

RESEARCH ARTICLE

For Queen and Country! National Identity and British Post-War Use of Military Power

Jan Werner Mathiasen

Royal Danish Defence College, DK
jama@fak.dk

British post-war security policy and use of military power is not subjugated by the structures of or interaction in the international system. Rather, British use of military power is strongly influenced by a territorially sovereign identity and an institutional balance between Crown and Parliament. British national identity originate in the historical struggle to maintain cohesion and political stability in Britain. From the Glories Revolution to the Second World War territorial sovereignty and institutional independence have defined Britain as an international actor and framed its security policy. Consequently, the territorially sovereign identity and institutional balance between Crown and Parliament continuously influence British security policy. The post-war use of British military power from the Suez Crisis in 1956 to the European Security and Defence Policy, thus, primarily recovers an internal institutional balance. An institutional balance that also played an underlying role in the British withdrawal from the European Union.

Keywords: National identity; state formation; Britain; post-war security policy; Brexit

Introduction

For four hundred years the foreign policy of England has been to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most dominating Power on the Continent... [...] it would have been easy and must have been very tempting to join with the stronger and share the fruits of his conquest. However, we always took the harder course, joined with the less strong Powers, made a combination among them, and thus defeated and frustrated the Continental military tyrant whoever he was, whatever nation he led. [...] It is a law of public policy which we are following, and not a mere expedient dictated by accidental circumstances, or likes and dislikes, or any other sentiment (Churchill 1936/2013: 101).

Most scholars define the balancing of the continental European powers as the enduring security policy of Britain. Consequently, Stephen M. Walt uses Britain as the obvious example of great power balancing in international relations (Walt 1990: 111). Likewise, former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger outlines Britain's consistent security policy as a strategy for other states to pursue (Kissinger 2001: 112). From Pitt and Newcastle to Palmerston and Churchill, great power balancing became a law of public policy and thus primed Britain's role in the world and the general understanding of British exceptionalism. However, this article argues that the law of public policy does not relate to the dominant powers on the European continent. Rather, it relates primarily to internal self-designation processes to maintain national cohesion in Britain. According to William Wallace, the myth of exceptionalism 'matured through the experiences of the English Civil War and the struggles against the threat of Catholic absolutism, first from Spain and then from France: a free England defying an unfree continent' (Wallace 1991: 70). Thus, the image of the territorially sovereign and institutionally independent Britain confronting military tyrants and regimes is the single most important part of British national identity. The Second World War, where the British Isles were territorially threatened by Nazi Germany and Churchill's Britain stood institutionally alone, influenced British self-designation in the post-war period and beyond. Consequently, the Second World War augmented British national identity as a territorially sovereign and institutionally independent state, thereby defining Britain's position in the world and influencing British use of military power (Hughes 2014; Wallace 1991; McCourt 2014).

British security policy is a product of the historical struggle to maintain national cohesion within Britain. As this article argues, the law of public policy and British exceptionalism originate in the formative moments of Britain. In time, a territorially sovereign identity and a balanced institutional expression between Crown and Parliament became the most important marker of Britishness (Wallace 1992). This article demonstrates how internal state formation processes forged British identity and continuously influence its security policy. To secure national cohesion, Britain always balances its territorial possessions and institutional duality between Crown and Parliament – between Queen and Country.

The article substantiates this argument by making three points. The first point is theoretical, about the relations between state formation, national identity and the security policy of states. The article argues that state formation processes create a kernel of national identity that strongly influences security policy. This kernel of identity omits structural and interactional dynamics of international relations and continuously influences the use of military power. Consequently, security policy traditions derive from the ongoing struggle to create national cohesion around this kernel of identity. The second point is that state formation processes and security experiences around the beginning of the 18th century forged Britain as a territorially sovereign state with primarily territorial security interests. As territorial sovereignty is the kernel of British identity, the security of the Isles was detached from the security of the Crown's overseas territories. The article argues that British exceptionalism and the law of public policy derive from the formative creation of this kernel of identity. The third and main point is that this territorial focus and balance between Crown and Parliament continuously influence Britain's post-war use of military power. The Second World War, where the British Isles were significantly threatened, reinforced the territorial element in British national identity. After the Second World War, the image of a free Britain confronting absolutism therefore grew stronger, but this caused an even narrower security focus on the Isles. Thus, national identity reorders the internal institutional balance whenever Britain is territorially and institutionally threatened, as the post-war case studies illustrate.

The article focusses on the hard cases of British security policy: the Suez Crisis, the withdrawal from East of Suez, the independent nuclear deterrence, the Falklands War, and the European Security and Defence Policy. These cases contradict the common understanding of British exceptionalism in international relations and great power balancing. Therefore, recent studies focus on role-based models of explanations, historical legacies and discursive legitimisation (Hughes 2014; McCourt 2014; Peevers 2013). This article intends to add to the existing social analysis by illustrating how a territorially sovereign identity and a need for institutional balance influenced the security policy in these cases. The final section of the article demonstrates how elements of territorial sovereignty and institutional independence played an underlying role in the British withdrawal from the European Union.

State formation, national identity and the use of military power

Undoubtedly, state identity and its impact on the use of military power is important in world politics (Hudson 2014). National identity and its origin, however, is one of the most debated topics of international relations theory (Hopf 1998; Weldes 1999; Wendt 1999). This debate primarily originates in the constructivist challenge of the realist conception of identity, as state-given and purely an outcome of the structure of the international system (Weldes 1999: 280). Consequently, the principal debate is on the origin of identity as either a product of structure or interaction. According to the structural realist tradition, identity relates only to the anarchic international self-help system. International position and relative power define state identity. Consequently, structures also define states' use of military power to secure their identity as super-power, regional power etc. in the international system. The constructivist position, on the other hand, defines interaction between states and the perception of self and others as constitutive of identity (Wendt 1999). Positive and negative experiences with others constitute state identity, and identities are more changeable than the realist-tradition prescribes (Wendt 1992). Thus, the perception of self and others and past experience in the system of states influence the use of military power. Both traditions focus on systemic factors and pay less attention to the actor-specific characteristics prior to engagement. Two case studies of British national identity exemplify the differences between the structural and the interactive approach.

David McCourt argues that the Second World War and the subsequent loss of relative economic and military power to the USA and the Soviet Union changed Britain's world role (McCourt 2009, 2014). As an outcome of these changes in the international order, Britain assumed the identity of a residual great power, an identity that strongly influences British post-war security policy from the Suez Crisis in 1956 to the Invasion of Iraq in 2003 (McCourt 2011). Like McCourt, Jonathan Gaskarth investigates British identity and subsequent use of military power through role theory (Gaskarth 2014a, 2014b). Gaskarth, however, applies a constructivist approach to explain how interaction with other states and perceptions of self and significant

others form national role concepts. To Gaskarth, important internal and external actor expectations combined with specific role conceptions form the vital link between identity and foreign policy options. Role conceptions and identity rather than 'the impact of austerity and the rise of new poles of power in the international structure' define the use of military power in post-war Britain (Gaskarth 2014a: 560). Most scholars acknowledge that the balance of world power, economic dynamics or imitation of norms and practices define states' specific identities. Contemporary research thus defines systemic relations to other states as the primary guidance for states' use of military power.

States' use of military power as the 'first and constant resort' for interaction with other states creates a clear linkage between security policy and state survival (Waltz 1979: 113). Consequently, the general realist theory tradition defines 'the survival of a political unit, such as a nation, in its identity' as 'the integrity of the nation's territory, of its political institutions and of its culture' (Morgenthau 1952: 973). States' survival relates to three interlocking elements: territory, institutions and public cohesion. Likewise, constructivist theory perceives states as 'an organizational actor embedded in an institutional-legal order that constitutes it with sovereignty and a monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence over a society in a territory' (Wendt 1999: 213). The constitutive elements of the state create political unity and national cohesion and instantiate three different archetypic identities: the political state, the organic state and the territorial state (Buzan 1991; Wæver 2002). The political state constructs national cohesion in an institutional expression, often by connecting individuals directly to the state in the constitutive act or by linking citizens politically to its institutions (Buzan 1991: 71; Holsti 1996: 45; Wæver 2002: 34). The organic state, on the contrary, constructs national cohesion on common criteria of nationhood (Buzan 1991: 72; Holsti 1996: 48; Wæver 2002: 34). A shared culture, language or ethnicity amongst the individuals legitimises the organic state, and nationality is the political bond of that particular state formation. In addition to these two well-established archetypes, national identity is a matter of residency in the territorial state (Holsti 2004: 98). The primary aspect of political cohesion is the mutual relation to a well-defined territorial area or a historical geographical relation. Since these specific nation-state links create social cohesion and constitute specific national identities, they are vital for understanding states' security policies and particularly their use of military power. All three elements are present in all states in the international system, however, one element of identity is the more important and frames the idea of the state (Buzan 1991; Kowert, 1999; Wæver 2002). This element is the kernel of identity which creates and continuously maintains national cohesion in a 'we'.

Thus, national identity does not primarily relate to structures of and interaction in the international system. On the contrary, 'the identity is generated by state formation and political development processes that to varying degrees are prior to or independent from interaction with other states' (Kahl 1999: 105). This article argues that neither structures nor interaction in the international system define states' security policies. The kernel of identity in states defines security policy options, and the use of military power in particular. This kernel as 'the raw material out of which members of the state system are constituted is created by domestic society before states enter the constitutive process of international society' (Wendt 1992: 402). The use of military power is historically rooted in identity as it constitutes the security policy of the state in its ongoing struggle to survive as a political unit (Buzan 1991: 70; Holsti 1996: 97). Consequently, British use of military power 'has a separate identity, formed through particular historically rooted understandings and behaviour patterns' (Gaskarth 2006: 332). In Britain, the kernel of identity originates in the formative moments of the state and centres around the creation of national cohesion in a territorial 'we'. Applying a historical perspective, this article focusses on how British identity is constituted in the first place, and how it continuously influences the use of military power. The article analyses how national identity continuously influences British post-war security policy as an underlying premise for the use of military power. Consequently, it is the territorially sovereign identity and not images of exceptionalism or the law of public policy that constitute Britain's self-designation.

Britain's territorially sovereign identity and institutional balance

Like William Wallace, Timothy Garton Ash argues that Britain as a state 'was forged in real wars against France [...] forged in both senses of the word: beaten into shape while heated, and falsified' (Ash 2004: 55). The image of British exceptionalism in international relations is therefore a self-designation process to create and maintain national cohesion in Britain, primarily in opposition to continental Europe. In his 2001 article, 'Is Britain European?' Ash answers this rhetorical question by identifying several different senses of 'European' in the British Europe debate (Ash 2001: 4). In his analysis, the geographical distinction between Britain and continental Europe plays an important role. Ash points out that many observers perceive British independence as opposed to European integration primarily as a struggle between 'the Isles' and 'Continental Europe' in the deconstruction of British history (Ash 2001: 7). Ash outlines the image of exceptionalism

as an ongoing self-designation process in which geographical and institutional independence forges British identity. Thus, British exceptionalism resembles the construction of national cohesion or Britishness in a territorial 'we' centred on the doctrine of 'splendid isolation' and 'the imagery of a sceptred isle in a silver sea' (Wallace 1991: 71; Wallace 1992: 432). Consequently, geography has always been the 'key currency in debates about relations between the people, Parliament and the King' (Mayhew 2005: 263), and the national cohesion in Britain primarily relates to the territorial sovereignty of the Isles and the institutional balance between Crown and Parliament. These two elements constitute the kernel of British national identity (Wallace 1992: 435). The following sections explore how the historical relation of power between Crown and Parliament created and maintained a territorially sovereign identity in Britain, and how this identity forged British security policy as the law of public policy from the Glorious Revolution to the end of the Second World War.

After William of Orange landed in southwest England in 1688, Parliament took over security matters from the Crown and Britain has since successfully defended its territory against foreign invasions. Subsequently, the Bill of Rights from 1689 created a state of dual institutional governance with a pragmatic balance between Crown and Parliament, governing the overseas territories and the Isles, respectively (Hall 1999: 156). As a safeguard of Parliament, the new constitution strongly reduced the power of the Crown which could not keep a standing army without parliamentary consent. After the unification of England and Scotland in 1707, Britain became a territorially defined sovereign state and was not influenced by the revolutionary period (1764–1789) or the nationalistic state formations in the 19th century. Consequently, the territorially sovereign identity lasted longer in Britain than in its European adversaries (Snyder 1991: 154; Kowert 1999: 12). In his analysis of the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), Rodney Bruce Hall argues that national identity and not dynamics of the international security structure caused the war between Britain and France (Hall 1999: 161). In Hall's analysis, Britain entered the war primarily to safeguard its territorially sovereign identity. Since Britain had no direct territorial security interests on the European continent, it had successfully safeguarded its national identity by economically supporting other states against the dominant power on the continent. In 1714, however, the Hanoverian Prince George I made his North German homeland a British client state (Woloch 1982: 40). Consequently, Britain adjusted its security policy in order 'to make provisions for Hanover's defence and thus for continental war, by subsidies to allies, through a British expeditionary force or both' (Schweizer 1987: 248). In 1756, King George II's conflicting interests challenged Britain's broader security requirements (Hall 1999: 167). To safeguard the institutional balance, the British government turned to Prussia for protection of the Crown's client state (Woloch 1982: 42). However, this alliance did not balance the political relations between Crown and Parliament as King George II considered Prussia an enemy of Hanover and wanted to protect his territorial possessions with British forces. Nonetheless, Parliament initially insisted on the alliance with Prussia for the protection of Hanover (Schweizer 1987: 40). Then, in April 1758, 9,000 British soldiers entered the continental theatre to secure the Crown's electorate. The Seven Years' War illustrates how Britain's cohesion depends on an institutional balance between Crown and Parliament. King George II's dual territorial realm of Britain and Hanover overruled the policy not to deploy troops on continental Europe, and to safeguard British cohesion, Parliament had to engage in a protracted war on the European continent, thereby accepting the migration of the colonial war in North America to the European continent (Hall 1999: 168).

During the 18th and 19th century colonialism, the territorially sovereign identity and the institutional balance once more became visible in British security policy. As Britishness related to the territorially sovereign Isles only, it was never the policy to establish small British societies in the colonies. The Crown resided over the dominions as 'the relationship between London and the overseas rested on customs and assumptions' (Bonwick 2000: 72). In his analysis of the long-lasting British Empire, Paul Kennedy argues that 'the British Empire was in reality a cluster of empires, a congeries of different parts moving at different speeds [and therefore] never faced the "massed hordes" to overrun the entire system' (Kennedy 1983: 207–208). Thus, the overseas territories never became an integrated part of the state, and the enduring policy was that the colonies only served as providers of resources for the security of Britain (Hedetoft 2013: 99). Overseas territories added wealth and prosperity, but the self-designation of Britain and Britishness related to the Isles only (Kennedy 1983: 205). This was in opposition to other European colonial powers, France for instance, who created its own institutional image in the colonies. Colonies brought wealth and glory to Britain, but Britain never jeopardised its territorially sovereign identity by creating national bonds between London and the overseas territories (Hall 1999: 156). The focus on territorial security and the institutional balance between Crown and Parliament forged the kernel of identity as a law of public policy in Victorian Britain.

In the immediate period following the Second World War, British territorially sovereignty identity was threatened. Germany had almost invaded the Isles in 1940, and the Soviet Union's heavy investments in airpower and nuclear weapons posed an imminent existential threat against the Isles. Consequently, in a series of post-war speeches, Winston Churchill reshaped the image of Britishness by reordering the institutional balance and territorially sovereign identity (Wallace 2005: 66). Churchill envisioned three spheres of influence that encompassed both British post-war exceptionalism and the law of public policy. The first sphere was the British Commonwealth and Empire, the second the rest of the English-speaking world and the third a United Europe (Churchill 2013: 373). Churchill's 'Island at the centre', however, could not choose between the overseas possessions, the Atlantic relationship or Europe. To secure its institutional balance and safeguard its territorially sovereign identity, Britain had to engage in all three spheres of influence (Churchill 2013: 373). In the so-called three-pillar post-war strategy, the territorial defence of the British Isles and continental Europe against the Soviet threat had top priority, and Britain therefore focussed its first pillar on aerial deterrence of the Isles and a stronghold on the European continent. The other two pillars were the Royal Navy's control of the vital sea lines of communications to the Empire and a firm hold in the remaining overseas bases in the Middle East and Southeast Asia (Dockrill 2002: 10). The Isles were fortified, and expeditionary forces based in a few strongholds safeguarded the rest of the Crown's territories. Thus, Britain adjusted the institutional balance between Crown and Parliament to safeguard the national identity. The diminishing world influence of Britain coincided with a narrow focus on protecting the British Isles from Soviet expansion and influence (Baylis et al. 1975: 265), and the territorially sovereign identity and institutional balance continued to define the security policy of Britain.

British identity and post-war security policy

Historical experiences, the Second World War in particular, have guided British Prime Ministers, from Anthony Eden in the Suez Crisis to Tony Blair in the 2003 Iraq Invasion (Ash 2004: 30; Hughes 2014). For 75 years, British prime ministers have self-embarked on a harder course, strongly influenced by self-designating images. History's effect on the British post-war use of military power, needs no further documentation, however, this law of public policy does not originate in exceptionalism or a moral approach to world order (Wallace 1991: 70). Rather, it is a security policy guided by the kernel of British national identity. The following analysis illustrates how institutional balance and the territorially sovereign identity influenced the hard puzzles of British post-war security policy.

Twice Suez in the immediate post-war period

The Suez Crisis of 1956 was the first post-war trial that greatly exposed the institutional balance and territorially sovereign identity of Britain. Even though the canal was located in Egypt, the Constantinople Convention of 1888 defined it as an international territory with free passage to all ships during peace and war. Prior to the conflict, only 12 years remained before the French-British Suez Canal Company had to turn over the canal administration to the Egyptian government (McCourt 2014: 62). The puzzle of the case, therefore, is twofold. First, the strong commitment to a military solution indeed challenged the Cold War superpower balance. Second, the British reluctance to commit to the creation of a Suez Canal Users' Association to operate the canal, as proposed by the American secretary of state was not in line with the image of exceptionalism in international relations. Although this international association would give Britain, France and Egypt an equal stake in the canal, Britain had planned to recapture the canal area by military power at the time of the nationalisation (Hughes 2014; McCourt 2014; Smith 2012).

Since the three-pillar strategy focussed on securing the Isles from Soviet aggression, British use of military power elsewhere was based on deployment from Britain and the strategic bases in Singapore and Aden (Howard 1966: 181; McCourt 2009: 454). The security of the Isles was a first priority, and the overseas territories depended on deployable forces and control of the vital sea and communication lines (Croft et al. 2001: 10). The withdrawal of British troops from the Suez base in October 1954 was the result of an increasingly narrow focus on the security of the Isles. The British withdrawal and the subsequent elimination of financial support for the Aswan High Dam in 1956 caused the Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, to nationalise Britain's gateway to the Crown's territories. Consequently, Britain had to regain control of the vital linkage between its military power and the Crown's overseas territories. As the Suez Canal nationalisation undermined the British three-pillar strategy and threatened the institutional balance, military responses were preferred from the start.

The legal issue of both the nationalisation and a British military intervention was primarily a matter of territorial sovereignty in official parliamentary debates and in the public and academic opinion (Peevers 2013: 71, 80, 84). Parliamentary debates vividly discussed the right to and, to some degree, the moral obligation

of self-defence for the preservation of 'the international character of territory'. Likewise, Prime Minister Anthony Eden repeatedly described Nasser's nationalisation and the Aswan Dam quarrel as a territorial dispute with Britain (Peevers 2013: 84; Hughes 2014: 56):

The [Aswan] dam is on British territory. It is owned by a British colonial Government. Egypt is a user and she is not sovereign over the dam. And yet, by peaceful agreement, Britain submits to Egyptian user control of a project vital to Egypt. There is no suggestion that it is in any way derogatory to British sovereignty that Egypt has this special position (Eden, HC Deb 13 September 1956, col 301).

The three-pillar strategy for the security of the Isles as well as the Crown's territories was conditioned by a firm hold on the Suez Canal. Thus, British exceptionalism of moral standards and the law of public policy not to upset the international order fell short in Suez. As a territorially sovereign state, Britain could not accept that a third institutional authority had its 'hand on our windpipe' or 'thump on our jugular vein' (Smith 2012: 46, 51). Consequently, it was the internal institutional balancing and not the dynamics of the international system or role expectations from significant others that guided the British security policy in the Suez Crisis. In the end, Britain intervened militarily to protect its territorially sovereign identity and safeguard its institutional balance.

Like the Suez Crisis, the withdrawal from East of Suez significantly weakened British exceptionalism and, in particular, Britain's military capacity to manage great power balancing. Many observers argue that the devaluation of the Sterling in November 1967 caused an increase in the defence costs for maintaining the British overseas bases. As the expenditure increase coincided with a diminishing return and a lack of British interests beyond the European theatre, the government decided to withdraw from East of Suez (McCourt 2009: 456; Croft et al. 2001: 16). However, two striking puzzles frame the case. First, to many critics, the security risks to the world order and British exceptionalism in particular were far greater in the Middle East, the Far East and Africa than in the Atlantic and European theatres (Croft et al. 2001: 38). In opposition to this risk perception, the British Army of the Rhine and an aerial deterrence in Britain were preferred over a British military footprint in the Crown colonies. Second, the trade-off between maintaining the overseas military presence and the national economy had long been a political phantom (Zinkin 1966: 209):

The one remaining argument which ought by now to have been laid at rest is the notion that a military presence should be maintained to safeguard economic interests in some direct way. Whatever may have been true in the past – and the point was always debatable – this line of argument is too conjectural to serve as a basis of policy for the seventies (Darby 1970: 658).

Britain sustained its overseas bases not for economic reasons, but for national cohesion and the institutional balance between Crown and Parliament. Consequently, it was not the decreasing profit, but the need to maintain a substantial deterrence capability and a large number of British forces in Europe to safeguard the Isles that ended the British world role (Croft et al. 2001: 17). The official explanation for the withdrawal from East of Suez in 1971 was economic necessity, but 'the final decisions owed at least as much to political expediency' (Darby 1970: 659). Hence, territorial security issues once again outlined the predicament of British national identity and re-balanced the institutions. The Crown Colonies were not allowed to jeopardise the protection of the Isles from the Soviet threat:

I would point out that the justification of our military presence East of Suez is not the building of a wall against Communism. Nor is it for the protection of selfish British economic interests. [...] We cannot be the permanent policeman for the whole of Africa and Asia. Whatever might have been possible in the nineteenth century, the days of pax Britannica are over. We must share our responsibilities with our friends and allies (Healey, HC Deb 3 March 1965, col 1338).

The British withdrawal from East of Suez coincided with the Vietnam War and the US political pressure on and economic support of a continuing British presence in South East Asia (McCourt 2009). However, neither the communist threat to the world order nor the US expectations could influence British security policy. Consequently, it was national identity rather than the structure of the international system or the expectations of significant others that necessitated the British withdrawal from East of Suez.

Recovering independence and territorial sovereignty

The Second World War greatly influenced British defence requirements as the aerial domain had so crucially threatened the British identity as a territorially sovereign state. Consequently, the British three-pillar strategy now focussed on deterring Soviet aerial aggression. The institutionally balanced and territorially sovereign national identity directed the immediate post-war security policy to protecting the British Isles and sustaining a balance of deterrence in continental Europe:

We must, therefore, honour our undertaking to maintain our contribution to the N.A.T.O. forces in Europe in time of peace. In war, this defensive shield would be of vital importance, for we must do our utmost to hold the Soviet and satellite forces at arms' length in order to prevent short-range air and rocket attack on these islands (Churchill, HC Deb 1 March 1955, col 1904).

After the successful test of a 1.6-megaton thermonuclear bomb in 1955, the Soviet Union could compete with the United States' nuclear weapons. Consequently, an independent nuclear deterrence capability became a prerequisite for safeguarding the British Isles and overseas territories. Just like the German use of strategic airpower in 1940, the Soviet nuclear bomb capacity seriously threatened British territorially sovereign identity:

Thirty years ago, the balance of warfare became very much more even. The difference between victory and defeat was less distinct – but it was still possible for nations who emerged victorious from battle to preserve their territorial integrity. [...] Ten years ago, with the advent of mass bombing, territorial integrity disappeared (Fienburgh, HC Deb 1 March 1955, col 1972).

The territorial aspect of British identity strongly influenced debates concerning British independent nuclear deterrence capability in 1955. The argument that 'no Power with thermonuclear weapons is likely to attack the territory of another Power which also has thermonuclear weapons' predominated the security debates for nuclear weapons (Healey, HC Deb 1 March 1955, col 1934). Likewise, the protesters believed that with limited use of nuclear power 'the danger will always exist that the big one will be used sooner or later', and the 'moment it is used this island is expended and has no further part to play' (Fienburgh, HC Deb 1 March 1955, col 1976). Given the global reach of a nuclear confrontation and the British commitment to NATO's collective deterrence on the European continent, the efforts and economic resources put into gaining an independent nuclear deterrence capability is puzzling. British exceptionalism and moral standards in international relations opposed the mass killing by US strategic airpower during the Second World War and later in the Vietnam War. Furthermore, nuclear proliferation in general had the possibility to seriously damage the existing world order and threaten British survival. Consequently, reliable nuclear deterrence was neither in line with the image of British exceptionalism nor the law of public policy. As it turned out, British nuclear deterrence capability became 'not British and not independent, and [...] very doubtful deterrent' (Rees-Williams, HL Deb 13 March 1963, col 798).

During parliamentary debates on the replacement of the Polaris with the Trident system in 1980, the territorial aspect and institutional balance once again became an important factor. This time, the territorial aspect was twofold. First, the more flexible use of tactical nuclear weapons in NATO reopened the territorial paradox of nuclear deterrence:

Allowing our homeland to be used as an offensive nuclear base carries with it a tremendous cost. We should be regarded as a primary nuclear target area in the event of the outbreak of hostilities. It is wrong that the House should permit that. For these and other reasons, I strongly object to the Government allowing nuclear bases on British territory or renewing the British nuclear deterrent (Newens, HC Deb 19 June 1980, col 1896).

Second, independent nuclear deterrence had become less pronounced with the purchase of the US missile systems. With the purchase of the new Trident missile system, the decision to launch sea-based nuclear weapons from British territorial waters did not rest on Britain alone:

If sea-launched cruise missiles are stationed on American ships in British waters, they will be completely under the control of American forces. We know that about 100 ground-launched cruise

missiles will operate on British territory, but there could be 1,000 sea-launched cruise missiles on ships and submarines in British territorial waters (Boyes, HC Deb 18 June 1984, col 75).

Since the US could now launch nuclear weapons from the British Isles, a third and foreign institutional authority was endangering Britain's territorially sovereign identity. Another aspect was the British reluctance to assign control of British nuclear weapons to NATO. This reluctance also concerned the protection of those of the Crown's territories that were not part of the NATO deterrence strategy (Carrington, HL Deb 19 November 1963, col 240). Consequently, the British Trident missiles came under NATO control, though with the right to act independently if 'supreme national interests are at stake' (Croft et al. 2001: 73; McCourt 2014: 89). In the end, the image of an independent nuclear deterrence capability safeguarded the institutional balance in Britain and, consequently, both the British Isles and the Crown's territories outside NATO.

Similarly to the case of the independent nuclear deterrence, the Falklands War was primarily a matter of territorial sovereignty and institutional balance. The conflict began on 2 April 1982, when Argentina backed their longstanding sovereignty claim with military power by invading the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. Up until the invasion, the great majority of the British population cared little about the Falklanders, who had been without British citizenship since the Nationality Act of 1981. Furthermore, the 1981 Defence Review withdrew the Navy patrol ship HMS Endurance from the South Atlantic. These decisions outlined a decreasing British interest in the Falkland Islands. Thus, the puzzle of the case is the amount of resolve and resources put into the recovery of 'a bunch of rocks in the South Atlantic' (Thomas 2002: 47), but for the British government, these isles had enormous symbolic effect precisely because they exposed the institutional balance between Crown and Parliament, thereby threatening the kernel of British identity.

To many observers, the Falklands War was primarily about protection of international principles and the right to self-determination even for small communities (Freedman 2005: 16), and the campaign to free the Falklanders appeared to be in line with the image of British exceptionalism. However, as the conflict occurred during the Cold War's intermediate-range nuclear missile race, a war could potentially damage the existing world order. The British response to the Argentine claim and subsequent invasion somehow subverted the law of public policy. Nevertheless, right from the beginning and throughout the war, Parliamentary debates discussed the invasion as a territorial aggression against the Crown's possessions. Accordingly, this particular archipelago in the South Atlantic Ocean was a matter of core national interests to Britain. On Saturday, 3 April 1982, Parliament was summoned 'to respond to a situation of great gravity [since] for the first time for many years, British sovereign territory [was] invaded by a foreign power' (Thatcher, HC Deb 03 April 1982, col 633). However, as the Falkland Islands territorially were not a part of Britain, the gravity of the situation concerned the balance between Crown and Parliament. To defend the British national identity, it quickly became 'the Government's objective to see that the islands are freed from occupation and are returned to British administration at the earliest possible moment' (Thatcher, HC Deb 03 April 1982, col 633). Therefore, a British Naval Task Force dispatched to the South Atlantic immediately after the Argentine invasion.

The territorial and institutional aspects of the conflict made a diplomatic solution very difficult. On behalf of President Ronald Reagan, US Secretary of State Alexander Haig tried to find a pragmatic solution to the conflict. Haig proposed that an interim British authority under the flags of six observer nations should take over the administration of the islands until sovereignty had been negotiated. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher flatly refused this proposal on 8 April at a meeting at Number 10 Downing Street (Rentschler 1982: 4):

I am pledged before the House of Commons, the Defence Minister is pledged, the Foreign Secretary is pledged to restore British administration. I did not dispatch a fleet to install some nebulous arrangement which would have no authority whatsoever. Interim authority! – to do what? (Rentschler 1982: 4).

To protect the British national identity, Thatcher could not accept this arrangement. The issue was not for her to accept, though, since Parliament did not have the authority to give up the Crown's overseas territories. Britain thus re-invaded the Falkland Islands arguing that 'We still have the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands. The Queen is still Queen and Sovereign of the Falkland Islands. All we have to establish is our administration' (Grieve, HC Deb 07 April 1982, col 1020). During a late-night telephone conversation on 31 May, Prime Minister Thatcher told President Reagan that Britain would not 'hand over the Queen's Islands to a contact group' (Hughes 2014: 110). Consequently, the territorial aspect of the conflict combined with the institutional balance of the British national identity called for military resolve and strength:

Today we meet in the aftermath of the Falklands Battle. Our country has won a great victory and we are entitled to be proud. This nation had the resolution to do what it knew had to be done – to do what it knew was right. [...] We fought with the support of so many throughout the world. [...] Yet we also fought alone – for we fought for our own people and for our own sovereign territory. [...] That confidence comes from the re-discovery of ourselves and grows with the recovery of our self-respect (PM Margaret Thatcher, 1982, July 3).

In the Falklands War, Britain fought alone to recover its own territorially sovereign identity. It was not the image of British exceptionalism or the law of public policy that guided the military response. The reinvansion of the Falklands was a recapture of British territory as well as a re-balance of British institutions and, consequently, had enormous impact on national cohesion. In the end, British territorially sovereign identity necessitated strong resolve and use of military power to recover a bunch of rocks in the South Atlantic.

Options for change in the European Defence Cooperation

Britain has always clung to its territorially sovereign identity and institutional independence when it comes to European integration (Ash 2001; Wallace 1991). Few British political leaders have ever denied that European integration serves British economic and political interests. However, 'concerns that the European Union might impose constraints on British sovereignty and independence' have been a permanent issue in British integration discussions (Milzow 2012: 17). Consequently, the national identity and institutional balance strongly influenced the creation of a common European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

The 1998 Saint-Malo meeting between Prime Minister Tony Blair and the French President, Jacques Chirac, was a turning point for British security cooperation with continental Europe. Europe was to work closer together in security matters in areas less important to the Atlantic relationship and NATO. In Blair's opinion, Europe's insufficient military response to the Balkan conflicts caused the atrocities in Bosnia, the Srebrenica Massacre being of particular importance to the image of British exceptionalism (Kampfner 2003: 59; Milzow 2012: 143). The British reluctance to timely intervene militarily in the Balkans relates to the three-pillar strategy's focus on the Isles. The recent experiences in Cyprus and Northern Ireland, which had proved the difficulty of withdrawing troops once deployed, had challenged the territorially sovereign identity (Rodd & Wolf 2012: 419). Consequently, and in line with the image of British exceptionalism, Blair focussed his security policy on upholding world order by actively engaging in conflict prevention and resolution outside the narrow territorial security focus. Britain and Europe should fight for a moral world order by British exceptionalism standards and with the law of public policy implemented as a guideline for Europe's use of military power. This meant that in the Saint-Malo declaration, Europe needed a 'capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises' (St. Malo Declaration 1998: section 2). However, concerns over the twin commitments to competing security institutions strongly influenced the parliamentary debates:

The Government believes in a strong Europe and a strong NATO. Our leading role in ESDP has been based on those twin commitments, which are widely shared across the enlarging European Union and the Atlantic Alliance and will be at the heart of the development of ESDP in the intergovernmental conference and beyond (Straw, HC Deb 20 October 2003, col 375).

Consequently, the kernel of identity influenced the efforts to balance Britain's security interests. The puzzle of the case is the irrefutable lack of political commitment to a European security initiative formed by the image of British exceptionalism.

In her analysis of national interest in the European integration project, Katrin Milzow identifies territorial security as the vital element for Britain. Consequently, Britain opposed the French-German ambitions to create a European defence identity by integrating the Western European Union into the European Union (Milzow 2012: 133). According to Milzow, Britain was determined that only NATO should provide the territorial defence of the British Isles and continental Europe. Any ambition of developing an all-European security policy for the territorial defence of European states was strongly opposed, and the security of the Isles played an important part in parliamentary discussions.

Following the first-ever military mission undertaken by the European Union (operation CONCORDIA in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), the House discussed the imbalance between NATO and ESDP as security providers. British territorially sovereign identity necessitated a dual commitment and institutional distinction between security interests. NATO safeguarded the territorial sovereignty of the Isles, and ESDP

should focus on conflict prevention alone and never undermine British territorial security. 'ESDP would be developed in conformity with our respective obligations in NATO, and that the Alliance remains the foundation of the collective defence of its members', and again 'it must be absolutely clear that for NATO countries the basic territorial defence rests with NATO (Hoon, HC Deb 27 October 2003, col 44). As a result, Britain never fully committed to its own 1998 Saint-Malo pledge. In the end, the kernel of identity challenged the British exceptionalism and pulled the law of public policy from Tony Blair's political ambition:

The Prime Minister protests that there are people who want to pull me away from Europe, and people who want to pull me away from America. If he is feeling pulled hither and thither, he has nobody to blame but himself. In reality, neither America nor NATO can pull Britain away from Europe. However, the EU constitution, which shall have primacy over the law of the Member States, would pull Britain away from our North American allies and from NATO if it were ever to come into effect (Jenkin, HC Deb 27 October 2003, col 37).

The balance between the Isles and the rest of the world once again interfered with and strongly influenced British security policy options. Narrow territorial security interests again overruled the law of public policy and the image of British exceptionalism: 'Before we embark on the "force for good" adventure, we must understand when determining our defence policy that our vital interests are to protect British territory, borders and air space' (Key, HC Deb 20 October 1998, col 1110).

Conclusion

This article explores how Britain's territorially sovereign identity and institutional balance between Crown and Parliament have strongly influenced British post-war security policy. This peculiar identity originates in the early formation of Britain around the beginning of the 18th century as a territorial state with a dual institutional expression. During the Seven Years' War from 1756–1763, King George II's territories on the European continent seriously challenged Britain's institutional balance and territorially sovereign identity. In order to safeguard its institutional balance, Britain changed its security policy for the European continent. Thus, the territorial focus and institutional balance of Britain strongly influenced the security policy and created a 'law of public policy' during the Georgian and Victorian eras up until the Second World War. During and after the Second World War, this 'law of public policy' was a matter of self-designation to restore national cohesion and the balance between the Crown and the Parliament. Thus, the image of British exceptionalism and the law of public policy influence the general perception of British security policy. At the same time, a kernel of identity continues to influence the hard cases. Overall, British post-war use of military power has primarily safeguarded the territorially sovereign identity and the institutional balance between Queen and Country.

Many observers of British security policy identify national sovereignty and political independence as significant hurdles for European integration. Marcussen et al. have analysed British political discourse in relation to the European Union and conclude that deep-rooted British identity constructions continue to perceive Europe 'as the, albeit friendly, "other" in contrast to Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism' (Marcussen et al. 2001: 112). According to their research, 'the social construction of "exceptionalism" as the core British nation state identity comprises meaning attached to institutions centring around a particular understanding of national sovereignty which is hard to reconcile with a European political order' (Marcussen et al. 2001: 113). Consequently, the question of British integration into the European Union has always been challenged by the British national identity as a territorially sovereign and institutionally balanced state. The concluding section of this article will address the article's findings in relation to the British withdrawal from the European Union.

Brexit and the national identity

Unsurprisingly, the 2016 Brexit referendum debates also invoked elements of identity on both campaign sides. The 'Leave' campaign used British historical exceptionalism to assure the voters that Britain does not need the European Union or the continental European powers. Thus, 'the question of national sovereignty provided the master frame for the Leave campaign – reflected in the campaign mantras of "I want my country back" and "take back control"' (Taylor 2017: 1). On the other hand, the 'Stay' campaign interpreted Winston Churchill's vision of 'a United Europe in which our country will play a decisive part' (McCann 2017: 3). According to this interpretation, Churchill's vision should remind Britain that unity is the only way to rewrite the 'tragedy of Europe' and safeguard the Isles. Thus, the campaigns embraced both the image of British exceptionalism and the law of public policy, and territorially sovereign and institutionally independ-

ent self-designation played an enormous role in the Brexit campaigns' core questions: national security, immigration, jobs, trade and finance. However, self-designation had long influenced British European integration and implanted a national psyche of Euroscepticism in Britain. In 2002, Prime Minister Tony Blair defined this psyche as the guardian of the territorial security and institutional independence:

We fear that the driving ideology behind European integration is a move to a European superstate, in which power is sucked into an unaccountable centre. And what is more a centre of fudge and muddle, bureaucratic meddling, which in economic terms could impede efficiency and in security terms may move us away from the transatlantic alliance. So, for all these reasons, our attitudes have, historically, been characterised by uncertainty; and that has bred in our psyche a feeling that Europe is something done to us by others, not something we do with others (Blair 2002/2013: 3–4).

Like the withdrawal from East of Suez, Brexit is primarily an attempt to rebalance Britain through territorial and institutional self-determination. Membership of the European Union cannot be allowed to jeopardise British national cohesion and territorially sovereign identity. Consequently, British national identity strongly influenced the Brexit referendum as it 'continued to shape the geo-political relationship between the United Kingdom, Europe and the rest of the world' in an idea 'that the United Kingdom has an independent destiny separate from the Continent' (Taylor 2017: 15). Thus, Brexit fits neatly into the British tradition of self-designation by reclaiming the national identity whenever it is threatened. In times of trouble, Britain always safeguards the territorial element of its national identity and institutional balance. For 40 years, shifting governments have re-addressed the ambivalent British membership of the European community. It has always been the prime ministers' difficult task to balance the image of British exceptionalism with the European integration project. Thatcher's rejection of European federalism and Blair's focus on aligning other European economies with British financial interests are the most obvious examples of how Britain could only join Europe by safeguarding its national identity (Taylor 2017: 20–22). Since the territorial element and institutional balance constitute the kernel of British identity, they also form the kernel of national cohesion. Thus, the law of public policy relates primarily to the internal self-designation processes in Britain and the ongoing struggle to balance the dual institutional expression in a territorial 'we'. Britain embarks on a self-designating project whenever the territorially sovereign identity is threatened:

The belief that Britain was a 'world power' with an 'exceptional' history and developmental trajectory defined by the legacy of Empire and the financial pre-eminence of the City, continued to define the relationship between the United Kingdom and 'Europe' throughout the eras of Thatcherism and New Labour. In different ways, both these projects were attempts to redefine and reinvigorate the meaning and significance of 'Britishness' in the context of post-imperial decline. Both emerged as movements within their respective parties with a mission to demolish the obstacles to British greatness and prosperity, and both attempted to reconnect 'state' and 'nation' in an era defined by globalization and demands for devolution within the United Kingdom (Taylor 2017: 22).

The Brexit campaigns focussed on British exceptionalism and the law of public policy because they were different expressions of national identity. Being the extreme appearances of Britishness, the Brexit campaigns emerged as the guardian of a territorially sovereign and institutionally balanced identity and strongly influenced the referendum. David Cameron had envisioned the Brexit referendum as a Churchillian gathering storm. The upcoming Scottish independence referendum, however, might be the storm that finally divides Britain and destroys its territorially sovereign identity. If Scotland were ever to leave Britain, it will seriously damage the balance between Queen and Country.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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