

England's Changing Foreign Policy in Its Modern International Relations

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For centuries England has been leading the way to empowered economics and a growing reputation in the world arena. This article analyzes efforts to change the policy of the country in order to maintain a balance of peace and power through its international diplomacy, alliances and military power. It identifies internal as well as external factors affecting the changing foreign policy of England within the framework of its interactions and international relations with other countries.

The realm of International Relations (IR) encompasses the study of a wide range of topics related to world politics in different periods of time. Included in this is the examination of “ways in which globalization and other factors have sometimes contributed to the creation of order but also often to the breakdown of order, violence among and within states, and the assertions of particularity, whether based on ethnicity, nationalism, or differences in culture, or wealth”. (See the site: <http://www.lehigh.edu/coursecatalog/international-relations.html>).

This essay looks at issues related to the ever-changing role of England's foreign policy in the world arena. It takes the position that England is able to solve a multitude of issues, such as its 'role' within the framework of unexpectedly emerging changes, through particular international interactions.

Apparently, England's foreign policy has never been given a particular pattern or behavior to be pursued by state officials. It has always assumed a changing character in its trends as well as in its content. For this reason, it is quite justified that some politicians say England has no permanent friend, but it has a permanent national interest.

Actually, at the beginning of the XX century England made remarkable changes in the structure and principles of its foreign policy. This consequently led to the rendering of necessary alterations to its world politics. *England's foreign policy has two major elaborative trends*: the first is associated with its internal socio-political situation and the second with changes to its international policy, which require necessary alterations to its foreign policy. Though these are considered separately, both of these play an integral role in shaping and reshaping the foreign policy of England and its changing role in international relations.

Joining NATO (1949) has helped England better identify its place in world politics, determine its allies and its role. Post-World War II England joined the disputes over the oil assets of Iran (1951-1954), the Suez-Crisis (armed conflict in Egypt-1956-

1957), Cold War negotiations with FSU (1972-1973), the problems of the Gulf War with Iraq (Iran and Iraq War in 1991), the issues of military involvement in Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia under the UN mandate and further bombings in Kosovo (1995 and 1999), the UN sponsored war in Afghanistan (2001) and further collaboration with UN and other allies in the occupation of Iraq (2003) and the occupation of Libya under the UN mandate within the Libyan No – Fly Zone (2011) programme and over other recent involvements.

While analyzing all these historical interactions, it is not difficult to observe that England has always had a great influence on the formation of foreign policy, both its own and that of other countries. Its impact began with the establishment of the British Empire and continued through the years of industrialization. England started to more increasingly realize the importance of its power over the world economic system. Since then, its economic privilege encouraged it to establish principles of cooperation and international relations within the European community. England not only expanded its zone of influence in the central European regions, but on the periphery as well. It simultaneously influenced more powerful cultural and social interrelations within the European Union. It was even observed by Niall Ferguson, an expert in political relations from Oxford University during the time, that England was expanding its colonial practice. “British rule brought to the colonies in technology and contributed to the development of culture and education. Assimilation in the provinces of British culture and traditions, the active contacts of the colonialists and the local population, sound economic policy of the government - all this led to the fact that the management of the colonies to be effective and not too expensive”. (Niall Ferguson. Empire. How Britain Made the Modern World. - London: Allen Lane, 2003, 392 p)

Despite the volume of interest in socio-economic interrelations, England was not completely free of disagreements with the US on various political problems during World War II. Such a controversial relationship had negative effects on mutual relations within Europe. “Britain traditionally has been reluctant to engage in continuous institutional engagement with Europe, beyond the requirements of military alliances helpful or essential to national security. ...The fading of militarism in Europe since 1945 is a fundamental accomplishment”(International Affairs Britain, Europe and the United States: change and continuity: Arthur Cyr, November 2012). Political parties existing in England have their own interests and political agendas regarding England’s relations with contemporary EU countries. For example, some newspapers and articles try to deal with this issue in light of the changing situation in the world. “The Conservatives do not want Britain's big government to be replaced by Brussels”. From another side, “whilst the Greek debt crisis once again exposed how fragmented the European Union is, both Labour and the Conservatives view complete isolationism from the EU as unrealistic. Europe is too close and too large to be simply ignored. However the two political parties have divergent views on the EU. The Labour party believes that through engagement London can influence the EU’s development and the ultimate direction of its policies. It is not opposed to a European political union...; it wants a prominent seat at the table of such a union. The Tories, on the other hand, are for engaging Europe in order to control it. (“Britain’s Forged Role in the World”: Article by Adnan Khan, 26 April 2010). Depending on the changing situation in the world, England also started to make more shifts and adjustments to its conservatism

and practical interest in the world arena. Interestingly, later, in the post World War II period, this role started to change gradually and began to assume the character of increased pragmatism and conservatism. In 1997, developing countries received only 5% of global foreign direct investment, in 1913 this figure exceeded 63% during the life of the empire total emigration from Britain to the colonies exceeded 20 million. (Niall Ferguson. *Empire. How Britain Made the Modern World.*- London: Allen Lane, 2003, 392 p).

Today England is suffering from its internal economic situation, and the rising voice of the common English people urges it to more vividly and punctually adjust to the changing international landscape, assuming more practicality and pragmatism to serve the interests of Englishmen. As it is stated in a recent article by Philip Stephens, “Britain has suffered a permanent fall in income and living standards. Global aspirations must be cut from less plentiful cloth. The flimsy pretence that Britain has a role as a pocket superpower will not survive the next round of defense cuts. Nor will others stand idly by while Britain fiddles with its geopolitical compass”. (British foreign policy should be realist. By Philip Stephens “Financial Times”, September 20, 2012).

Nowadays, one of the characteristic features of English foreign policy is reflected in its cooperation and collaborative actions with the US and the EU. Evidently, the USA is more involved in political engagement in the Pacific, whereas England does not see its role increasing in this region. Another particular trait is characterized by England’s clear and vital national interests that seemingly lie in an open world economy, pushing it to seek access to international trade and investment. From this view, England’s oil company BP also plays a decisive role in expanding its ever-growing economic interests in the world. In fact, its long term operational involvement in oil business in the North Sea, Caspian Sea and other regions brings benefits to its economy and provides energy security for England and other EU countries. England cannot abandon the EU energy security policy, as it is quite vital for the development of its current economic situation.

Another particular interest of England is related to its global security issues, immigration policy and the policy of country admission. The London 2012 Olympic Games once again demonstrated that England is ready to sacrifice even its sport and tourism revenues for its safety and stability. As it is stated in the article by a correspondent Philip Stephens, “Britain has a big stake in global security. History, culture and economic interest make it a natural champion of the international rule of law. This means it needs armed forces that can reach beyond the task of homeland defense to make a wider contribution to security”. Undoubtedly, “Mr. Cameron’s government too often hankers after a new Elizabethan age. Why cannot plucky Britain, you can hear ministers say, leave the troubles of Europe behind and remake its fortune in far-off lands? Sad to say, romanticism is eclipsing realism. The first step towards a serious foreign policy is to see the world as it is rather than as one might have liked it to be”. (British foreign policy should be realist. By Philip Stephens “Financial Times”, September 20, 2012).

One more interesting fact in England's changing foreign policy is related to its offer of a closed national community seeking to offer high levels of welfare and security to "native" citizens. It comes from the view of a socialist model; however, this term can hardly convince the rest of the political forces inside the country. "As such, growing pressures towards nationalism and introspection ought to be rebuffed. It is to the left's advantage that this is fundamentally an age of interdependence, not isolationism", states another article written by Daniel Hennan on "Guardian" (Tuesday, 20 November 2012).

In summary, the changing role of British foreign policy is inevitable in light of the changing nature of the world's countries and policymakers' attitudes, visions and stances towards the maintenance of peace and stability, and as well as towards the increased welfare of individual nations. Whatever may be, in my opinion, national security comes first and foremost.

Reference:

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