

What should a UK foreign policy look like?

As we leave the EU the UK will be free to design a new foreign policy. Whilst it is true that the present Treaties allow an EU country to express a different view about a third country from the common EU line, it is becoming increasingly centralised with more resources being put into the EU diplomatic service and more loyalty expected to the EU High Representative's view. In many areas, ranging from trade to climate change the UK and other member states have to accept the common line and allow the EU to lead. The UK is bound in to a trade policy by Treaty, and has to watch as the EU represents us at the WTO even though we have to pay a membership subscription to the WTO. There are many other bodies making standards and regulating business worldwide where the EU has taken over from the UK. When it comes to military intervention the UK and the others still have the power to decide for themselves whether to commit to common action or not.

The UK needs a new foreign policy not just to incorporate the areas the EU currently does for us, and the new freedoms we will have to shape a policy in our own national interest. We also need it to reflect on the problems caused by coalition and NATO actions in the Middle East and elsewhere in recent years. Many UK voters are critical of the UK's policies this century, disliking the military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, and disliking the inability of the UK to argue its own case in matters like trade and energy to look after its own economic interests. Take back control was mainly articulated about migration, taxes and domestic laws, but it was also relevant to the conduct of foreign policy.

I wish to explore how we should use our new freedoms, and what we should learn from the military interventions of recent years, in a series of blog posts over the weeks ahead. Today I wish to start with the issue of what should be the main purpose of UK foreign and defence policy? I would propose that the main aims are

1. Creating friendly and positive relationships with our neighbours and partners, including promoting more free trade, more exchanges of ideas, investments, intelligence, cultural activities and the rest.
2. Having sufficient power to defend and protect the UK islands and our dependent territories, and sending clear messages of our resolve to protect ourselves should need arise.
3. Working with allies and partners to promote peace and prosperity worldwide, seeking conflict resolution and better economic development in troubled developing countries. Acting where we can make a difference for the better.
4. Recognising the limits to our abilities to reform or amend governments and their policies far from home. We are not to blame for all the ills of the world and cannot solve all the worlds problems.
5. Seeking mutual understanding with the major powers of the world, whilst being able in conjunction with our NATO allies to protect ourselves if

diplomacy fails.