

How should the UK develop a European foreign policy?

The UK will need clear and well defined relationships with the EU and with Russia. All the time there are some powers for independent action, especially militarily, amongst the EU states, we will also need good links to Paris, Rome, Berlin and Madrid as well as to Brussels.

The aim of the relationship with the EU will be one of friendly collaboration. If we leave with a deal we will be continuing free trade with them as well as many close workings over Intelligence, defence, policing, trading standards and the like. If we leave without a deal and the EU decides to impose some barriers on our access to the EU markets, then the UK will have to retaliate with tariffs against their food, cars and other items attracting tariffs under WTO rules. This might then lead to a change of heart by the EU, who may wish to enter talks about how to remove those barriers again. The UK should be willing to do this, though there is no need for the UK to be desperate to do it or to give ground to secure such a change.

More difficult is our approach to Russia. I have no more time for Russia's military adventures in eastern Europe than the western governments or NATO. I do, however, think there is a chance that Russia could be a better world citizen if the west collaborated more and resorted to sanctions and condemnations less. The west should of course keep up its guard and be aware lest Russia does resort to aggressive and illegal actions, but should not go looking for trouble. The West through the EU and NATO intervened in Ukraine in ways which provokes a mixture of anxiety and aggression in Russia, fearing for the security of its warm water naval base. Whilst this did not justify the illegal annexation of Crimea, the west did not facilitate a peaceful solution to this problem by allowing a referendum, for example, to let the people decide where they wished to belong as the UK has recently done in Scotland.

The UK has intervened too much in past centuries in continental politics and wars. Whilst the West did have to engage to bring Hitler down, it is more difficult to see what national interest the UK pursued in the First World War. The main aim of our foreign policy should be to keep out of continental rows and conflicts. The UK has sold the pass on the old idea that we need to stop a single power dominating the continent. It is now Foreign Office policy to encourage and allow the consolidation of power on the continent under the EU. In that case we need to be global in reach, have partners around the world, and keep out of the EU's more contentious issues.