

Lecture 10 - Foreign Affairs:

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Relationships between Britain and the rest of the world reveal a lot:

Once Britain was the powerful giant and "the machine house of the world".
Today Britain is the weak old man, bitter and disillusioned and sceptical of Europe.

There is a three-way division of allegiances: The Empire, USA, Europe.

1) The Empire and the Commonwealth

In the late 1800s Britain "ruled" 1/3 of the world.

There were two types of colony:

1. Colonies of settlement, e.g. Australia
2. Colonies of economic and/or military benefit, e.g. India.

Today it is in a "club" consisting of 54 members (about 1/5 of the world) with a total population of 1,500 million, but with no real political power.

The remnant of empire exists in the form of 15 small "overseas territories" e.g. Pitcairn.

2) USA

There are four areas of special friendship with the USA:

1. Historical and cultural – e.g. a shared language
2. Intelligence – e.g. the satellite system Echelon
3. Nuclear affairs – e.g. USA Trident nuclear technology
4. Military matters - e.g. Gulf War + Kosovo campaign + Afghanistan

2, 3, and 4 are all defence-related.

Throughout the last century the USA and Britain have worked closely as allies in military cooperation.

Today New Labour attempt to maintain a balance between the NATO alliance and European defence. It is here that Britain is clearly divided between the USA and Europe in its loyalties.

3) Europe

Tony Blair and New Labour claim to be pro-European. At both the Nice and Stockholm conferences Tony Blair has claimed that Britain was "at the heart of Europe" in its policies:

1. Its role in defence policy
2. Its role in economic reform

However, Britain is seen as a reluctant EU member - only a member out of economic and political necessity, a country **against**:

"federalism" (the Conservatives are strongly anti-federalist), the loss of sovereignty, "Brussels bureaucracy".
but **for**:
safeguarding "nation-states" in the EU, expanding the number of EU members.

The EU Commission (under Prodi) does not think Britain is saying yes to the Union. The Commission believes Britain obstructs:

1. Tax coordination (where it wants majority voting – Prodi wants to fight fraud and avoid double taxation)
2. Social policy
3. The European satellite system