



Bilateral Diplomacy in an Integrated Europe: the Co-existence of Institutional Orders?

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Abstract

Bilateral diplomacy is typically portrayed as under threat by European integration, which has forged direct links between sectoral ministries, introduced an all-embracing policy arena in Brussels and, arguably, rendered traditional embassy representation irrelevant. This paper questions whether this thesis indeed holds sway, inspired by insights from historical institutionalism. Drawing on data from diplomatic service lists we present a time-series analysis of embassy staff allocation. The results from five foreign services point towards maintained representation in EU 15 and a strong increase in EU 16-27, in line with an expectation of institutional robustness. As regards variation between the foreign services, *convergence* in representation patterns is a dominant trend. Furthermore, it is suggested, where the foreign ministry has a strong position, changes in the allocation of embassy staff will be less radical. Among the cases, France points itself out by its high and increasing priority of embassies in EU 15.

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Introduction

How does the traditional institution of bilateral diplomacy fare in an integrated Europe? This empirical puzzle has not as yet been subject to any systematic scrutiny. While some key comparative studies of foreign ministries have been made (Hocking 1999, Hocking and Spence 2005), little research has been done more specifically on the status of the bilateral diplomacy enacted through embassies (Rana 2002:16). In light of profound changes at the international level, it seems appropriate to re-evaluate the status and function of bilateral diplomats today. Nowhere should the urge to do so be stronger than in Europe, where integration has posed a range of new challenges to diplomacy, which could jeopardise embassy representation between the European Union (EU) member states.

This paper looks at trends in bilateral diplomacy by analysing changes in the resources allocated by foreign services to embassies in Europe. More specifically, it presents a time-series analysis of the number of diplomatic embassy staff in various capitals in Europe, drawing on data from the foreign services of four EU member states – Britain, France, Denmark and Sweden – and one European Economic Area (EEA) member state – Norway. Together, these cases represent variation along some key variables assumed to influence the status of bilateral diplomacy, such as *degree of EU scepticism* and *strength of the foreign ministry*, as well as *size* and *timing of EU accession*. While restricted in empirical scope, it is the purpose with this paper to open a research avenue on the broader process of change within bilateral diplomacy.

If such change is profound it could be seen to hold important implications. What I will argue here is that *the degree to which bilateral diplomacy is transformed could be seen as a key indicator of tightening European integration*. Thus, if deep integration takes place, there should be less need for bilateral diplomacy as the decision-

making arena is multilateralised and drawn to the centre. If, on the other hand, integration is limited, the need for bilateral arrangements should be maintained. It follows from this that the significance of bilateral diplomacy should decrease over time as European integration is strengthened. In an integrated polity there is no justification for bilateral representation, as political authority is centralised and diplomacy restricted to federal representation abroad. We could thus witness a phasing out of bilateralism by way of integration, a process depending on the institutional framework in place and on the resistance of the component parts.¹

In the following, we give a brief thematic backdrop as well as a theoretical framework for accounting for change in bilateral diplomacy. The empirical analysis which follows thereafter presents a time-series analysis of diplomatic staff numbers in bilateral embassies in Europe over the last twenty-five years.

Diplomacy's Predicament in Europe

Inter-state diplomacy is characterised by unified structures and rules of conduct that are stable across space and time and thus facilitate interaction (Bátora 2005). Diplomacy, from this perspective, refers to the methods and personnel maintaining the Westphalian system, in Nicolson's classic definition (1969:41) "the management of the relations between independent States by way of negotiation". To adherents of this classical conception there should be ample reason for concern in an environment where borders between nation-states are blurred and where decision-making takes place in a multi-level system in which sectoral ministries are deeply involved. This is indeed the case in the EU.

¹ The contrasting experiences of American and German unification may illustrate the significance of constitutional structures. The transition from con-federalism to federalism embedded in the American Constitution (1787) was relatively clear-cut compared with German unification under Prussia in the 1870s. Under Prussian auspices inter-state relations and the unified federal structure co-existed for some time under a weakly constitutionalised polity (Lerman 1997).

In the process of European integration there are two clear dimensions that could be seen to threaten classical bilateral diplomacy.² First, the multilateralisation or *Brusselisation* of diplomacy definitely threatens the *bilateral* method to the benefit of a hybrid multilateral structure in which the foreign ministry controls only parts of the agenda and personnel. Member states vary with regards to composition of and recruitment to EU delegations. The typical model appears to be a slight majority of non-diplomats (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997:220, Kassim et al. 2001:303-05). Delegations, with some notable exceptions such as France, remain part of the foreign ministry portfolio, chaired by an ambassador and with their formal line of communication passing through the foreign ministry at home (Kassim et al. 2001:304). Furthermore, the second-pillar character of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) has typically tied this policy area to foreign ministries as their *domaine séparé* (Keukeleire 2003). However, the decision-making arena in Brussels is inherently multilateral, and while diplomats may dominate the CFSP, sectoral and technical expertise prevails in the broad committee structure under the European Commission as well as the Council (Egeberg et al.2006).

Second, as a threat to both multi- and bilateral diplomacy, a process of *domestication* characterises cross-national contact patterns. The foreign ministry, while never an omnipotent gatekeeper in this respect, has seen its controlling and coordinating function further weakened (Hocking 2005) . Sectoral ministries increasingly communicate outside of the foreign ministry's purview, a pattern that is promoted by Commission policy as well as by the sectoral organisation of the Council (Egeberg 2006c). Sector-based international cooperation is hardly a novelty, drawing on more than a century of technical coordination such as in telecommunication and transport. It is primarily when these organisational efforts are drawn together in a multi-purpose executive such as the Commission that the

² This section is inspired by Bátor's (2005:52-60) discussion of where to trace empirical evidence of a transformation of traditional diplomacy in Europe.

Westphalian system is challenged. This is becoming an established pattern of interaction within the EU, particularly in the shape of Commission-generated networks of national agencies operating at arm's length from their ministries. As a consequence of such networks of governance not only the role of the foreign ministry but the idea of national coordination as such may be reduced, with the Commission arriving as a second locus of authority (Egeberg 2006b).³

Theoretical Framework

As part of a larger project on bilateral diplomacy, this paper draws on institutional theory with particular emphasis on historical institutionalism. In latter years a research avenue has opened which conceives of diplomacy from an institutional vantage point (Bátora 2005, Jönsson and Hall 2005). Due to its unity in structure (foreign ministries, embassies) and collective identity, diplomacy is here seen to convey core characteristics of a cross-national institution. Concerning reform and change, this leads to the empirical prediction that functionally driven change will be difficult to achieve (March and Olsen 1989). First, national foreign services are embedded in the (international) organisational field of diplomacy, where isomorphism and mutual adaptation prevail, based on a norm of reciprocal representation and shared conventions (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Second, as they reflect national sovereignty and prestige foreign services could be less amenable to rationalisation and reform than sectoral ministries.⁴

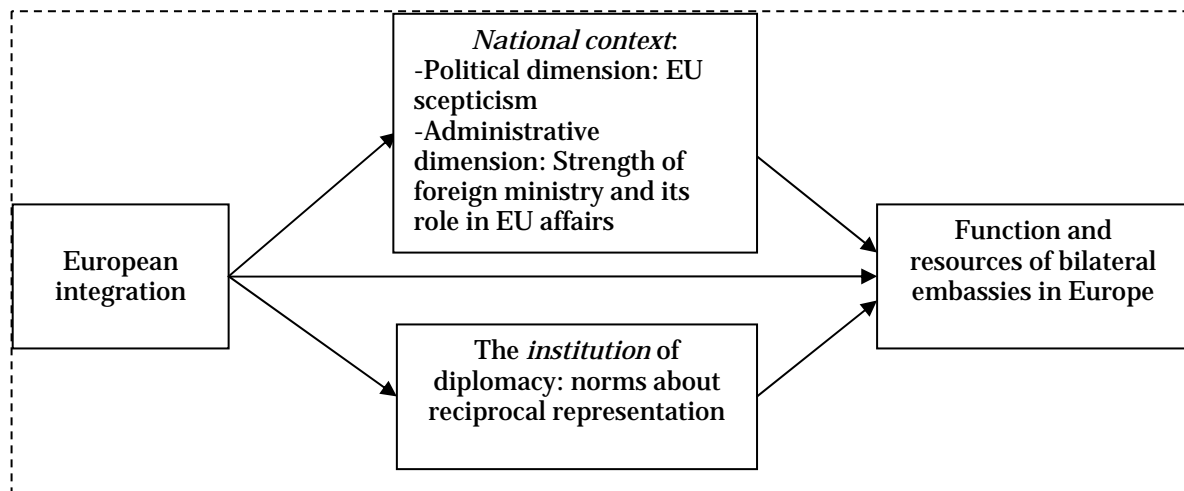
³ In addition to these EU-specific trends, there are also general global processes in play to which foreign ministries must adapt. The new demands and challenges resulting from globalisation and the communications revolution are frequently referred to, but less often discussed systematically (Melissen 1999, Bátora 2006). Nevertheless, while part and parcel of the pressures towards traditional diplomacy, globalisation and communication are not analysed specifically in this paper.

⁴ Though difficult to substantiate, this argument is reflected in the literature on new public management (NPM), where a focus on foreign ministries is rarely seen. One may hypothesise that NPM-inspired reform of public administration will be the more difficult when performance criteria are unavailable and the symbolic significance of structures is strong. For general reference see Christensen and Lægreid (2001).

Based on the above, an assumption of institutional resilience is particularly interesting to test on the foreign services of EU member states. Viewed through the theoretical lenses of institutionalism, the process of European integration represents a tension between innovative political design and inherited institutional structures (Olsen 2007). The latter weigh heavily on the scope for political (re)design by defining the margin of manoeuvre, whether these constraints are derived from normative structures or from embedded material interests (Hall and Taylor 1996). Institutional resilience or “stickiness” typically prevails: where change does occur, it will tend to leave core characteristics of the institution intact. New structures could be *layered* upon rather than replacing the old, thus evading the thorny process of re-justification. Alternatively, existing structures can be *converted* to facilitate a new content while the institutional shell is kept intact (Pierson 2004). If European integration goes further, it could push the institution of diplomacy to more radical change. From such a critical juncture we would have a change *of* rather than *in* diplomacy (Bátora 2005:50).

Resilience of national institutions in the face of Europeanisation could today be perceived as a robust research finding (Ladrech 1994, Harmsen 1999, Cowles et al. 2001, Knill 2001, Bache and Jordan 2006). With reference to the Europeanisation literature, the effects of European integration on diplomacy entail not only the common institutional response but also sustained national trajectories. At the national level, contextualisation has both a *political* and an *administrative* dimension. The political dimension refers here to the degree of Euro-scepticism: the administrative dimension refers primarily to the position of the foreign ministry within the government and the degree to which it holds a leading role in EU policymaking. The causal model reads as follows:

Figure 1



Hypotheses

The general theoretical expectation from this material is one of institutional resilience, which could be operationalised in this context as the maintenance of diplomatic staff. It is however on variation along national lines that the more specific hypotheses may be defined:

With regards to the *political dimension*, one could expect member states with a tradition of EU scepticism to maintain a stronger emphasis on bilateral diplomacy through embassies. Meanwhile, in member states where integration is perceived with less opposition, one could hypothesise a clearer shift of priorities from bilateralism to multilateral representation in Brussels.

*Hypothesis 1: More EU-sceptical member states will maintain their bilateral representation to a higher degree than less EU-sceptical member states.*⁵

⁵ Norway represents a particular case in this respect, as non-member yet with participation in the inner market and the Schengen agreement. Analytically, one would expect Norway to cling even harder to bilateralism as a substitute for participation in the EU's (multilateral) institutions in Brussels. This emphasis on bilateralism as channel of influence was strongly reflected in foreign minister Jonas Gahr Støre's six-monthly report to the Norwegian parliament concerning EU and EEA issues, presented on 4 June 2007. See http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/dep/Utenriksminister_Jonas_Gahr_Store/taler_artikler/2007/eusaker.html?id=469773

With regards to *strength of foreign ministry*, one would expect that in member states where the ministry has a strong position and a clear coordinating role in EU affairs bilateral representation will be largely maintained as a reflection of the ministry's position. Conversely, where the foreign ministry has a historically weaker position and is partly by-passed in EU affairs, the tendency to neglect it will translate into a reduction of bilateral embassy staff. From a theoretical perspective, the institutional resilience of the foreign ministry will be less evident.

Hypothesis 2: Member states with a strong foreign ministry holding a leading role in EU affairs will maintain bilateral representation to a higher degree than member states with a weak foreign ministry.

Two hypotheses may be added which do not follow directly from our causal model. First, we expect the *size* of a member state to be of importance, as smaller units may be easily adaptable to changing demands.

Hypothesis 3: Smaller member states will be more exposed to change, for example by reducing staff numbers faster where decrease is a general trend.

Finally, familiarity with European integration may play a role, as early member states with a long acquaintance with the EU may be expected to have shifted their attention towards Brussels over a longer time frame. This is also in line with the thesis of incremental change and institutional robustness, as the consequences of exogenous change will take time to sink in. Recent member states, then, will lag behind in adapting to a more densely integrated EU.

Hypothesis 4: old member states will already have reduced their number of embassy staff (and re-established stability) to a larger extent than more recent member states, due to the former's longer time of adaptation.

The cases selected for study represent diversity within a comparative design. With regards to *size* and *timing of EU accession*, the constellation of cases ranges from big (France, Britain) to small (the Scandinavian nations) and from a founding father (France), via late-comers (Britain, Denmark), to one recent member (Sweden) and finally one non-member that nevertheless takes part in the integration project through the EEA and Schengen (Norway). Variation is also present with regards to the relative weight and function of the foreign ministry in government. This has implications for how European integration is dealt with by the individual member state, and for how pressures for coordination and harmonisation are met (Hocking and Spence 2005, Kassim et al. 2000). Our brief empirical overview of the foreign ministries given below is organised around the variables of traditional role, relative strength in national administration, and role in the coordination of EU policies.

Political Dimension:

In terms of EU scepticism, Norway represents the singular case here in having twice (1972, 1994) refuted membership by referendum. The destructive potential of EU debates on party politics has meant that the question of membership has been kept off the political agenda for long periods. When it has resurfaced, in the main prior to the two referenda, the traditional cleavage structure has been particularly prevalent, in particular the conflict between centre and periphery (Nelsen 1993). While a “no” has been the Norwegian response to the EU question, political opinion does not diverge profoundly from Sweden, where membership was marginally accepted in 1994 (Jenssen et al. 1998). Furthermore, due to its EEA affiliation, Norway is closer to the EU decision-making processes than non-membership would seem to imply (Egeberg 2005).

Among the other cases, Sweden, although acceding to the EU in 1995 may be grouped with Denmark and Britain as part of a common sceptic, northern fringe

of EU member states (Miles 1996, Geddes 2004). A preference for inter-governmental arrangements and scepticism towards enhanced powers to Brussels are concomitant to this approach, along with an explicit emphasis on the nation-state as reference point. France represents the longest trajectory and most intimate affiliation with the EU. The European project was essential to French foreign policy throughout the post-war period and is intrinsically linked to the promotion of French interests abroad (Balme and Woll 2005, Charillon 2001). Significantly, closer integration has also met with strong opposition, as shown by the negative result of the 2005 referendum on the EU's Constitutional Treaty. Nevertheless, in comparison with the EU's northern member states investigated here, we will nevertheless place France on the less EU-sceptical side of the political dimension. A more integrationist approach should according to our causal model correlate with a stronger preference for multilateral diplomacy in Brussels and a relative lower emphasis on maintaining bilateral representation within Europe.

Strength of Foreign Ministry and its Role in EU Affairs:

Sweden, Denmark and Norway share a tradition of a strong foreign ministry in a consensus-oriented public administration, although some variations in status occur (Jørgensen 2005, Neumann 1999, Ekengren and Sundelius 2005). Of the three, the Danish foreign ministry could be seen to hold the strongest relative position, something that is reflected in EU affairs (Jørgensen 2005). Sweden represents an egalitarian governmental structure where the foreign ministry has held fewer special prerogatives, while in Norway the foreign ministry's influence has been weakened by administrative deficiencies and a cultural resentment towards diplomacy from a young and egalitarian nation-state (Moses and Knutsen 2001, Utenriksdepartementet 2006). All the Scandinavian foreign ministries have acted as focal point of foreign policy coordination and they still draw upon an extensive network of embassies abroad. Behind this common profile, Norway and Sweden

in particular have represented the stronger preference for distant geographical areas, foreign aid and conflict resolution, based on a somewhat idealised self-perception (Johansson 1999, Neumann and Leira 2005). The Danish foreign ministry seems characterised by a stronger position at home and lower profile abroad.

Following EU accession, the Danish foreign ministry quickly had to accept that sectoral ministries were drawn into the policy-making orbit and a new role hammered out for the foreign ministry itself (Jørgensen 2005:80-82). Nevertheless, in this process the Danish foreign ministry has managed to maintain a considerable authority (Jørgensen 2005). For the Swedish foreign ministry, a prolonged re-evaluation of competencies occurred after EU accession in 1995 (Ruin 2000). The essence of structural reforms conducted since accession is a shift of coordination tasks from the foreign ministry to the prime minister's office and the ministry of finance (Ruin 2000). In Norway, the reluctance to participate in Europe has been a barrier to modernisation of the foreign ministry (Moses and Knutsen 2001). The issue of coordination remains underspecified due to the depoliticised process of implementing EU law. Non-membership has the further consequence of keeping the foreign ministry out of Council proceedings while sectoral ministries may participate in expert groups under the Commission. Along with the Swedish ministry, the Norwegian foreign ministry could in sum be seen as holding a weaker position than its Danish counterpart.

Britain and *France* share key characteristics as former colonial powers with political and economic leverage to play leading roles in Europe. Notwithstanding their differing relations to the EU – and the systemic difference between a parliamentary and presidential system – the foreign ministries seem to have met with many of the same challenges. In Britain as in France, the foreign ministry is part of a continuous power struggle over defining and guiding foreign policy goals. In the context of European integration, the British arrangement seems to

have worked beneficially for the FCO, which, in a triad with the Cabinet Office and the Permanent Representation in Brussels, has maintained considerable leverage and prevalence over sectoral ministries and managed to modernise its structures and *modi operandi* accordingly (Allen and Oliver 2006, Bulmer and Burch 1998). The FCO has managed to retain a significant role in this system due to its command of geographical competence and relative flexibility in its relation to other ministries, as first among equals. In the British government, the FCO thus holds a vital coordinating role despite visible traits of sectorisation in Britain's European policies (Smith 1999:232).

Where conflicts of interests occur in British EU policy, issues may be resolved with the Cabinet Office's European Secretariat as arbiter. As the coordinating body of Britain's EU policy, the European Secretariat holds considerable leverage, yet arguably less so than its French counterpart. French communication with its permanent representation in Brussels is formally channelled through the SGAE⁶, placed under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office. Where the foreign ministry has maintained exclusive competencies is mainly on issues relating to the CFSP (Morisse-Schilbach 2005:119-21). In the institutional machinery of French foreign policy, the foreign ministry is additionally faced with the presidential prerogative. The ministry's influence may vary with political constellations and new challenges – enhancing its role, for example, with EU presidencies and, being weakened by the power struggle between Prime Minister and President in the case of cohabitation (Védrine 2002). On the whole, however, as regards

⁶ The SGAE (*Secrétariat Général aux Affaires Européenne*), previously known under the acronym SGCI (*Secrétariat Général du Comité Interministériel (pour les questions de coopération économique européenne)*), is the coordinating body of French EU policy. Originally created in 1948 to assist the implementation of the Marshall Plan, the SGCI was during the 1950s converted to coordinate French relations to, firstly, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and, secondly, to the European Communities (EC). In October 2005 the name was changed to SGEA to respond to the actual remit of the secretariat. Under the authority of the Prime Minister's Office at Matignon the SGEA constitutes the exclusive communication channel with the Permanent Representation in Brussels. Excepted from the arrangement are CFSP-related issues, for which the ministry of foreign affairs is formally responsible (Lanceron 2007).

position in government we may conclude with a relatively strong foreign ministry in Britain against a somewhat more constrained foreign ministry in France.

Empirical Analysis

By looking at staff numbers, this paper provides one indicator of institutional change: the number of diplomatic staff is here perceived as gauging the resource allocation *towards and between* bilateral embassies. The core of the analysis is based upon data on the number of diplomatic staff in various embassies in Europe in the years between 1982 and 2006. Other indicators of change could be the allocation of tasks in various bilateral embassies, the qualifications of diplomatic staff, and their identity and role conception. The focus in this paper, however, is on changes in the *number and allocation* of diplomatic staff. Five cases are analysed and compared, namely Britain, France, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.

Method

Data are taken from national diplomatic service lists, usually published every year, where diplomatic staff in each embassy abroad is listed.⁷ While there are clear cross-national differences as to how much of the personnel are included in these directories, each national case is conceived as consistent, enabling a valid comparison over time. For each of the cases, the diplomatic staffs in (present) EU member state embassies were counted in three-year intervals from 1982 to 2006. To broaden the perspective, data were also registered on four selected embassies in Asia and on the UN delegations in New York and Geneva. Consular as well as locally engaged staff was to the extent possible omitted from the data. Although some cross-national difference may occur here (due to differences in the staff

⁷ The relevant publications for each of the cases are: (i) Britain: *the Diplomatic Service List*, (ii) France: *L'Annuaire Diplomatique*, (iii) Sweden: *Utrikesdepartementets Kalender*, (iv) Denmark: *Udenrigsministeriets Kalender*, (v) Norway: *Norges Diplomatiske og Konsulære Representasjon i Utlandet*. See bibliography for complete references.

lists), data within each case are registered consistently with regards to which categories are included. What has *not* been registered in the data are fluctuations in the allocation of tasks or staff *categories* within the embassies. There are several reasons for this, the most important one being that diplomatic staff categories are broad and do not lend themselves easily to systematic comparison.⁸

Results

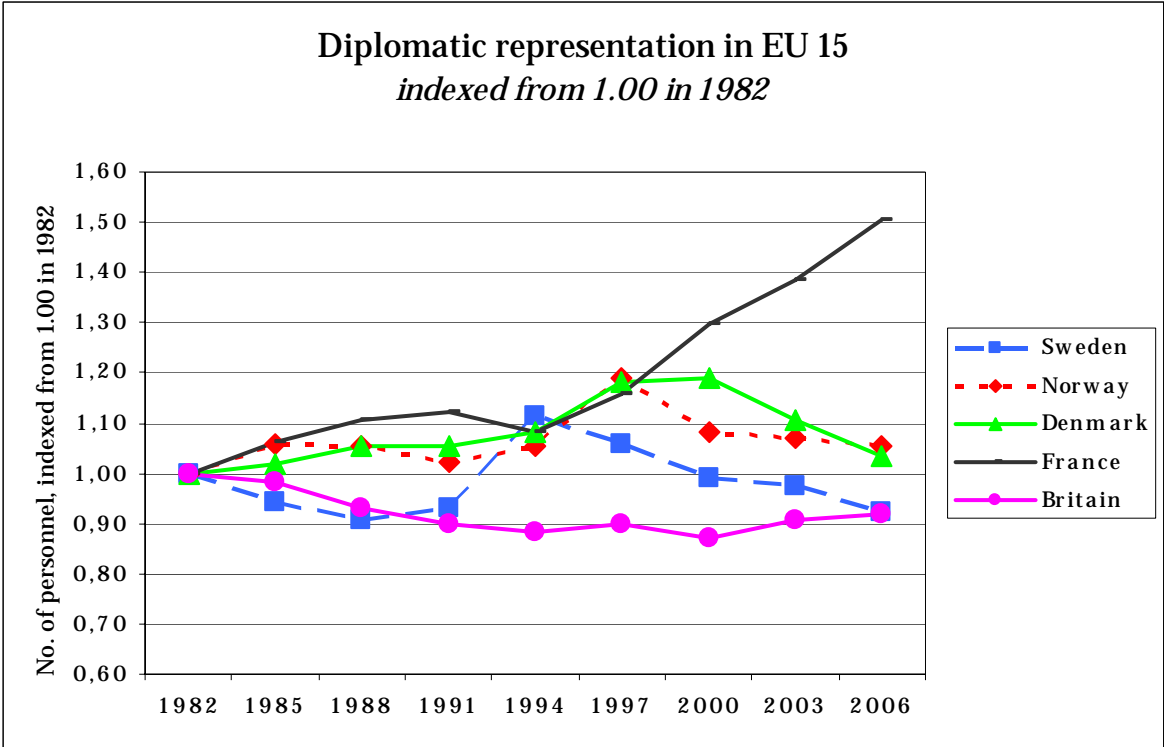
General Patterns

Due to our focus of change rather than absolute numbers, we choose to index the number of staff in each national case to 1.00 in 1982. This has the benefit of enhanced comparability between big and small: the obvious drawback lies in the risk of overrating change in the smaller foreign services. We choose nevertheless to maintain the relative rather than absolute numbers except where they give clearly biased results. From this starting point, we may observe the development in diplomatic staff numbers in bilateral embassies across Europe. In the data collected here, staff numbers are counted in 3-year cycles from 1982 to 2006.⁹ As a further organising device, we choose to aggregate embassies in EU 15 and embassies in EU 16-27. The results in the 15 core members of the EU are shown in figure 2.

⁸ A useful example is the distinction between various counsellors and first, second and third secretaries, categories that have rather different meanings across diplomatic services.

⁹ Some exceptions to the 3-year cycle had to be made, due to lack of access to certain years of the diplomatic yearbooks. Adjacent years have in these cases been applied as a substitute. This includes the following data entries (correct year in parentheses): Sweden: 2002 (2003) and 2004

Figure 2



The graphs show a number of interesting trends. At a general level, all the cases – with the notable exception of France – display a relatively strong stability as regards staff numbers in embassies in EU’s old member states.¹⁰ This stability is striking considering the changes in bi- and multilateral relations occurring during the period, which traverses the end of the Cold War and various EU treaty revisions (Single European Act, Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice) that have taken integration into new issue areas and, as we will see, considerably enhanced the diplomatic presence in Brussels.

On the basis of this overall stability, the increase in French staff numbers is particularly notable. The aggregate numbers for French embassy staff in EU 15

(2006), France: 2002 (2003), Norway: 1984 (1982), 1987 (1988), 1992 (1991), 1998 (1997) and 2004 (2006).

¹⁰ Notably, if we limit our purview to embassies in the original core Europe, EU 6, results are slightly more heterogeneous while the main trends still reappear. It hence appears valid to conceive of EU 15 *en bloque*.

show an increase of 50% from 1982 to 2006, from 241 to 362 positions.¹¹ A similar calculation for Britain points to a *decrease* of 8% during the same period, from 322 to 296 diplomatic staff. While the British trend is steady throughout the period, French representation climbs steeply from 1994 onwards, which corresponds with an assumption that developments from Maastricht (such as the emerging CFSP) may have been pivotal.¹² Among the Scandinavian nations, Denmark equally shows an increase in its representation in EU 15 from 1994 to 2000, but, significantly, this trend is countered and turns towards a slight reduction thereafter. The trend towards a cautious reduction of embassy staff is observed also on Sweden and Norway's behalf. In both these cases, the summit of the graph appears in fact during the 1990s – in 1994 and 1997 respectively – which may be linked to the particular focus accorded to the EU in this period, where the question of membership was high on the agenda.

If we turn towards representation in the more recent member states of the 2004–07 enlargements, a new pattern is revealed. Due to systematically skewed starting points, we choose to present the absolute rather than relative numbers here (figure 3). French representation, from a relatively low starting point in 1982, has been considerably increased since 1991, bringing the number of diplomatic staff alongside Britain.¹³ Danish embassies in the emerging EU 16–27 more than tripled in the period from 1988 to 2006. The British case represents a slow and cautious increase throughout the period. Among the significant observations is also that the

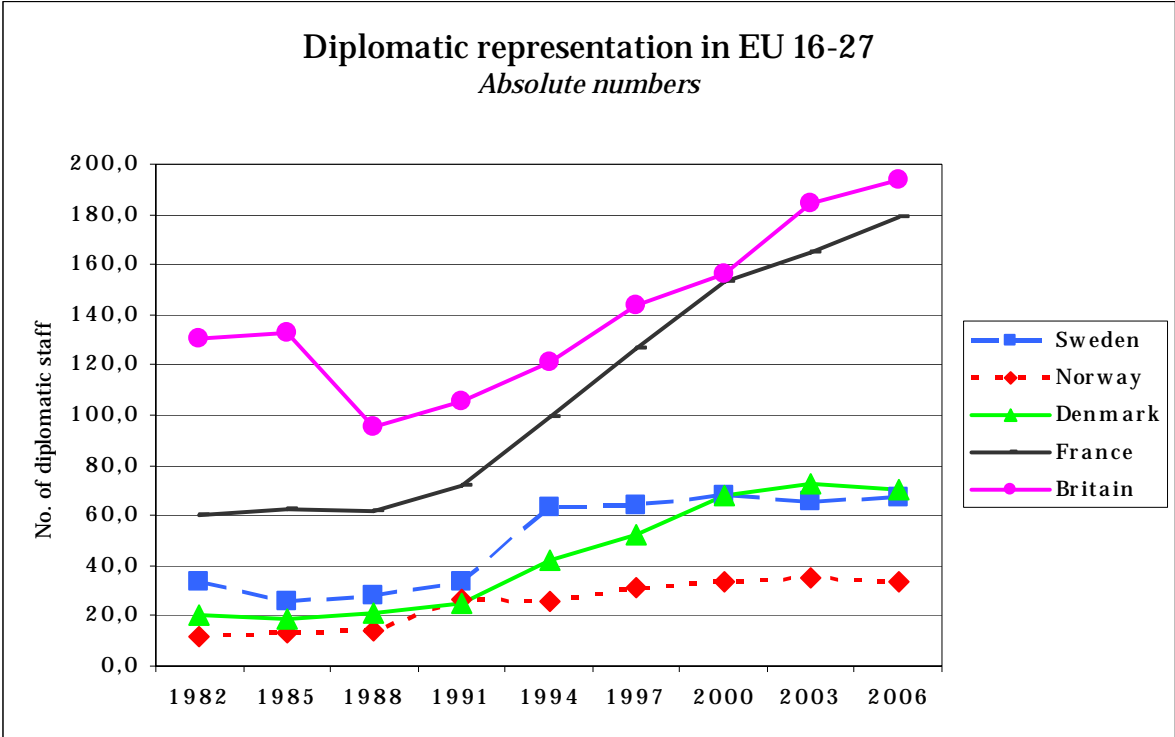
¹¹ It should be noted here that the French embassy in Germany is under-represented in 1991, -94 and -97 as diplomats in the remaining French “Berlin office” have not been added to the embassy staff in Bonn. However, even if these positions are included, staff numbers in 2002 and 2006 are higher than the aggregate representation in 1994 and -97: the representation in 1991 is equalled in 2002, and clearly exceeded in 2006.

¹² Although the French increase is consistent across EU 15, there is some variation between embassies. French representation in Portugal, the Netherlands, Sweden, Austria, Germany and Britain show the highest relative increase in the period from 1994–97 to 2006. The material thus indicates a combined focus on new member states (Sweden, Austria) and on the more powerful partners (Britain and Germany). French increase in Italy and Spain is slightly, but not dramatically, lower.

¹³ French staff numbers in EU 16–27 rose from 71 in 1991 to 179 in 2006; corresponding numbers for Britain are 105 and 194.

representation of Norway and Sweden, both subject to abrupt change during the period, went through a similar quantitative leaps but at different points of time, in 1988-91 and 1991-94 respectively. One may hypothesise that this represents a contrast in (the swiftness of) reaction to the post-Cold War liberalisation of Eastern Europe.

Figure 3



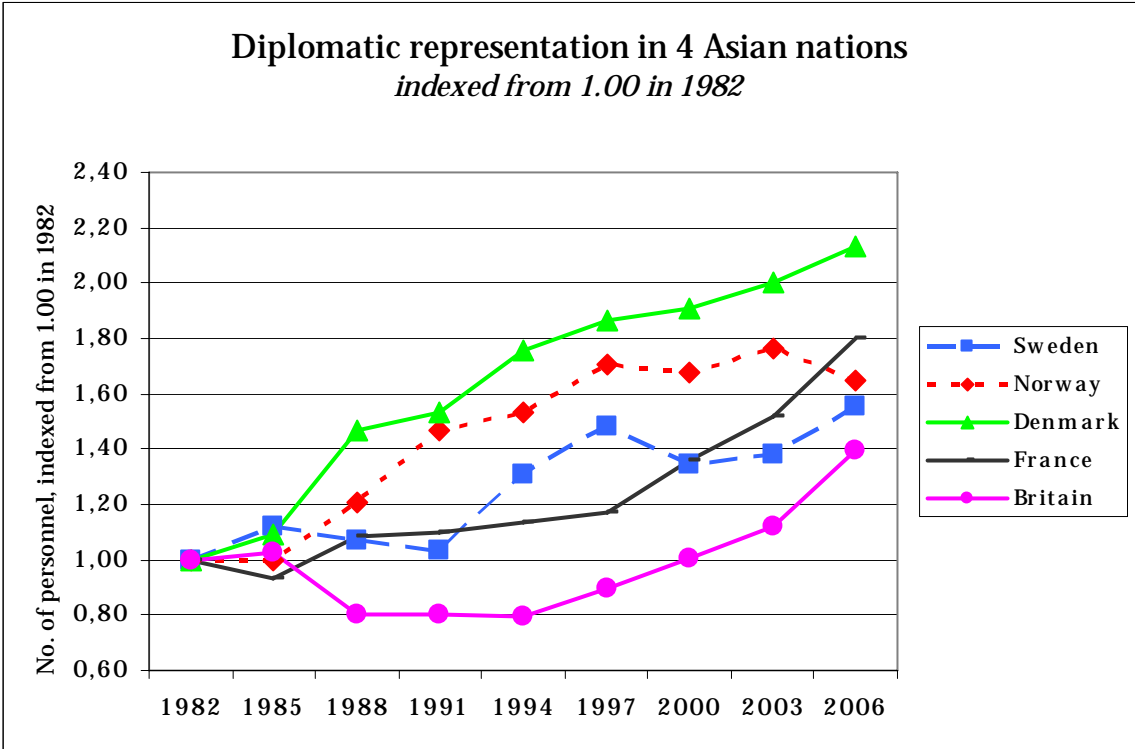
Some caveats must be added to this presentation of developments in central and East European embassies. First, staff numbers are inflated by the establishment of the Baltic states (on which no staff is counted before 1994).¹⁴ Secondly, as observed in the graph, the sharp increase of French representation in Central and Eastern Europe testifies not only to a heightened presence during the 1990s but also a lower starting point than Britain. Equally, Norway and Denmark had

¹⁴ The Czech Republic and Slovakia are counted as one until 1991. From 1994 numbers are split between the Prague and Ljubljana embassies. As regards Yugoslavia, diplomatic staff in the embassy in Belgrade is counted until 1991, thereafter only staff from the embassy in Ljubljana are counted, due to Slovenia's later accession to the EU.

considerably less diplomatic staff than Sweden in this region during the 1980s. Between Britain and France, then, and between the Scandinavian nations, what we may observe in this area is also a process of *convergence*.

Do developments elsewhere in the world confirm the trends in Europe? For a suitable comparison, we look to another growth area of diplomacy, namely the distant East, represented by embassies in India, China, Japan and South Korea (figure 4). The three Scandinavian nations have all strengthened their presence in South-East Asia consistently. France has equally increased its representation, more so in relative terms than Britain, which could benefit from a higher number of staff from the start of the period.¹⁵

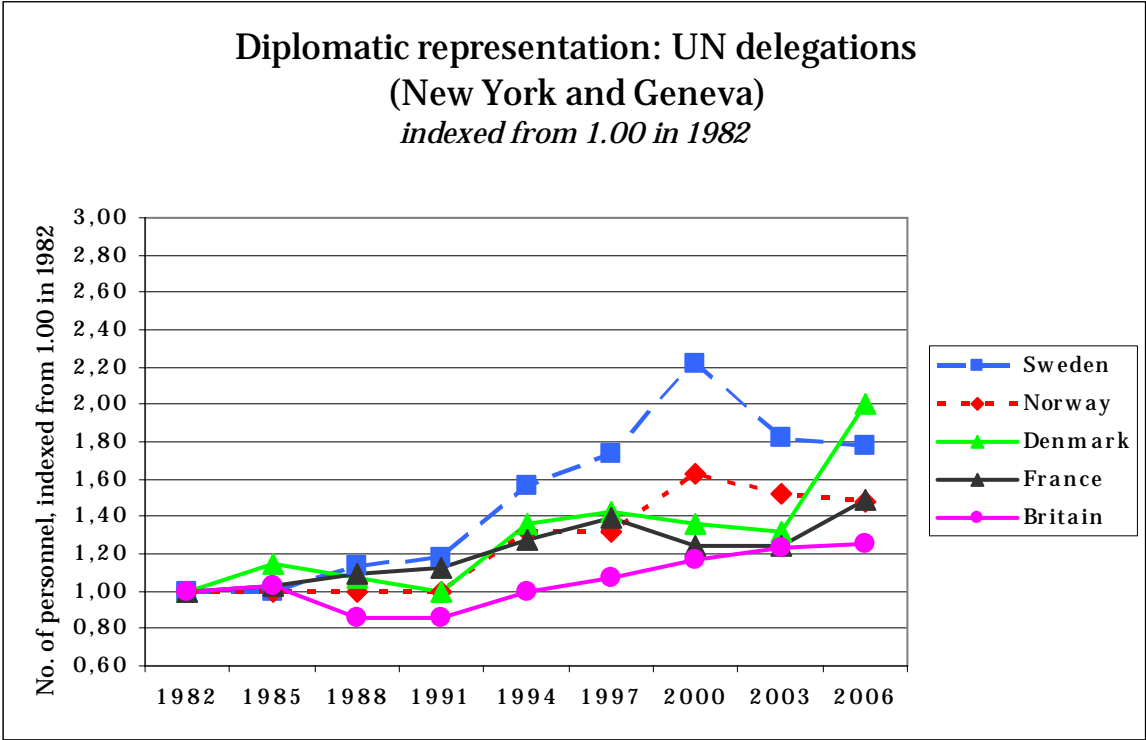
Figure 4



¹⁵ This also means that developments since 1982 have not closed the French-British gap in representation. The aggregate number of embassy staff in these four Asian embassies is for Britain 149,5 (1982) and 209,0 (2006), while for France the similar numbers are 75,5 (1982) and 136,0 (2006).

Finally, for comparison, we also look upon the multilateral side of diplomacy, represented by permanent representations in Brussels and UN-related delegations in New York and Geneva. Let us begin with the latter, where we combine diplomatic staff numbers from delegations in New York and Geneva. The results are shown in figure 5.

Figure 5

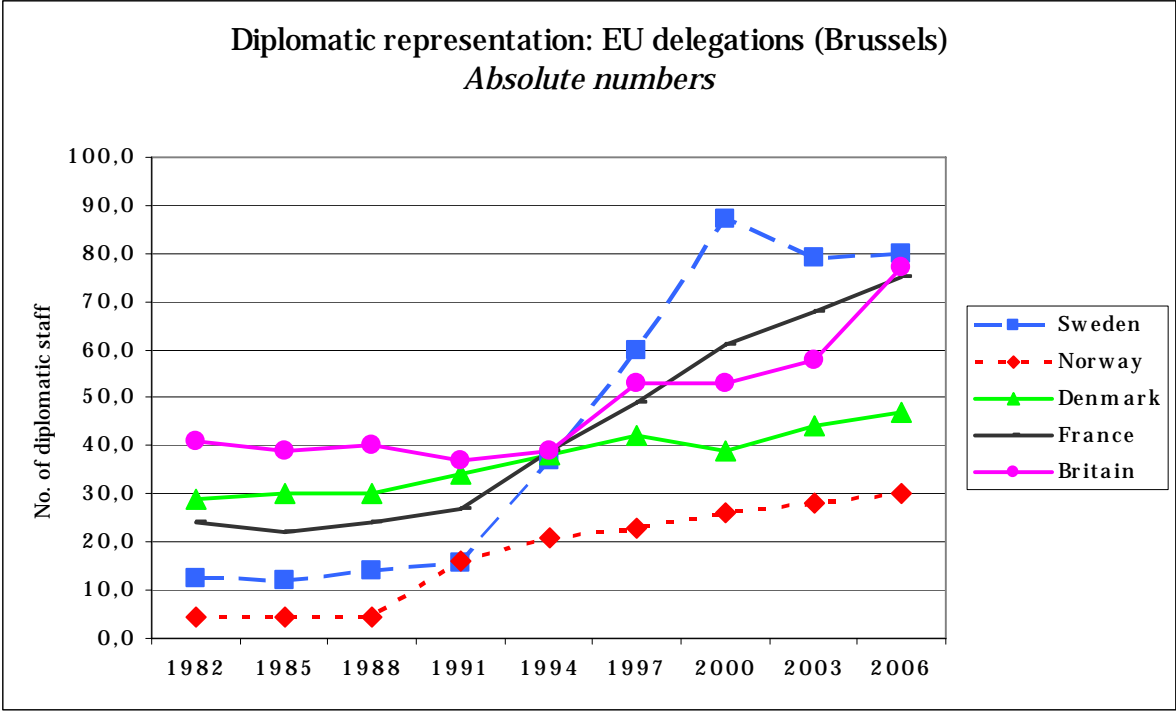


In relative terms, this modest increase makes a striking contrast with the growth of permanent representations in Brussels.¹⁶ Increase in staff numbers differs considerably between the member states, however, due to shifting priorities and different models of policy coordination (Kassim et al. 2001). Sweden represents a particular case, being one of the smaller member states, yet with “one of the largest permanent representations in Brussels” (Mazey 2001:265). Other – and primarily older – member states – have not increased the number of staff by

¹⁶ A caveat should be added with regards to personnel data on representations in Brussels, which may contain some inaccuracies and slightly lower comparability than data from bilateral embassies. This is primarily due to differences in the staff directories for Brussels delegations. The

anything near the Swedish growth rate. We choose here to present the absolute rather than relative numbers, due to the differences in starting point:

Figure 6



Conclusion

On the basis of our data on embassy staff, institutional robustness is an apt characterisation of bilateral diplomacy in Europe. It seems clear that embassy representation is largely maintained in the integrated EU. Thus, while we can say little from these data about the actual *tasks* conducted in the embassies, we may draw the conclusion that the number of staff – and hence resources – accorded to these embassies has remained relatively stable in EU 15 and increased in EU 15-27, which points towards an enhanced rather than reduced scope for bilateral diplomacy.

fact that secondees and delegates from sectoral ministries participate in these delegations further complicate the picture.

While robustness appears to prevail, convergence is an equally valid observation. This becomes apparent in a comparative time-series design. What we see here is a development where France has closed its negative gap in staff numbers vis-à-vis Britain while the three Scandinavian countries have reduced similar cross-national differences. In the case of the permanent representation in Brussels, Sweden and Norway have taken the convergence thesis further, not only reducing the gap from a point of low representation, but, in the Swedish case, going beyond the staff numbers other member states have attained in Brussels.

With regards to variation between the cases, our hypothesis that *more EU-sceptical member states will maintain a higher bilateral representation* is not supported by the data. Given that France and Britain were presented as contrasting cases along this variable, the data point to rather the opposite observation: while Britain has reduced its representation, the more integrationist France does not demobilise but rather *strengthen* its bilateral diplomacy in EU 15. One possible interpretation is that working bilaterally may be a way of enhancing leadership and initiative at the decision-making arena of the EU (Smith and Tsatsas 2002). When it comes to strength of foreign ministry, we hypothesised that *member states where the foreign ministry has a leading role (including in EU affairs) will maintain a higher bilateral representation*. Denmark and Britain were presented as cases with comparatively strong foreign ministries. The data do not point to a stronger maintenance of representation. What characterises in particular the Danish and the British trajectory, however, is a relatively high degree of stability, from which we may draw a competing interpretation: where the foreign ministry is comparatively strong, changes and adjustments will be *more incremental* and *more easily accommodated* within existing structures than in relatively weaker foreign ministries, which will be more susceptible to deep reform. Sweden, and to some extent Norway and France, may exemplify the latter category.

Finally, we also expected that *old member states will have reduced their number of embassy staff (and re-established stability) to a larger extent than more recent member states*. Among the Scandinavian cases, the Danish foreign ministry could be interpreted in this light when compared with its two Scandinavian neighbours. The observation of rapid reform in Norway and Sweden during the 1990s furthermore lends some credence to our final hypothesis, *that smaller member states will be more exposed to change*. However, the French volatility in staff numbers goes against a crude differentiation on the basis of size.

On a general level, innovations in diplomacy appear to be *layered upon* the traditional structures of bilateral diplomacy in Europe. However, while embassies may retain traditional tasks it could also be that these bilateral structures have been converted by new and functionally driven needs. Staff developments give only an initial cue to developments in European bilateral diplomacy. Further research should be directed in particular towards the *strategic planning* on the part of foreign ministries on the one hand and the *tasks and functions in bilateral embassies* on the other. Much remains to be said about the role of bilateral diplomacy in an age of closer international integration. That analysis on Europe should be on the frontier of this research seems obvious: whether European integration does indeed represent a critical juncture to diplomacy remains to be seen.

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