

## The Europeanization of British Foreign Policy and the Crisis in Zimbabwe

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COMMENTS WELCOME

For over a decade now, Britain governments have expressed their intention to locate the country 'at the heart of Europe'.<sup>1</sup> In this paper I explore the extent to which British foreign policy has become Europeanized with specific reference to the British government's recent policies towards Zimbabwe. As Brian White has noted, the idea of a European foreign policy implies 'that the foreign policies of [European Union, EU] member states have been significantly changed, if not transformed, by participation over time in foreign policy-making at the European level. This process of change can be referred to as the 'Europeanization' of national foreign policies'.<sup>2</sup> On the surface, analysing the extent to which British foreign policy has become Europeanized may not be particularly representative given the traditional level of suspicion with which British governments viewed the European project, especially between 1973 and 1991. But, on the other hand, this is precisely what makes the British case so interesting. It is now common parlance within academic analyses to suggest that Britain has become so deeply enmeshed within European structures of governance that detecting where 'domestic' policy stops and 'European' policy starts is almost impossible. Consequently, British policy within the European economic and security community is often said to be qualitatively different from its relationship with outsiders.<sup>3</sup> I do not dissent from this view but my intention here is to explore some of the similarities and differences evident in how Britain and the EU deal with outsiders, in this case, Zimbabwe.

At a general level, British foreign policy has become significantly Europeanized in relation to: 1) the ideological and political context of contemporary foreign policy; 2) the mechanics of making foreign policy; and 3) the actual content of foreign policy. That said, these Europeanizing trends do not subsume British foreign policy and nor were they intended to.<sup>4</sup> As the case of Zimbabwe demonstrates, the Europeanization of British foreign policy has not prevented the government from pursuing bilateral or alternative multilateral policies with regard to specific issues. Distinctly 'British' and 'European' foreign policies are thus not mutually exclusive activities. Rather, in relation to Zimbabwe, the British government has drawn upon

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<sup>1</sup> Brian White, *Understanding European Foreign Policy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> White, *Understanding European Foreign Policy*, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Laurence Martin and John Garnett, *British Foreign Policy: Challenges and Choices for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London: Pinter/RIIA, 1997), p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Martin and Garnett, *British Foreign Policy*, p. 9.

its increasingly close relationship with the EU to supplement its own bilateral (and other multilateral) efforts to achieve its foreign policy objectives.

## **A Europeanized Foreign Policy?**

### *The Ideological and Political Context*

Especially since the end of the Cold War, the ideological and political context within which the foreign policies of Western states have been conducted has been shaped by the principles of liberal democratic capitalism. There have, of course, been often heated debates about the appropriate relationship between individuals and society, and states and markets within and between Western states, but for the most part these debates have taken place with the ideological parameters of liberal democratic capitalism. As Michel Albert put it, these were largely debates between different strains of capitalism rather than between fundamentally different political ideologies.<sup>5</sup> In this very general sense, there was a convergence of foreign policy objectives within Western states that pre-dated the end of the Cold War and focused on promoting ideas of economic and political liberalism and human rights, especially the civil and political kinds. Despite Tony Blair's emphasis on charting a 'third way' ostensibly between old-style socialism and neo-liberalism, there is significant evidence to suggest that New Labour's political economy shares a great deal with the previous Conservative governments of Thatcher and Major.<sup>6</sup> It should therefore come as no surprise that at this admittedly broad level, there is a high degree of ideological convergence between British foreign policy-makers and those within the EU. However, even at the level of policy, there are only a small number of issues since the mid-1990s where Britain has defined its interests as being significantly divergent from the EU member states, such as British opposition to the deployment of EU/WEU forces in Albania in 1997.<sup>7</sup> In addition, this ideological convergence has been augmented by the fact that since the end of the Cold War, the question of Europe has dominated debates about British foreign policy, especially the issues of EU enlargement and the prospects for monetary union.<sup>8</sup>

### *Making Foreign Policy*

On a day-to-day level, it is clear from the testimony of Sir John Coles, former Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), that the Europeanization of British foreign policy (both through political co-operation and attempts to develop a CFSP) has dramatically increased policymakers' workload.<sup>9</sup> However, while it is widely acknowledged that the CFSP in particular 'has become a significant dimension in the policy-making process in London', Coles suggests that the 'golden rule' remains that outcomes must conform with the policy decisions taken by British ministers.<sup>10</sup> To date, therefore, arguably the most visible impact of the CFSP is the almost knee-jerk tendency to respond to international crises by gathering Europe's foreign ministers in one of their capital cities for hours of debate.

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<sup>5</sup> Michel Albert, *Capitalism Against Capitalism*. Translated by Paul Haviland (London: Whurr, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> See Colin Hay, *The Political Economy of New Labour: Labouring under false pretences?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Forster, 'Britain', in Ian Manners and Richard G. Whitman (eds), *The Foreign Policies of the EU Member States* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 55.

<sup>8</sup> Martin and Garnett, *British Foreign Policy*, p. 143.

<sup>9</sup> John Coles, *Making Foreign Policy: A Certain Idea of Britain* (London: John Murray, 2000), p. 95.

<sup>10</sup> Coles, *Making Foreign Policy*, p. 96.

In terms of the mechanics of British foreign policy-making, practitioners have clearly been forced to pay increasing attention to the effects of Community law and the changing range of issues creeping onto the foreign policy agenda, which in turn has drawn more domestic actors and institutional players into the foreign policy process.<sup>11</sup> In relation to the Europeanization of British foreign policy, what White calls the 'core executive' comprise of the Prime Minister's office; the European Secretariat within the Cabinet Office; two Cabinet Committees, the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee and the Sub-Committee on European Issues; these committees are officially 'shadowed' by the European Questions system of committees; the FCO itself; and finally, the UK permanent representation (UKREP) in Brussels. Within these six actors, the centre of the Whitehall policy-making machine comprises the European Secretariat, the FCO and UKREP.

Some analysts have argued that Tony Blair's leadership has witnessed a 'remarkable' increase in the power of the Prime Minister's office in relation to EU politics.<sup>12</sup> But historically, British foreign policy-making has regularly been the preserve of the executive.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, to draw a relatively recent historical comparison, there is significant evidence to suggest that Blair's office actually exercises less control over British foreign policy than Margaret Thatcher's so-called 'kitchen cabinet' of advisers, including Charles Powell, Bernard Ingham, Hugh Thomas and Norman Stone.<sup>14</sup> By way of comparison, during New Labour's first term in office, for instance, EU policy was dominated publicly by the troika of Blair, Chancellor Gordon Brown, and Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, the latter after the FCO managed to convince him of the benefits of EU membership, the traditional FCO position.

The important question is what impact these developments have had upon the making of British foreign policy, especially the issue of where control most effectively resides? As Brian White has noted, there are differing views about the impact Europeanization is having 'on the workings of the policy machinery and on the possibility of retaining control of the process at the centre'.<sup>15</sup> The first perspective argues that unlike the French Foreign Office, the FCO has retained its 'gatekeeping' role, primarily through its control of UKREP. Thus, while a degree of Europeanization has obviously occurred, its impact has tended to be assimilated within Britain's robust traditional system of central state administration. As a result, the British system is often regarded as a model for other member states to mimic to ensure high levels of coherent, cross-departmental European policy. In contrast, an alternative argument has been made that suggests powerful centripetal forces are eroding the power of the Cabinet and FCO in relation to European policy issues. Here, Europeanization is a more extensive and potentially more disruptive process.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> White, *Understanding European Foreign Policy*, pp. 124-5.

<sup>12</sup> Anne Deighton, 'European Union Policy', in Anthony Seldon (ed.), *The Blair Effect* (London: Little Brown, 2001), p. 324.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Clarke, *British External Policy-Making in the 1990s* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), p. 73.

<sup>14</sup> See Christopher Hill, 'United Kingdom: Sharpening Contradictions', in Christopher Hill (ed.), *The Actors in Europe's Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 74 and Anthony Forster and William Wallace, 'The British Response: Denial and Confusion?', in Robin Niblett and William Wallace (eds), *Rethinking European Order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 126.

<sup>15</sup> White, *Understanding European Foreign Policy*, p. 140.

<sup>16</sup> See M.J. Smith, *The Core Executive in Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) and Forster, 'Britain', pp. 44-63.

Supporting evidence can be marshalled for both positions, but in some respects the former position seems more persuasive. This is at least partly because the CFSP often appears hampered by the fact that policy-making within the EU is not Europeanized enough with divergent sources of analysis and often, conflicting interests as well, as was the case during the initial stages of the wars of Yugoslav succession.<sup>17</sup>

*The Content of Foreign Policy: Rhetoric and Practice*

Despite Thatcher's anti-European rhetoric, in reality, her period as Prime Minister witnessed the continued Europeanization of Britain's foreign relations. In this sense, the Thatcher period was, as Hill put it, 'little more than the dramatic interruption of a longer trend towards the Europeanization of British foreign policy'.<sup>18</sup> In a 1992 study, Bulmer et al. acknowledged this trend when they suggested that British economic policy was most Europeanized, foreign policy less so, and defence policy least of all. In relation to European Political Co-operation, they concluded that the British government had been able to steer the process in their desired, intergovernmental direction that would not threaten formal sovereignty or attract much domestic controversy.<sup>19</sup> While from today's vantage point arguably all three of these elements have continued to Europeanize, it is in the military sphere that New Labour has made the most profound steps to embrace and influence the process of Europeanization.

The most important conceptual shift in British foreign policy came with Blair's consistent warnings that Britain should not 'continue to be mesmerized by the choice between the US and Europe'. It was, he argued, 'a false choice'. Instead, Britain should act 'as a bridge between the EU and the USA'.<sup>20</sup> In Blair's words, though Britain will never be the mightiest nation on earth, we can be pivotal ... It means realising once and for all that Britain does not have to choose between being strong with the US, or strong with Europe; it means having the confidence that we can be both. Indeed, that Britain must be both; that we are stronger with the US because of our strength in Europe; that we are stronger in Europe because of our strength with the US.<sup>21</sup>

Having made this conceptual departure, Blair's vision required some practical flesh to be placed upon its theoretical skeleton.<sup>22</sup>

Through the 1990s and the initial period of the incoming Blair government, Britain remained opposed to Franco-German attempts to promote a co-ordinated EU approach to defence. Consequently, the British Presidency of the EU (January-June 1998) was notably silent on the defence aspects of the CFSP and, in particular, the issue of the closeness of the WEU's association with the EU. Those seeking decisive action from the British Presidency were thus disappointed but this was at least partly due to the fact that New Labour had not been in power long enough to set a viable agenda.<sup>23</sup> Although there were public murmurs from Blair in March 1998 about the potential for Britain and France collaborating more seriously in joint military

<sup>17</sup> Martin and Garnett, *British Foreign Policy*, p. 134.

<sup>18</sup> Hill, 'The United Kingdom', p. 71.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in White, *Understanding European Foreign Policy*, pp. 132-3.

<sup>20</sup> Cited in White, *Understanding European Foreign Policy*, p. 138.

<sup>21</sup> Tony Blair, speech to the Associated Press Luncheon, London, 15 December 1998.

<sup>22</sup> For a good discussion see Jolyon Howorth, 'Britain, NATO and CESDP: Fixed Strategy, Changing Tactics', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 5 (2000), pp. 377-96.

<sup>23</sup> Deighton, 'European Union Policy', p. 313.

ventures, it was only well after the British Presidency that he unveiled a plan to abolish the WEU by having its political functions taken over by a new fourth pillar of the EU.<sup>24</sup>

The British plans to develop a European defence capability were apparently based upon a booklet by Charles Grant of the Centre for European Reform and left to Robert Cooper of the FCO to write a confidential paper on the future of Europe. The essence of Cooper's argument was that Britain should engage in 'the reform of European institutions, to increase their legitimacy and make them more effective'.<sup>25</sup> Defence, as Grant had pointed out, was a logical area for Britain to assume a prominent role given that itself and France were the only states capable of projecting significant military power beyond Europe. More specifically, Grant suggested Britain should strengthen European defence, especially through deepening bilateral military relationships, without damaging its relations with the US; try and broker an agreement between the US and France on the latter's full reintegration into NATO's command structure; continue its attempts to restructure the European defence industry; and propose that the WEU be abolished.<sup>26</sup>

The Blair government unveiled its intentions on European defence at the EU Pörschach summit on 24-5 October 1998, held under the auspices of the Austrian Presidency. This was followed by the Anglo-French St Malo Declaration in December. This stated,

The European Union needs to be in a position to play its full role on the international stage ... To this end, the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed by credible, military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises ... acting in conformity with our respective obligations to NATO.

The next two years were spent filling in the detail of the EU's future military commitments. By 2003, the EU was to have access to an ad hoc rapid reaction force of up to 60,000 personnel, complete with the appropriate command, control, intelligence, air and naval facilities, within 60 days. The decision to draw on such a pool of military personnel would require, in turn, NATO's decision not to act and then a unanimous vote of the European Council. According to Deighton, these proposals represent 'the greatest change that New Labour has made in EU policy'.<sup>27</sup>

However, while these developments look impressive on paper, their practical impact should not be over-exaggerated. As Coles noted, the CFSP has 'been largely declaratory in nature' and has yet to make a significant impact upon international events. 'Agreement on public statements of a common position', Coles argued, 'has been relatively easy to achieve. Meaningful common action in the form of sustained and serious diplomacy has been much more elusive'.<sup>28</sup> Forster has made a similar point that the declaratory commitments of the CFSP have developed without adequate 'procedural mechanisms' to achieve its stated goals.<sup>29</sup> This is down to a combination of factors but among the most obvious are Europe's relatively small capacity for

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<sup>24</sup> Simon Duke, *The Elusive Quest for European Security* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 307.

<sup>25</sup> *The Economist* cited in Duke, *The Elusive Quest*, p. 308.

<sup>26</sup> Cited in Duke, *The Elusive Quest*, p. 309.

<sup>27</sup> Deighton, 'European Union Policy', p. 323.

<sup>28</sup> John Coles, *Making Foreign Policy: A Certain Idea of Britain* (London: John Murray, 2000), p. 149.

<sup>29</sup> Forster, 'Britain', pp. 44-63.

power projection and joint political analysis, and its poor track record of marshalling the necessary political will and sustaining a convergence of specific policy goals in times of crisis. However, with Javier Solana's appointment as High Representative of the CFSP, and the appointment of his own political unit, there is at least the potential for the EU to make real progress over the coming years.

As the above discussion demonstrates, British foreign policy has become increasingly Europeanized in at least three senses: 1) since at least the end of the Cold War there has been a general convergence around the ideological principles of liberal democratic capitalism; 2) the foreign policy-making process has become increasingly Europeanized, although the extent to which this has been assimilated into traditional British structures is up for debate; and 3) there has been a closer collaboration within the CFSP framework between Britain and certain EU member states, most notably France. With these developments in mind, the next section examines how Britain and the EU have responded to the ongoing crisis in Zimbabwe.

### **The Case of Zimbabwe**

#### *Britain and Zimbabwe*<sup>30</sup>

From 1997, Britain's involvement in Zimbabwe's crisis needs to be understood within the context of New Labour's efforts to promote its version of the 'third way' in sub-Saharan Africa by building peace, prosperity and democracy on the continent. Ostensibly, the third way is designed to chart a course between socialism and neo-liberalism; but in Africa at least it has encouraged adherence to the accepted tenets of contemporary development discourse, namely good governance, human rights and sound (essentially neo-liberal) economic policies.<sup>31</sup> In relation to Zimbabwe, British policy has been based upon five underlying principles, intended to convey the point that the British government did not see itself as being necessarily against Mugabe but rather as being against the 'real enemies' of Zimbabweans: poverty, disease, hunger, oppression and social injustice.<sup>32</sup> First, Britain is interested in seeing a stable, prosperous and democratic Zimbabwe. Second, Zimbabweans deserve the support of the 'international community'. Third, the future prosperity of Zimbabweans depends on respect for the rule of law and an end to political violence. Fourth, Britain will help a democratic Zimbabwe to achieve prosperity through successful land reform. And finally, the future of Zimbabwe should be left in the hands of its people and they should be given a genuine opportunity of making their voices heard.

Not surprisingly, New Labour was not averse to using Zimbabwe's crisis to score party political points by differentiating its approach from the Thatcher government during the 1980s. It was the Conservative party, Robin Cook reminded the House of Commons, which was in power during the 'Matabeleland massacres'; yet

there was not a word of criticism from any Minister. There was no cut in overseas aid—on the contrary, Lady Thatcher increased aid by £10 million at the time of the massacres. No attempt was made to use the Commonwealth against Zimbabwe at the

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<sup>30</sup> This section draws heavily from Ian Taylor and Paul Williams, 'The limits of engagement: British foreign policy and the crisis in Zimbabwe', *International Affairs*, 78:3 (2002), pp. 479-97.

<sup>31</sup> See Rita Abrahamsen and Paul Williams, 'Ethics and foreign policy: the antinomies of New Labour's "third way" in sub-Saharan Africa', *Political Studies* 49: 2, 2001, pp. 249-64.

<sup>32</sup> See Ben Bradshaw in *Hansard* (Commons), 7 November 2001, cols 125WH-127WH.

time. It is no wonder that President Mugabe let it be known that he was grateful for the British Government's restraint.<sup>33</sup>

That said, at the time Labour politicians had offered little in the way of public criticism of either the Conservatives or Mugabe.

The difficulties of balancing public, bilateral criticism and quiet, multilateral diplomacy have dogged Britain's involvement in Zimbabwe's crisis. In the absence of a united Commonwealth position, and faced with the characteristically lethargic response of the EU, the British government opted to criticize publicly Mugabe's government while simultaneously offering openings for constructive dialogue. Therefore, despite several verbal harangues by Mugabe and his senior officials against Blair and Peter Hain in particular, the British government consistently reiterated its invitation for Zimbabwean representatives to visit London to discuss a way out of the crisis. In late April 2000, for instance, Cook reiterated Britain's willingness to allocate an additional £36 million to fund a 'proper' land reform programme that would genuinely empower Zimbabwe's rural poor. The additional money would come on top of the £44 million Britain has already put into honouring the commitments it made at Lancaster House.<sup>34</sup> The point Cook consistently articulated was that

Neither Britain nor any other donor is going to fund a programme of land reform, unless: it is conducted within the rule of law; it is based on a fair price to the farmer; and it reduces poverty among the rural poor who have no land. Ministers in Zimbabwe have complained that Britain is imposing colonial conditions. There is nothing new about these conditions. They were all in the conclusion of the 1998 Land Conference which was hosted and chaired by the Government of Zimbabwe itself.<sup>35</sup>

Not only was Mugabe's land reform programme circumventing the rule of law, but half of all the farms redistributed since 1997 had gone to employees or members of the Zimbabwean government.<sup>36</sup>

The first major dilemma for British policy revolved around sending electoral observers to Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections in June 2000. Elements of the British and international media called for Zimbabwe to be suspended from the Commonwealth in recognition of Mugabe's catalytic role in the crisis. Cook, however, rejected the calls for suspension on the grounds that it would jeopardize the presence of international electoral observers. If Zimbabwe were suspended, he argued,

the net effect would be that we could not provide Commonwealth observers when President Mugabe comes up for re-election next year. I do not see how it would help anybody in Zimbabwe for us to be unable to provide observers, which would give Mugabe an even clearer run at re-election.<sup>37</sup>

After the parliamentary elections Cook felt at least partially vindicated by the relatively smooth electoral process and the MDC's encouraging performance. Nevertheless, he quickly added that 'two days of calmness around the polling stations' did not equate to 'a free and fair election'.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Hansard* (Commons), 27 March 2001, col. 799.

<sup>34</sup> Robin Cook (with Don McKinnon), doorstep interview, London, 13 April 2000.

<sup>35</sup> Robin Cook in *Hansard* (Commons), 3 May 2000, col. 149.

<sup>36</sup> See Human Rights Watch, *Fast track land reform in Zimbabwe* (New York: Report A1401, March 2002).

<sup>37</sup> *Hansard* (Commons), 27 March 2001, col. 801.

<sup>38</sup> Robin Cook, interview on BBC Radio 4, London, 26 June 2000.

In retrospect, however, because ‘sensible dialogue’ with the ZANU-PF government was declared ‘almost impossible’, this strategy failed to produce any concrete results and left Britain in the predicament of pursuing the type of ‘megaphone diplomacy’ that played directly into Mugabe’s hands.<sup>39</sup> In recognition of the potentially negative consequences of a megaphone approach, the government concluded that the resolution of Zimbabwe’s crisis was ‘best pursued through private diplomacy’.<sup>40</sup>

As Whitehall’s frustration with Mugabe’s intransigence grew, the British government became more willing to consider the imposition of sanctions against Zimbabwe. From the outset, Britain drew a clear distinction between general trade sanctions and so-called ‘smart’ sanctions that include financial sanctions, travel bans, arms embargoes and commodity boycotts. The former were rejected by Britain on the grounds that they would exacerbate the suffering of ordinary Zimbabweans and have little impact upon the ruling ZANU-PF elites.<sup>41</sup> Such concerns were echoed by MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai, who told Cook that he did not want Zimbabwe to be cut off from contact with Britain or the outside world because it would be ordinary Zimbabweans rather than the ZANU-PF elites who would suffer most.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, Britain felt that smart sanctions would send an important message of political support to Zimbabwe’s beleaguered opposition while simultaneously isolating Mugabe’s regime and targeting the private wealth and liberties of senior ZANU-PF officials. To this end, Britain imposed an arms embargo against Zimbabwe on 3 May 2000. In addition, it halted the provision of 450 Land Rovers to the Zimbabwe police force, withdrew the British Military Advisory Training Team (BMATT), which left at the end of March 2001, and cut aid to Zimbabwe by one-third. Certain types of aid, such as that destined to help tackle the AIDS pandemic and provide levels of basic sanitation in rural Zimbabwe, were continued.<sup>43</sup> Later on (see below), Britain played an important role in the EU’s decision to implement targeted sanctions against the government of Zimbabwe on 18 February 2002.

One of the few signs that a negotiated resolution of Zimbabwe’s crisis might be possible came on 6 September 2001 when the ZANU-PF government signed the Abuja Agreement. Concluded under the auspices of the Commonwealth in general and President Olusegun Obasanjo and Foreign Minister Sule Lamido of Nigeria in particular, the agreement set out the conditions for a peaceful resolution of Zimbabwe’s crisis and a programme of land reform that would take place within the rule of law. *The Guardian* was not alone in describing Abuja as ‘a remarkable piece of diplomacy’ that heralded a resolution of what the newspaper characterized as a dispute between Britain and Zimbabwe.<sup>44</sup> But such an analysis was misplaced.

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<sup>39</sup> Peter Hain, interview for BBC Radio 4, 30 March 2000.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Hain, *Minutes of evidence taken before the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC)*, 18 April 2000, question 106. <[www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/fachome.htm](http://www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/fachome.htm)>.

<sup>41</sup> See Robin Cook’s reply to Mr Julian Brazier MP in *Hansard* (Commons), 1 May 2001, col. 741, and Jack Straw’s evidence to the FAC, *Zimbabwe: fourth report of session 2001–2002*, HC 456 (London: The Stationery Office, 2002), p. EV 6.

<sup>42</sup> Robin Cook, interview for Reuters TV, New Delhi, 16 April 2000. Peter Hain made the same point in *Evidence to the FAC*, question 67.

<sup>43</sup> Since 1980 Britain has provided over £500 million of development aid for Zimbabwe.

<sup>44</sup> Ewen MacAskill and Andrew Meldrum, ‘Mugabe seizes chance to end mayhem’, *The Guardian*, 7 September 2001.

Mugabe's government had committed itself to agreements concerning the nature of, and mechanisms for, land redistribution before, with virtually no tangible results. In retrospect, those commentators who urged caution and warned that Mugabe would violate the spirit and substance of the Abuja Agreement turned out to be correct. The foreign secretary, Jack Straw, was suitably cautious, combining his satisfaction at securing the Abuja deal with the frank acknowledgement that 'ultimately whether it represents real progress will depend on events on the ground. And that can only be judged in the future'.<sup>45</sup> As it turned out, it is now clear that the Zimbabwean government simply ignored the conditions concluded at Abuja.<sup>46</sup>

With the failure of the Abuja Agreement, attention focused upon the build-up to the presidential elections that eventually took place over 9–11 March 2002. Throughout the electoral process the British government continued its condemnation of Zimbabwe's government (as did the US and EU). It therefore came as no surprise that shortly after Mugabe was declared victorious, Straw condemned ZANU-PF's persistent use of violence and intimidation, manipulation of the voters' roll, restricted access to polling stations and exploitation of 'every instrument of the State to distort the electoral process'.<sup>47</sup> He also affirmed that the British government would continue to work in close cooperation with the US and through the EU and Commonwealth to oppose Zimbabwe's access to international financial resources 'until a more representative government is in place'. In conclusion, Straw justified Britain's position as one of defending a universal principle—the right of people freely to determine their future.

#### *The EU and Zimbabwe*

Since independence in 1980, the EU has been Zimbabwe's main source of development assistance. The current cooperation programme is worth almost 90 million euros not including additional bilateral aid from EU member states. The EU is also the primary donor to the Southern African Development Community (SADC). With such large development commitments it was not surprising that the EU decided to observe Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections in June 2000. The EU's intention was to have a presence sufficient in size to 1) make a real contribution to the observation exercise; 2) help to deter intimidation; and 3) make it possible for the EU to arrive at a clear judgement on the process.<sup>48</sup> The mission arrived in Harare on 15 May and remained in Zimbabwe for five days and operated with the consent of the Zimbabwean government, consulting the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, the Minister of Home Affairs, the Minister of State Security, the Registrar-General, the Delimitation Commission and the Electoral Supervisory Commission. The Mission also held meetings with the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), and various civic institutions. The EU formally decided to observe the elections on 30 May and the Mission's head, Pierre Schori, arrived in Harare the following day. The aim of the mission was twofold: to contribute to a more favourable climate for the elections and to come up with a clear judgement on the electoral process.

<sup>45</sup> Jack Straw (with Baroness Amos), doorstep interview, Abuja, Nigeria, 6 September 2001.

<sup>46</sup> International Crisis Group, *Zimbabwe: time for international action* (Harare/Brussels: ICG Africa Briefing, 12 October 2001) p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Jack Straw, 'Zimbabwe: An issue of universal principle', in *Hansard* (Commons), 14 March 2002, cols 1031-3.

<sup>48</sup> *Report of the EU Election Observer Mission on the Parliamentary Elections in Zimbabwe, 24-5 June 2000*, <[www.europa.eu.int](http://www.europa.eu.int)>.

The Mission concluded that ‘violence and intimidation in the run-up to the campaign and during the election period marred the final result’ and that the Zimbabwean ‘government failed to uphold the rule of law’. In addition, the Mission suggested that,

The Office of the Registrar-General did not operate in an open and transparent manner and, as a result, failed to secure the confidence of both the political parties and of the institutions of civil society in the electoral process. There were particular weaknesses in the electoral administration concerning, among other things, voter registration, the delimitation of constituencies, and the postal vote, which may lead to legal action. However, the management of the voting process and the count at the local level was exemplary in most parts of the country.<sup>49</sup>

In light of these problems and evidence of increasing levels of political violence and intimidation in Zimbabwe, the EU endeavoured to ensure that international observers were deployed in a similar manner for the presidential elections scheduled to take place in 2002.

From 29 October 2001, EU foreign ministers unanimously agreed to apply political pressure on Zimbabwe under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement. The EU had previously invoked Article 96 in its relations with Haiti (which led to sanctions) and the Ivory Coast (which did not). Signed in June 2000, Article 96 regulates EU relations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states. It stipulates that if there is no progress on human rights issues within 75 days after formal consultations began, ‘appropriate measures’, including sanctions, may be implemented. In line with its mechanisms, the EU sent a letter to Zimbabwe seeking political consultations. However, the EU was rebuffed almost immediately when the Zimbabwean government rejected its request to allow its officials to monitor the presidential elections.

The EU’s dilemma was that both its ministers and Mugabe knew that stopping its £7.35m of development aid would only harm the poorest members of Zimbabwean society.<sup>50</sup> In addition, by January 2002, the EU admitted that even adopting ‘smart sanctions’ would have a limited effect without the co-operation of other regional states, which was at that stage virtually non-existent. At an EU-Zimbabwe meeting in Brussels on 11 January 2002, Zimbabwe’s foreign minister Stanley Mudenge accused Britain of ‘exercising hypnotic powers’ over its EU partners. Mudenge argued that the British government was using the EU to renege on its commitments to fund the land reform process in Zimbabwe. In response, the Spanish ambassador to the EU, Javier Conde de Saro, rubbished Mudenge’s suggestion stating that the EU member states were ‘not the UK’s puppets’.<sup>51</sup>

By the end of January, the British government changed tact slightly and concentrated upon securing Zimbabwe’s consent for international observers to the presidential elections rather than pushing for immediate sanctions. The rationale was that the imposition of sanctions would in all likelihood cause Mugabe to reject the presence of international observers, which in turn, would make his re-election as

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<sup>49</sup> *Report of the EU Election Observer Mission*, chapter 7.

<sup>50</sup> Judy Dempsey, ‘Scant hopes for EU talks on Zimbabwe’, *Financial Times*, 11 January 2002.

<sup>51</sup> Judy Dempsey and Nicoli degli Innocenti, ‘Zimbabwe blames London for EU hostility’, *Financial Times*, 12-13 January 2002.

president even more probable. The British government and the EU felt that the presence of international observers would make it more difficult for Mugabe to rig the elections, especially in rural areas. Then again, some commentators were sceptical that EU observers would make much practical difference, especially given the fact that international society had ignored the EU's highly critical report on the December 2001 elections in Zambia. Nevertheless, the British (and EU) position was supported by SADC leaders and MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai, who remained convinced that he could win the elections in spite of Mugabe's efforts. The EU plan was thus to threaten sanctions and reinforce this with the threat of Commonwealth suspension after the elections. The Zimbabwean government portrayed this change of tact as a humiliating climbdown for Straw, while the MDC claimed to be baffled as to why the British government had raised the issue of Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth if it was not going to follow it through.<sup>52</sup> As it turned out, this change of tact did not last long and on 28 January, EU foreign ministers agreed to impose targeted sanctions on Zimbabwe if it prevented the deployment or effective operation of an EU observer mission or prevented the international media from having free access to cover the election. Mugabe was given one week to respond to the EU's preconditions. Even if these conditions were met, the EU declared its intention to proceed with sanctions if the elections were not assessed as being free and fair.<sup>53</sup>

Two weeks after the EU's declared deadline had passed, the organisation was virtually forced to impose sanctions or risk severely damaging its credibility. The final straw was Zimbabwe's expulsion of Pierre Schori, the Swedish ambassador to the UN and head of the EU observer mission.<sup>54</sup> As Chris Pattern suggested, quite simply, Schori's expulsion represented a credibility test for the EU.<sup>55</sup> In some respects, Schori had been an unwise choice to lead the team. Not only had he previously refused to call Zimbabwe's parliamentary elections 'substantially free and fair' but as a Swede, Mugabe's government declared him to be biased because his government had been running workshops held in South Africa for MDC supporters.<sup>56</sup> The sanctions themselves entailed a travel ban on Mugabe and nineteen members of his inner circle, an asset freeze affecting those same individuals, an embargo on the sale of arms and technical and training assistance relating to arms in Zimbabwe, and an embargo on the sale or supply of equipment that might be used for internal repression in Zimbabwe. But their imposition posed their own problems. In particular, it was widely accepted that they would make it even less likely for Zimbabwe to accept other foreign observers or grant significant access to foreign journalists. Indeed, the 30 remaining EU observers were subsequently withdrawn and many foreign journalists were denied significant access. The withdrawal of EU observers had the effect of pushing the teams from the Commonwealth and South Africa to centre stage.

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<sup>52</sup> Judy Dempsey, Andrew Parker and Tony Hawkins, 'EU to hold back on immediate Zimbabwe sanctions', *Financial Times*, 28 January 2002.

<sup>53</sup> Judy Dempsey, 'EU observers prepare for Zimbabwe poll', *Financial Times*, 4 February 2002.

<sup>54</sup> Zimbabwe actually defined six 'hostile' states from which it refused to accept observers: Britain, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands.

<sup>55</sup> Judy Dempsey, 'EU imposes immediate sanctions on Zimbabwe', *Financial Times*, 19 February 2002.

<sup>56</sup> *Africa Research Bulletin*, 39:2 (2002), p. 14758B.

The other major problem for the EU was that SADC leaders and many other African elites proved unwilling to support its course of action. While many local analysts saw the EU's targeted sanctions as too little, too late, the Zimbabwean government described them as tantamount to 'economic terrorism', while South Africa described them as 'regrettable and unfortunate'.<sup>57</sup> The US, on the other hand, was fully supportive of the EU's position. Indeed, the US Congress had passed a law the previous year allowing President Bush to impose broader economic sanctions against Zimbabwe. Following the EU's lead, Richard Boucher, the US State Department spokesman, stated that his government was close to imposing travel restrictions against 'the individuals responsible for or who benefit from policies that undermine Zimbabwe's democratic institutions'.<sup>58</sup> Whether or not the US government imposed such sanctions would depend upon the results of the March elections. Several days later, fearing that the targeted sanctions imposed upon Mugabe and his close associates would have little effect, Britain called for broader sanctions against companies regarded as front organisations for ZANU-PF.

Following reports of growing levels of hunger in Zimbabwe, in late March, several EU states signalled that they were willing to send emergency food aid to Zimbabwe, provided it was distributed by independent charities not party organisations.<sup>59</sup> This was felt necessary in light of World Food Programme estimates that approximately 500,000 people out of a population of 11 million were malnourished and three times as many had registered for food aid.<sup>60</sup> EU pressure on Zimbabwe continued in April with the submission of a draft resolution to the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) urging the ZANU-PF government to comply with its human rights obligations. This was submitted by Spain as the current holders of the EU Presidency. The draft resolution expressed concern over Zimbabwe's human rights violations and 'the adverse impact of the actions by the government of Zimbabwe on the security of its citizens'.<sup>61</sup> The EU was particularly concerned about disappearances, executions, kidnapping, torture, beatings and detentions without trial of members of the media, the opposition and human rights groups. It therefore urged the government of Zimbabwe to uphold its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention Against Torture, and other human rights treaties to which it is a party, including the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. The resolution called for UN special rapporteurs to investigate incidences of torture, the independence of judges and lawyers, freedom of expression, extra-judicial executions and violence against women and report to the UNHRC at its 59th session. The UNHCR spokesperson Veronique Taveau suggested that the finalised resolution would represent 'a moral contract' on Zimbabwe. However, it was subsequently defeated later that month by a no-action motion that was passed by 26 votes to 24, with 3 abstentions.

## Conclusions

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<sup>57</sup> Tony Hawkins, 'Zimbabwe sanctions 'will have little impact'', *Financial Times*, 20 February 2002.

<sup>58</sup> Tony Hawkins, 'Zimbabwe sanctions 'will have little impact'', *Financial Times*, 20 February 2002.

<sup>59</sup> 'On the knife-edge', *Africa Confidential*, 43:6 (2002), p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> *Africa Research Bulletin*, 39:3 (2002), p. 14770B.

<sup>61</sup> Cited in IRIN (Johannesburg), 'Zimbabwe: EU urges government to respect human rights'.

At a general level British foreign policy has undoubtedly been affected by a process of Europeanization, although the extent to which this has impacted upon actual policy will vary from issue to issue. In particular, British policy has been Europeanized at an ideological level, in regard to foreign policy-making, and in relation to the agenda and content of policy. However, the process of Europeanization has not entirely subsumed a distinctly British foreign policy. In this sense, successive British governments have been quite successful at using the European level of foreign policy to achieve its own objectives and simultaneously prevent unnecessary levels of integration.<sup>62</sup> As the FCO noted in its latest annual report on human rights,

The EU therefore represents a crucial mechanism through which the UK can pursue its national interests in promoting human rights worldwide. Our membership of the EU gives us the leverage of greater political weight than we have alone. It allows us to multiply and reinforce our actions to promote human rights by acting jointly with the other 14 EU member states.<sup>63</sup>

Thus a distinctly British and a European foreign policy should not be thought of in mutually exclusive terms. Rather, although there are significant areas of overlap, European foreign policy does not exhaust British options on the international stage.

The Zimbabwean case illustrates this point. As Baroness Amos made clear to the Foreign Affairs Committee,

we are very well aware that in terms of the United Kingdom being able to influence what is going on in Zimbabwe, we have to work through our international partners because the government of Zimbabwe has sought to portray the difficulties that we have with respect to human rights, the harassing of the opposition, the harassing of the judiciary, as a bilateral issue between the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe ... so the opportunities for the United Kingdom to influence are very much through our work with our European Union partners, through our contact with the United States, and through our membership of the Commonwealth.<sup>64</sup>

Despite drawing support from the EU when necessary, the British government has pursued its own bilateral initiatives, including attempts to bring ZANU-PF delegations to London, and multilateral initiatives, most notably in this case through the Commonwealth. Britain's decision to impose targeted sanctions meant that support from the other EU member states became increasingly important, as did support from other African states, both individually and through international organisations such as the Commonwealth, SADC and the OAU. Arguably, this course of action has raised as many problems as it has solved but it does have the unmistakable benefit of sending a political message to Mugabe's government that it has failed to live up to its obligations under international law. The rather more embarrassing issue is that Mugabe has undoubtedly been subjected to greater international scrutiny than other African leaders also guilty of using political violence to sustain their power, including Museveni in Uganda, Rawlings in Ghana and Moi in Kenya.<sup>65</sup> Or, specifically in relation to elections, President Nguesso of the Congo, President Ratsiraka of Madagascar and President Mwanawasa of Zambia have all engaged in rigging their respective electoral processes yet Western leaders and their media have largely ignored their activities.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Forster, 'Britain', p. 46.

<sup>63</sup> FCO, *Human Rights Annual Report 2001* (London: The Stationery Office, CM 5211), p. 50.

<sup>64</sup> Baroness Amos, evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, 14 May 2002, para 73.

<sup>65</sup> Richard Dowden, 'Mugabe's contradictions', *Financial Times*, 4 March 2002.

<sup>66</sup> See *Africa Research Bulletin*, 39:3 (2002), pp. 14768C-9A and Ian Taylor 'Zambia's Future After its Elections', *Contemporary Review*, vol. 280, no. 1634, (March 2002), pp. 142-5.

Finally, although Britain retains its ability to act outside the CFSP framework, a high degree of convergence exists over both the means and ends of Zimbabwe policy between the British government and the EU. Both parties are attempting to promote good, liberal governance within Zimbabwe, an objective shared by the US and the rest of the G-8. In this sense, British foreign policy may not only be becoming increasingly Europeanized, it is arguably becoming more generally Westernized as well.