

## Returning to Europe or to Be an International Role?

### ---The Role Choice of the UK in the Cause

### of European Common Defense

Fei Chen

School of Politics and Administration, Ludong University

Yantai 264025, Shandong, China

E-mail: cindy\_vinven\_sdu@yahoo.com.cn

Bing Lu

Department of College Foreign Languages Teaching, Ludong University

Yantai 264025, Shandong, China

#### **Abstract**

European integration has developed for 60 years, which has been clearly branded with the “irreversible” mark in its process. Common defense has become the node in its in-depth development. The UK, as an important member of the European Union (the EU), has played a crucial role in the progress of the cause for the common defense. The games between them exist from the beginning to the end and are jointly promoting the common defense of the EU.

**Keywords:** The EU, Common defense, The UK, Game

The United Kingdom of the Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the UK), originally belonging to the Western Europe, jointed the European Community in the 1970's. However, this important country, one of the European families, has displayed a series of specialties in the integration process. And there is no exception in the field common of defense. This paper tries to analyze the British attitude to the EU common defense from the angle of the historical tradition and practical games.

#### **1. The historical tradition**

The UK has a long history of diplomacy and its most obvious characteristic in its political and cultural tradition is conservatism. Modern British conservatism has three main sources of the natural conservative tendency, that is, a natural love of familiar things and hatred and suspicion of strange things; of Toryism, which is against all revolutionary thoughts starting from the French Revolution; of imperialism, which maintains the greatness of the United Kingdom in international affairs and safeguards the British rule in every colonies. (Cecil). In addition, the UK is accustomed to using policy of power balance to deal with the European international relations. Usually, it puts the chips to the weaker side to maintain the European balance of power. (Wang, p.268).

Historically, the British foreign policy has borne a color of “splendid isolation”, including the principle of nonintervention, which adopts a detached attitude to the European affairs and intervenes depending on some conditions; the principle of undertaking no obligations, which means that the UK does not form any long-term or fixed leagues with any European countries, or any treaties leading to such leagues in order to keep free in action; the principle of not being interfered, which means that any other continental European countries must not interfere with British affairs. In short, the UK, without being controlled or restrained by any fixed principle, can adopt a flexible policy according to the actual conditions. Therefore, we are not surprised to see that the UK displays ambiguous attitudes in the real European defense cooperation.

## 2. The games in reality

### 2.1 The United Kingdom

However, in the real world the United Kingdom can be seen to have given an unprecedented extra attention to the EU common defense. In December 1998, the United Kingdom and France reached European Defense Cooperation Declaration in St. Malo and for the first time proposed establishing a rapid response force. In May 1999, when meeting D'Alema, President of Italy, Blair put up with the idea and plan of setting up a rapid response force. Then after several months of deliberation, the Helsinki Summit finally made the decision to establish the EU independent military force. People can be more confused that in addition to the factors of traditional history, what more realistic consideration the United Kingdom has? In order to analyze the problem more clearly, this paper attempts to discuss about it with game theory.

If the UK does not support the cause of the EU common defense and hold an uncooperative attitude, it can gain some benefits as the following: (1) it still can maintain its independence by standing outside of the Europe, as is represented by the small letter of a. (2) It needs more cooperation with the United States in military action, antiterrorism, and safeguarding its own security, as is represented by the small letter of b. (3) it can maintain the traditional ties with the United States (For the U.S. does not want to see an independent European common defense), as is represented by the small letter of c.

To the contrary, if the UK actively supports the cause of the EU common defense and adopts a cooperative attitude, it can produce the following effects: (1) it can better integrate into Europe and win more voices in the EU, as is represented by the capitalized letter of A. (2) It has more choice of cooperation on its security, as is represented by the capitalized letter of B. (3) it can increase its weight over the U.S., as is represented by the capitalized letter of C.

#### 2.1.1 A comparison of a and A

As I have analyzed previously, the specialty of the traditional British history and culture is conservatism and the power balance policy based on it. The UK is accustomed to using the power balance policy to deal with the European international relations and has gained a lot of benefits. Today, however, the United Kingdom has lost the basis to maintain its conservatism. Facing with the great changes of the geopolitical structure of Europe, especially in the process of the deepening integration in European economic, social and even political and security fields, the United Kingdom will be marginalized if it continues to stay away from the core of Europe in the trend in the European Union so that it may lose some of the benefits brought by the integration. Therefore, the more it integrates into Europe, the more voices it will have within the EU. The closer it is to Europe, the more weights it will have on the international stage. It is obvious that integration into Europe and more cooperation with the European countries are in line with British interests to much more degrees. Therefore, it is of little significance to make strategic policies by obeying or betraying its historical tradition. The key lies in that which is larger, the benefit resulting from cooperation or non-cooperation? This is also consistent with British empirical philosophy—all for the national interests without being controlled by any fixed principle. “The UK has to approach Europe out of the reality to strive for a greater voice in Europe. It wants to connect the U.S.A and affect the world through influencing the European countries.” (Tang, 2004, p.88). Clearly, A>a. More participation in European affairs means more profits for the United Kingdom.

#### 2.1.2 Are there more benefits brought by depending its own security on the United States than by more participating in the EU common defense? Or vice versa?

We must know that the U.S.A, as today's only superpower on the international stage, is annoying with its hegemony. Before the Iraq war broke out in early 2003, the British media had done a series of opinion polls. The results showed that in the aspect of using weapons against Iraq, the closer Blair was to Bush the lower support rate he had. That was because the number of people who were against the British attack on Iraq was significantly higher than those who were for it. And the defense strategy of following the U.S.A would lead to more enemies in the international community and more threats from terrorists. As for the Independent defense issues in Europe, although the United Kingdom realized that the Atlantic Alliance was still the pillar of European security, it was also aware that “Britain can not always need to rely on the U.S. military force to take its own action in the world. Europe should be able to assume the task, the more equal share.” It is difficult to imagine that the UK will continue to closely follow the United States to take concerted actions. The close cooperation and coordination in the past will be increasingly replaced by scruples and conditions. If it strictly follows the logic of the current

American to seek absolute security, it will conflict with more countries, even besides those in Europe. (Calleo, 2003).

Based on the above analysis, in the broader context of the current international environment, the international image, set by the United Kingdom by taking an active part in European affairs and establishing a joint defense, is much better than that by following the United States as a pup with every step to its master. Its own safety has been safeguarded to more degrees by establishing a good international image for it has few opportunities to be the target of nationalists. In this sense, B>b.

2.1.3 It is difficult to make an analysis on whether the UK can keep the traditional special relationship with the United States.

First, there exists a basic starting point. That is, the UK does not want Europe to become an independent pole, which is not consistent with the traditional conservatism of it. Second, between Europe and the United States, considering the choice in reality or the tradition or interests, the British are more willing to cooperate with the latter.

On the basis of the two premises, the United Kingdom is unlikely to upset the United States on the European common defense. What is more, it will consider the common defense as a tool to balance the US-European relations and gain interests from the fights of the two. So attitudes of the United States to the issues of the European common defense can significantly affect the attitudes of the United Kingdom.

In fact, the United States, after the war in Kosovo, has shown satisfaction on the EU's developing in defense forces and it strongly encouraged the EU countries to increase military spending to reduce its burden on the defense. The EU's developing the common defense, improving military technology and equipment level helps to conduct effective cooperation with the United States and increase the overall NATO force. However, the U.S.A is conditional. First, the bottom line of the U.S.A is that the European independent defense can not overhead the United States or make the United States lose the reasons and conditions of stationing its army in Europe. Second, the key note that the U.S.A has made for the EU defense is that the EU defense will be supplementary for the NATO. Any self-defense program must not produce opponents within the NATO. Europe can increase military spending and reorganized military forces under the umbrella of the NATO. (Gao, 2002). The USA diametrically proposed three restrictions of stopping loosening the Atlantic Alliance, stopping overlapping with the NATO structures and stopping discriminating against non-EU NATO member countries.

Such a limited support from the U.S.A makes British win the space of activities. The UK can support the European common defense and gain benefit from within Europe. It also can increase its weights over the USA without touching the bottom line and annoying it. In reality, the United Kingdom can be found that although it supports the European defense, it still repeatedly emphasizes the common defense should be placed within the framework of the NATO, as embodies the consideration.

So in the current, the United Kingdom supporting the common defense within the framework of the NATO is in line its own interests and C>c. But this will change as the U.S. attitudes change.

Based on the above analysis of the pros and cons, the British attitude towards the problem of the common defense should be a gesture of cooperation, as is seen in reality. The UK actively promotes the development of the common defense because the profitability of cooperation is greater than that of non-cooperation.

### **3. The European Union**

The European Union needs its own defense. In the premise of the cooperative attitude by British government, the UN of course has two choices: cooperation (The UK plays a leading role in common defense) and non-cooperation (opposite to the former.)

If the EU chooses to cooperate, it will win benefits as the following:

First, the existing military forces in the EU countries are established for homeland defense, and they have not enough carrying capacities, long-range delivery capabilities and offensive capabilities. Furthermore, the EU is lack of military equipment expenditure (The U.S.A has \$ 80 billion per year, twice as high as that of the EU). Particularly, there is less military research and development expenditure in Europe (Military research and development budget in the USA is 35 billion dollars while Europe has only 12 billion U.S. dollars). The EU military equipment (particularly, the means access to information and combat aircraft) is in urgent need of renewal. (Report in 1998). Therefore, the British cooperation in the common defense will indeed improve the EU's military forces, enhance the level of military equipment, and further increase the weights in EU action.

Secondly, the EU independent defense, with the cooperation of the United Kingdom, will further increase the weights against the USA. In February 2001, Donald Rumsfeld, the U.S. Defense Secretary, for the first time, visited Europe. When participating in Conference on Security Policy in Munich, he pointed out that the defense of the EU could become a means to weaken the power and influence of the U.S.A in the NATO. As is known, the United States controls the European Union through the NATO, a strong military and political machine. And now the rapid development of the EU's independent defense is undoubtedly like extracting the firewood from under the cauldron. Therefore, the centrifugal force of the European Union (Gao, 2001) and the United States will increasingly enlarging, which will benefit the EU to make and implement its independent diplomacy in international affairs.

At the same time, the drawbacks resulting from the cooperation are obvious. (1) The stable policy that France and Germany play a leading role in the EU will be affected. (2) The introduction of the support from the British government equals the introduction of the United States and the NATO. So in a long period of time, it is difficult for the EU to separate from the framework of the NATO defense to realize real independence.

As far as the EU is concerned, benefits from cooperation is still greater than benefits from the non-cooperation. British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw in a letter to the Special Committee of the House of Commons acknowledged that only a third of the EU rapid response forces can reach the planned level in combat capability. And some of the capabilities can be available in 2012. According to Western military experts, since the new weapons are gradually delivered for use, the EU rapid response forces will have difficulty in taking large-scale military actions in the coming years with the exception of undertaking a limited number of humanitarian relief and peacekeeping missions. (Shen, 2001).

This situation of both sides is consistent with what is described in the Hunting of the game theory. C stands for co-operation and D stands for non-cooperation. There are four situations in the relationship between the UK and Europe (the first letter is on behalf of British policy): CC (mutual cooperation), DC (The UK is non-cooperative and Europe is cooperative), CD (Britain is cooperative and Europe is non-cooperative), and DD (mutual non-cooperation). The analysis of these four cases tells the sequence is CC> DC> DD> CD and the game model is shown as the following:

CC (4.4)	CD (1.3)
DC (3.1)	DD (2.2)

It should be said it is a game with the most promising cooperation because cooperation is the best result for both sides. However, cooperation (CC) or non-cooperation (DD) is the Nash equilibrium point in the hunting game. Both sides do not have “absolute predominant strategy”. Each side makes its strategy depending on the other side. Only when both sides ensure that the opposite will be cooperative, can the “cooperation” of the Nash equilibrium point be reached.

So the key point of the model is what action will be anticipated by one side. If one side can understand well about the cooperative attitude of the other, the equilibrium point of CC (cooperation) can be reached.

The reality is that the UK has taken the leading position to actively promote the European defense integration and the EU has made a positive response. Both sides are carrying out a tentative co-operation. Because both parties can determine the attitude of the other, risks in what is described in CD or DC do not exist. They are not impaired in their cooperation so the two sides are most likely to work together to promote the common defense cooperation to ultimately get to CC in the Nash equilibrium instead of the point of DD.

In reality, the EU's common defense can be seen to be in a smooth operation. On December 12, 2003, the EU summit in Brussels passed the European Security Strategy, entitled “European security in a better world”. This is the first European security strategy. In June 2004, the EU summit passed Overall Goal in 2010 to promote the EU common security and defense policy construction. The document clearly stipulates that the main mission of the EU Common Security and defense policy are “the use of combat troops in humanitarian and rescuing, peacekeeping and crisis management, including peace building, disarmament, and supporting the anti-terrorism by a third country and the reforms by security sectors.”

#### 4. The game in the future

As for the games between the UK and the Europe on common defense issues, there are many variable factors. And a lot of problems vary with the changes of the U.S. policies. For the UK, the common defense is the inevitable choice. However, it does not really break away from the United States to join Europe. Similarly, with

the development of political and economic integration of Europe and along with the attempt to become an independent force in the world, independent army for the EU is essential unless the European integration stops – it now seems unlikely – otherwise, efforts to seek independent defense will not cease. So both sides need the common defense and the resulting cooperation is understandable.

Meanwhile, as a less active participant in European integration, the UK supporting the defense must be limited. Although a good relationship has been established now by both sides, the fundamental differences still exist. Thus, this kind of cooperation of the two sides is not stable. Games between the two started from the time when European common defense was born. There is no winner in these games. In the competition, what can be seen is the increasingly deepening degree of the European integration.

### References

- Calleo, David P. (2003). Power, wealth & wisdom. *The National Interest*.
- Cecil, Hugh. *Conservatism*.
- Gao, Hua. (2002). The beginning, problems and prospects of the EU independent defense. *International Politics*, Issue 12.
- Gao, Ying. (2001). The EU joint defense development and its influences on the relationship between Europe and America. *International Politics*, Issue 7.
- Reports in 1998 of the U.S. National Defense University.
- Shen, Guoliang. (2001). EU has difficulties in setting up the rapid response forces. *Military Forum*, December 10.
- Tang, Yongsheng. (2004). Returning to Europe to play an “international role”—analyzing the basic orientation of the British foreign policy in the 21 century. *International Politics*, Issue 2.
- Wang, Zhenhua. *Rebuilding the UK—Tony Blair and the Third Way*. China Social Sciences Press.