking the lead in the European defence debate in order to shape it in accordance with the UK's preferences. Discussing Blair's initiative at Pörschach, Cook emphasised that the Prime Minister had taken 'the lead in Europe', and argued that the UK would take 'a leading role in the defence debate that we have started.'⁹⁸ Blair acknowledged his motivation at the Cologne European Council, arguing that it had always been intended that Europe would have a common defence policy.⁹⁹ The choices facing the UK were 'engaging with that debate and shaping it in a way that was fully consistent with NATO' or 'opting out once again.'¹⁰⁰

⁸⁸ Major, J. (20 November 1991). Column 276.

⁸⁹ Major, J. (1 March 1995) Commons Hansard. Column 1065.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Hurd, D. (21 May 1992). Column 518.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Major, J. (12 January 1994) Commons Hansard. Column 178.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Portillo, M. (24 October 1996) Commons Hansard. Column 222.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Cook, R. (27 November 1998). Column 510.

⁹⁹ Blair, T. (8 June 1999) Commons Hansard. Columns 473-474.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

On issues of defence, the preferences of the UK centred around a consistent commitment to NATO, an aversion to EU institutions playing a role in security and defence, and a consistent preference for unanimity in decision-making. UK adaptation took the form of convergence on a role for the EU in security, the incorporation of the WEU into the EU, and the development of a military dimension to the EU. The diversionary form of adaptation was apparent in the Conservatives' efforts to strengthen the WEU as the European pillar of NATO. Labour displayed leadership adaptation, taking the lead on the defence and security debate to ensure that it developed in accordance with UK preferences. UK adaptation to the institutional development of the ESDP therefore took all three forms of adaptation identified in the analytical framework. Having examined adaptation to the institutional development understanding of the CFSP, the following sections will examine two individual case studies to determine the extent of UK adaptation within policy areas, in line with the analytical framework.

3.3 UK Adaptation to EU Policy towards Cuba

Cuba is a small country, with a population of around 11 million. Nevertheless, its Communist leadership and proximity to the United States have led to a significant role in international relations. US relations with Cuba have been frozen since the 1959 revolution, and in 1995 the US attempted to widen its unilateral sanctions through the imposition of extra-territorial legislation on third parties. In contrast, the EU has pursued a process of critical engagement with Cuba, combining engagement and dialogue with criticism on issues such as human rights and political freedom as established with the Common Position in 1996.¹⁰¹

Britain has enjoyed full diplomatic relations with Cuba since 1902,¹⁰² and has normal trade relations with the island.¹⁰³ Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening up of the Cuban economy, the UK decided to try to improve trade relations between the two countries.¹⁰⁴ To that end, the Caribbean Trade Advisory Group began leading business missions to Cuba.¹⁰⁵ Politically, the Government hoped to expand relations as Cuba made political and economic progress.¹⁰⁶ In the early 1990s, however, the UK's focus was bilateral as the Government argued that improving bilateral trade between the UK and Cuba was 'of more immediate importance than the longer-term structural relationship between the EU and Cuba.'¹⁰⁷

It was not until early 1996, shortly after the Spanish Presidency had pressed for an improvement in EU-Cuban relations, that the Government began demonstrating signs of convergence through the "reflex response".¹⁰⁸ In response to a debate on UK relations with Cuba, the Minister of State at the FCO, David Davis, argued that the best way to encourage reform in Cuba was to maintain a constructive dialogue with the Cuban authorities in conjunction 'with our EU partners',¹⁰⁹ showing clear recognition of the role of the EU in this policy area.

¹⁰¹ Council of the European Union, 96/697/CFSP: Common Position of 2 December 1996 defined by the Council on the basis of Article J.2 of the Treaty on European Union, on Cuba.

¹⁰² The Website of the British Embassy in Havana [The UK and Cuba: Bilateral Relations](#).

¹⁰³ Garel-Jones, T. (22 May 1991) [Commons Hansard](#). Column 507.

¹⁰⁴ Heathcoat-Amory, D. (27 January 1994) [Commons Hansard](#). Column 321.

¹⁰⁵ Hamilton, N. (26 May 1994) [Commons Hansard](#). Columns 479-481.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* Columns 480-481.

¹⁰⁷ Heathcoat-Amory, D. (15 June 1994) [Commons Hansard](#). Column 623.

¹⁰⁸ The "reflex response" refers to the habit of responding to questions on British relations or policy or representations with reference to the EU and indicates convergent adaptation.

¹⁰⁹ Davis, D. (20 March 1996) [Commons Hansard](#). Column 336.

The convergence begun under the Conservatives continued under Labour. In July 1997, the Government argued that the policy of the Government was to encourage a process of transition to a pluralist democracy and respect for human rights 'along with our EU partners.'¹¹⁰ Questioned on Britain's relations with Cuba in November 1997, the Minister of State at the FCO, Tony Lloyd, argued that the EU had presented its Common Position to the Cuban authorities on 21 July 1997, and that the UK Government looked forward to furthering the dialogue discussed in the Common Position.¹¹¹ Discussing the EU position was a clear sign of convergence, made all the more significant by the fact that the question concerned bilateral relations. That the Government was responding to questions on bilateral relations with reference to the EU indicated that EU policy had become part of UK policy.

With regard to the issues of concern to the EU, such as human rights and political freedoms, there was also significant convergence on the part of the UK. The day after the adoption of the Common Position, the Government Whip, Baroness Miller, argued that the UK 'and Europe' believed that engagement and trade with Cuba was 'the best way to ensure that human rights eventually prevail in Cuba.'¹¹² Under the Labour Government, the reflex response in the area of human rights became more evident.¹¹³ Questioned on the UK's response to an appeal by the Pope for an amnesty for political prisoners in Cuba in 1998, Baroness Symons replied that the UK supported the Pope's appeal.¹¹⁴ She then added that the UK, holding the EU Presidency, had 'coordinated an EU declaration' calling for the release of the political prisoners, despite the question referring to the *UK* response, rather than that of the EU.¹¹⁵ The Government was also instrumental in the development of the EU Human Rights Working Group, which was created under the UK's EU Presidency and brought together the Embassies of the Member States in Havana.¹¹⁶ The Government was keen to highlight this cooperation, arguing that EU missions in Havana had 'broadened the areas in which they work closely together' under the UK Presidency.¹¹⁷

One further area of interest concerns US policy towards Cuba. During the 1990s, Cuba put forward a resolution at the UN General Assembly on an annual basis which condemned and called for an end to the US embargo. Initially, the UK abstained from voting on the resolution, arguing that it was a 'bilateral matter between the Governments of Cuba and the United States.'¹¹⁸ However, in 1996, following the Helms-Burton legislation, the UK voted 'with European Union partners'¹¹⁹ against the US embargo, with the aim of '*condemning* the US embargo against Cuba.'¹²⁰ While it is obvious that the Helms-Burton legislation was a key motivator for the UK in voting with the other EU member states, commentators argue that the development of the EU Common Position – which was then being drafted – also contributed to the UK's change of stance.¹²¹

Despite this significant convergence and the limited nature of UK interest in Cuba, there were nevertheless indications that EU policy towards Cuba had not completely

¹¹⁰ Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean (14 July 1997) Lords Hansard. Column 899.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Baroness Miller of Hendon (3 December 1996) Lords Hansard. Column 581.

¹¹³ See comments by Tony Lloyd above: Section 5.3.1.

¹¹⁴ Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean (5 May 1998).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ European Council (30 April 1998).

¹¹⁷ Lloyd, T. (9 March 1998) Commons Hansard. Column 57.

¹¹⁸ Heathcoat-Amory, D. (15 June 1994). Column 622.

¹¹⁹ Baroness Chalker of Wallasey (17 November 1996) Lords Hansard. Column 261.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

¹²¹ Interviews with European Union and Member State Officials.

submerged that of the UK. The UK retained bilateral relations with Cuba throughout the period of analysis, with the Conservatives focused on trade, as already discussed. Under Blair's purportedly more pro-European Government, however, bilateral political relations increased substantially. The Prime Minister met Fidel Castro at an international summit in May 1998.¹²² In addition, the first FCO Ministerial visit to Cuba since the 1959 Revolution took place in 1998, when Baroness Symons held discussions with the Cuban Vice-President, amongst others.¹²³ It is important to note, however, that the UK was not alone in maintaining bilateral relations with Cuba. Spain was particularly keen to retain its relationship with Cuba, and developed bilateral Ibero-American summits without informing the other EU member states of their intention.¹²⁴

In the area of policy towards Cuba, the UK therefore demonstrated both ongoing bilateralism and convergence around the EU policy, and developed a 'reflex response' to questions on Cuban issues. It also moved clearly from a neutral stance to one critical of US policy, demonstrating that, on this issue, UK policy was aligned more substantially with the EU than with the US.

3.4 UK Adaptation to EU Policy towards Iran

Policy towards Iran is a more complex area of policy to examine, given the long relationship between Iran and the UK. However, this also makes it a particularly illustrative means of uncovering the relationship of UK policy with that of the EU.

EU policy towards Iran was similar to that towards Cuba. It focused on critical engagement, through the "critical dialogue", focused on engagement and criticism on certain areas of concern, including human rights, the *fatwa* against Rushdie, arms procurement, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and Iran's attitude towards terrorism and the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP). Relations between the two parties were broken as a result of the Mykonos crisis in 1997, but were restored, and expanded, with the election of President Khatami. The same issues of concern remained at the centre of the now "comprehensive" dialogue, but cooperation between the two parties was also increased to include working groups on cooperation against drug trafficking, on energy and on trade and investment. Relations since the period of analysis have been troubled by the issue of Iran's nuclear development programme, but the EU has maintained its preference for constructive dialogue, arguing that it is the best way to bring about the reforms in Iran which the international community wishes to see.

The UK's relations with and involvement in Iran date back to the 19th century, when British and Russian ambitions in the Middle East were played out in Iran.¹²⁵ In recent times, relations were broken off between the two parties when the UK refused to condemn the publication of Rushdie's "Satanic Verses", and Iran refused to withdraw the *Fatwa* issued against him. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait led to the decision to restore relations in the interests of regional stability, but the situation remained difficult, and relations distant. By the early 1990s, however, links between UK and EU policy and relations were becoming apparent, with the first signs of a developing "reflex response". In March 1993, the Government argued that the conclusions adopted at the Edinburgh European Council on the critical dialogue had made clear the conditions necessary for an improvement in relations with Iran.¹²⁶ This was all the

¹²² Blair, T. (28 October 1998) Commons Hansard. Column 172.

¹²³ Lloyd, T. (19 January 1999) Commons Hansard. Column 430.

¹²⁴ Interview with Source XVI.

¹²⁵ Hunter, S.T. (1990), p. 145.

¹²⁶ Hogg, D. (19 March 1993) Commons Hansard. Column 428.

more significant coming as it did in response to a question on relations between the UK and Iran, and not the EU and Iran.

The reflex response was also in evidence under the Labour Government. Questioned as to what action the *UK* had taken in response to the Mykonos verdict, the Government replied that the *EU* had 'immediately issued a statement condemning the evidence of official Iranian involvement in these murders and withdrew its Heads of mission for consultation.'¹²⁷ Further convergence was also demonstrated through British Embassy cooperation with the Embassies of the other member states in Tehran. On average, these meetings took place once every three weeks,¹²⁸ occurring only once a month in calm periods, but once or twice weekly during crises.¹²⁹

In addition to convergent adaptation, the UK also demonstrated the leadership form of adaptation. Both EU and UK sources confirm that the policy of the UK largely drove that of the EU during the 1990s, and suggest that it continues to do so now.¹³⁰ They also argue that the UK spent a lot of time trying to form joint positions towards Iran, and tried consistently to influence EU policy towards Iran.¹³¹ Discussing the restoration of relations between the EU and Iran following the Mykonos crisis, the Government argued that it had taken the lead during its Presidency in early 1998 and that the UK's preference for a change of perspective on Iran had been welcomed by the other member states.¹³² Sources at the EU-level concur that the EU dialogue with Iran was re-established very much under the UK Presidency.¹³³

There was also convergence apparent on the issues of concern outlined by the EU. In July 1993, the Government was asked what representations it had made regarding abuses of women's human rights in Iran. Hogg replied that the Government regularly underlined its concerns to the Iranians 'both bilaterally and with our EC partners.'¹³⁴ The reflex response continued under the Labour Government. In March 1999, the Minister of State at the FCO, Derek Fatchett, replied to questions on the UK's action on human rights in Iran by arguing that the UK 'and our EU partners' frequently raised their concerns with the Iranian authorities.¹³⁵

More significantly, the UK was willing to allow the EU to act on its behalf on issues of human rights. In response to questions on UK action regarding the execution of a prominent member of the Bahá'í Community, Douglas Hogg argued that the UK was hoping that the Presidency would soon make a demarche 'on behalf of the Twelve' to the Iranian authorities.¹³⁶ For the Labour Government, EU action was also considered synonymous with UK action. Following the arrests of members of the Iranian Jewish Community in 1999, the Government highlighted the German EU Presidency representation to the Iranian authorities and the EU demarche to the Iranian authorities on 7 and 16 June respectively.¹³⁷ This was in reply to a question regarding the action that the UK intended to take, demonstrating the willingness of the UK to allow the EU to act on its behalf.

¹²⁷ Henderson, D. (5 June 1997) Commons Hansard. Column 214.

¹²⁸ Interview with Source VIII.

¹²⁹ Interview with Source V.

¹³⁰ Interviews with Source XXVIII and VIII.

¹³¹ Interviews with Sources VIII and V.

¹³² House of Commons 1997-98 Paper 582-i. Foreign Affairs Committee. Iraq. Minutes of Evidence, Tuesday 24 February 1998. Derek Fatchett. Reply to Question 65.

¹³³ Interview with Source XXI.

¹³⁴ Hogg, D. (8 July 1993) Commons Hansard. Column 238.

¹³⁵ Fatchett, D. (1 March 1999) Commons Hansard. Column 601.

¹³⁶ Hogg, D. (14 May 1992) Commons Hansard. Column 193.

¹³⁷ Hoon, G. (18 June 1999) Commons Hansard. Column 254.

On the other issues of concern identified by the EU, UK policy showed both adaptation and continuing bilateralism. On terrorism, the Government displayed the reflex response, answering questions on efforts to combat terrorism emanating from Iran by pointing to the decision taken at the Edinburgh European Council to adopt the critical dialogue.¹³⁸ The Government also argued that they maintained 'regular contact with our European partners... on ways of combating terrorism.'¹³⁹ Labour's discourse on the issue of terrorism also showed convergence. In July 1998, the Government contended that it would raise its concerns about terrorism 'through the new [comprehensive] EU/Iran dialogue.'¹⁴⁰

However, the UK also attempted to tackle the issues of terrorism and WMD bilaterally, arguing in October 1994 that it would maintain pressure on Iran 'bilaterally' as well as through the EU, and other multilateral organisations.¹⁴¹ The Labour Government not only continued to raise its concerns on the issue bilaterally, but actually increased its bilateral efforts on the issue of terrorism, arguing in July 2000 that it was developing its cooperation with Iran in this and other areas.¹⁴²

On the issue of arms procurement and WMD proliferation, the UK's concerns were predominantly bilateral. In 1995, although the issue of WMD had been incorporated into EU policy towards Iran, the focus of the Government remained predominantly bilateral, remaining 'deeply concerned at reports that Iran is interested in developing nuclear weapons and in acquiring ballistic missiles.'¹⁴³ Under Labour, the bilateral focus of the UK continued, and by early 2000 the UK had begun to actually increase its bilateral action in the area of arms procurement and WMD proliferation. During the visit of the Iranian Foreign Minister to London in January 2000, he and the British Foreign Secretary issued a Joint Declaration agreeing to continue 'mutual co-operation' aimed at reinforcing international efforts to eliminate WMD.¹⁴⁴

The bilateral focus of the UK on the issue of WMD did not prevent some convergence towards EU cooperation on the issue. David Davis argued in May 1995 that the Government would continue to work closely 'with our European partners to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.'¹⁴⁵ Labour also argued that the UK had urged Iran to negotiate additional protocols with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) 'with our European partners'.¹⁴⁶ The UK remained involved in bilateral discussions with Iran over their concerns, but they were evidently aware of and accepted a degree of EU cooperation on the issue.

Concerning Iran's attitude towards the MEPP, the Government argued in March 1996 that it had made it clear to the Iranian Chargé when he visited the FCO that its policy was 'unacceptable'.¹⁴⁷ The Government then added, however, that it would continue to press home its opinion on Iran's attitude 'through the European Union's critical dialogue'.¹⁴⁸ Under Labour, the Government initially demonstrated the reflex response regarding Iran's attitude towards the MEPP. In February 1999, Derek Fatchett responded to questions on British representations on the subject by highlighting the EU/Iran talks in Vienna in December 1998, where they had discussed

¹³⁸ Hogg, D (2 May 1993) Commons Hansard. Column 486.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Goodlad, A. (26 October 1994).

¹⁴² Hain, P. (12 July 2000) Commons Hansard. Column 291WH.

¹⁴³ Davis, D. (13 February 1995) Commons Hansard. Column 519.

¹⁴⁴ Hain, P. (17 January 2000).

¹⁴⁵ Davis, D. (22 May 1995) Commons Hansard. Column 381.

¹⁴⁶ Fatchett, D. (3 February 1999) Commons Hansard. Column 687.

¹⁴⁷ Hanley, J. (29 March 1996) Commons Hansard. Column 1364.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

the MEPP.¹⁴⁹ By the end of 2000, however, there was little mention of the EU in the context of discussions on the MEPP. Discussing the UK's concerns, Hain argued simply that the Government raised the MEPP with the Iranian Government regularly, and urged them to continue with the more moderate stance which they had recently adopted.¹⁵⁰

A further, extremely significant issue in relation to Iran was the *Fatwa* against Salman Rushdie. As the author was a British citizen, Iran's refusal to revoke the *Fatwa* was a considerable obstacle to bilateral relations. The EU took a strong stance on the issue, including it in the issues to be resolved before further cooperation could take place under the critical dialogue. The UK's reflex response was noticeably absent on this issue, however. Although the UK clearly did not prevent the EU from raising the issue, it made few comments on the role of the EU. There was no mention of the critical dialogue's emphasis on resolving the *Fatwa* against Rushdie. Instead, in early 1993, the Government discussed only its own meetings with Rushdie, and the assurances that the UK had given that the failure of the Iranian authorities to repudiate the *Fatwa* and bounty prevented 'the establishment of full and friendly relations with Iran.'¹⁵¹

Under Labour, the Government began to acknowledge EU action on the Rushdie issue. In March 1998, Derek Fatchett argued that the *Fatwa* remained a significant impediment to 'relations between Iran, the United Kingdom *and* the European Union.'¹⁵² Nevertheless, despite acknowledging the role the EU had to play, the Labour Government resolved the *Fatwa* bilaterally. Discussing the issue in the Commons, Derek Fatchett argued that the agreement had allowed 'a welcome improvement in relations between the United Kingdom and Iran.'¹⁵³ Furthermore, following resolution of the Rushdie issue, the UK began extensive efforts to improve bilateral relations and also increased its representations on a number of issues of concern. Thus despite the significant convergence displayed within the UK's diplomatic relations and human rights policy, the Rushdie issue illustrated starkly the limits of British adaptation.

Nevertheless, the UK was prepared to stand alongside its European partners in opposition to the US approach. Robin Cook argued in 1998 that 'isolating Iran economically will not hit the target that we want',¹⁵⁴ signalling UK affinity for the EU rather than the US approach of sanctions and attempted extra-territorial legislation.

UK adaptation to EU policy towards Iran was therefore mixed. There was convergence, evidenced by the "reflex response", but also leadership and ongoing bilateralism, particularly in areas of most interest to the UK, such as the *Fatwa* against Rushdie.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to question, through a detailed empirical examination of the UK, the common assumption that adaptation to the CFSP of the EU will be less significant amongst the major minor states than amongst the minor ones.

¹⁴⁹ Fatchett, D. (3 February 1999). Column 686.

¹⁵⁰ Hain, P. (30 November 2000). Columns 834W-835W.

¹⁵¹ Hogg, D. (12 February 1993) *Commons Hansard*. Columns 837-838.

¹⁵² Fatchett, D. (18 March 1998). Column 1268. Emphasis added.

¹⁵³ Fatchett, D. (25 January 1999).

¹⁵⁴ Cook, R. (15 January 1998) *Europe and America: The Decisive Partnership*. Speech Given to the European Institute. USA: Washington DC.

In moving away from both the term Europeanisation and the association expectation of convergence, the understanding of adaptation adopted here allows for a fuller exploration of that process amongst the member states. Applied to the UK, it is apparent that adaptation amongst the major member states is more complex and nuanced than commonly understood. Examining two individual policy areas, as well as UK adaptation to the institutional development of the CFSP and ESDP has also helped to clarify the full extent of UK adaptation.

UK adaptation to the institutional development of both the CFSP and ESDP took place around certain consistent preferences. The UK remained committed to intergovernmentalism, with limited Community involvement. Defence was a matter for NATO, and the Commission and Parliament were excluded from this policy area. Nevertheless, convergence was apparent on a number of issues, including external representation, the expansion of the scope of the CFSP, and decision-making. In defence, there was also convergence around the idea of a security and military capability within the EU, and the relationship between the WEU and the EU. Perhaps most significantly in terms of adaptation to institutional development, however, were the diversion and leadership forms of adaptation. Both the Conservative and Labour Governments shared the same strategic goal of maintaining the place of NATO in European defence, and preventing security from becoming an area of Community involvement. They employed different tactics, however, with the Conservatives attempting to divert attention towards the WEU as the European security organisation, while Labour took the lead in shaping the European security and defence debate in order to ensure that it complied with UK preferences.

Within individual policy areas, adaptation was also mixed and complex. Both Governments developed a “reflex response” to questions relating to policy towards Iran and towards Cuba, responding to questions on UK policy and relations towards the two countries by pointing to those of the EU. However, this convergence was limited to specific issues in which it had been agreed that the EU had competence, and did not preclude other forms of adaptation, or ongoing bilateralism. Interestingly, despite the supposedly more “pro-European” outlook of Blair’s government, bilateral activities with both countries increased after 1997, rather than decreasing in line with expectations. In both cases, however, the position of the UK was clearly aligned with the EU, rather than the US, and indeed the UK became vocal in its criticism of US policy towards both countries following both Helms-Burton and ILSA.

UK adaptation therefore took all three forms: convergence, diversion and leadership. Ongoing bilateralism was apparent, and certain key preferences remained consistent throughout. Nevertheless, it is apparent that adaptation amongst the major member states is more complex than frequently assumed, and that the “special relationship” had less of an impact on the nature and extent of UK adaptation than commonly perceived.