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Setting the Agenda on the United Kingdom's Policy towards the European Community: Miriam Camps at Chatham House

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Historical analysis of the UK government's policy towards European integration is mostly confined to the 'official' sphere, that is government, civil service and professional diplomacy. Non-governmental actors within the wider field of para-diplomacy such as policy entrepreneurs or elite foreign policy think tanks have not yet been systematically incorporated in this history. This article explores when and under what circumstances such diplomatic actors can influence government foreign policy formulation. The case explored here is that of Miriam Camps (1916–94), a scholar, former US diplomat and senior researcher at Chatham House. Camps utilised her Chatham House contacts, including key Foreign Office officials as well as her wider transnational network, to influence the Foreign Office's stance on the so-called 'empty chair' crisis of the European Economic Community in 1965/6. The article argues that during the crisis Camps acted as a policy entrepreneur with the aim of advancing her own ideas and changing the UK government's position towards the European Economic Community. Besides demonstrating the influence of unofficial diplomats on policy formulation, the article also contributes to the growing literature on the varied roles of women in international relations and diplomacy.

Introduction

'My professional life has . . . been a dual one, 15 years working for the U.S. Government and some 30 years writing articles on international problems on the "outside".'¹ This is how the US diplomat, scholar, journalist and economist Miriam Camps (1916–94), née Camp, summarised her long career. While she highlighted her preference for being on the 'inside', working for the US Department of State, she was somewhat more dismissive about her time on the 'outside' where, in her own words, she merely 'wrote articles on international problems'. This article will challenge Camps's own juxtaposition of 'inside' and 'outside' diplomacy and will demonstrate how, even in what she herself considered to be an outsider role, Camps nevertheless remained part of the foreign policy field and became an effective policy entrepreneur, able to influence the British Foreign Office's position on the European Economic Community (EEC) in the mid-1960s.

The article explores when, and under what circumstances, diplomatic actors can advance their own foreign policy ideas, influence foreign policy thinking of key individuals and trigger a change in official government policy. The example explored here is the British Foreign Office's policy towards the EEC during the so-called empty chair crisis (June 1965–January 1966). Briefly, the crisis broke out on 30 June 1965 when the six EEC member states failed to agree on a proposal by the EEC Commission on the financing of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The Commission had proposed a package

¹ Miriam Camps, A Submission Written by Miriam for the Mt. Holyoke Alumnae Archives (composed sometime in the 1980s), undated, Mount Holyoke College Archives [MHCA], Miriam Camps papers, Box 27, Folder 7.

deal that included a permanent financial arrangement for the CAP, an independent revenue for the Community from customs duties and levies from goods arriving in the EEC and a gradual increase of the budgetary powers of the European Parliament. French President Charles de Gaulle, who was opposed to developing the ‘supranational’ elements of the Community including transferring more power to Community institutions, decided to interrupt the negotiations. Shortly after the breakdown of negotiations, the French government withdrew the French permanent representative from Brussels and ceased to participate in decision-making in the Council of Ministers, thus paralysing the work of the Community.² De Gaulle, threatening to break up the EEC, demanded a revision of the EEC treaty with the aim of curtailing the role of the Commission and removing references to taking decisions by majority vote in the Council of Ministers, something he saw as a threat to French national sovereignty. The crisis pitted five member states – Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Luxembourg – against France and catapulted the EEC into its most serious crisis yet before it was resolved in January 1966.³

The crisis provided the UK government with an unexpected window of opportunity that challenged the until then non-committal attitude of Prime Minister Harold Wilson (1964–70) towards the EEC. New policy ideas and solutions from the wider diplomatic field were able to enter the Foreign Office with the Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House) and its Study Group on Europe, led by Miriam Camps, becoming a central source and conduit of such ideas.

Miriam Camp, known since 1954 under her married name Camps, was an expert on post-war European integration. She had joined the US State Department in 1943 and spent the war years working on economic questions at the US Embassy in London, where she also became involved with post-war European reconstruction. She wrote the terms of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and was involved in the design of the institutions of the Marshall Plan, including the Organisation for European Economic Co-Operation.⁴ In the late 1940s, Camp worked at the State Department’s European desk and in this capacity shuttled between Washington, Paris and London, obtaining a wealth of professional experience and acquiring a vast network of contacts.⁵ After she had had to leave her position in 1954 following her marriage to a UK academic, Anthony Camps, she continued to be engaged in diplomacy as an unofficial diplomat through her roles as scholar, journalist and member of elite foreign policy think tanks.⁶

After a short stint as a journalist for *The Economist* in the mid-1950s, Camps became affiliated with the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Political and Economic Planning (PEP) and Chatham House in London. These think tank appointments provided her with an alternative way to remain engaged in transatlantic relations and contribute to shaping UK policy towards the EEC. As to the methods of her diplomatic activity, these are wide ranging and include, firstly, the production and dissemination of policy assessments in the form of scholarly articles, studies, books and letters.⁷

² On the empty chair crisis, see N. Piers Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s: Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge* (London: Routledge, 2006); Katja Seidel, ‘From the Early Common Market to the Crises of the 1960s, 1958–68’, in *Reinventing Europe: The History of the European Union, 1945 to the Present*, eds. Brigitte Leucht, Katja Seidel and Laurent Warloutzet (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), 41–3.

³ N. Piers Ludlow, ‘Challenging French Leadership in Europe: Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the Outbreak of the Empty Chair Crisis of 1965–1966’, *Contemporary European History* 8, no. 2 (1999), 231–48.

⁴ Interview with Miriam Camps by François Duchêne, London, 31 Aug. 1988, Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU), Florence, INT 492.

⁵ On Camps’s role in the State Department, see also Kenneth Weisbrode, *The Atlantic Century: Four Generations of Extraordinary Diplomats Who Forged America’s Vital Alliance with Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2009), esp. 105–19.

⁶ See also Katja Seidel, ‘Miriam Camps and European Integration: Blurring the Boundaries between Scholarship and Diplomacy’, *Global Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (2023).

⁷ Camps authored several books on European integration in the 1960s. Her three most influential studies were *Britain and the European Community 1955–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964); *What Kind of Europe? The Community since De Gaulle’s Veto* (London: OUP/Chatham House, 1965); *European Unification in the Sixties* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

Secondly, she maintained a vast network of contacts of individuals in influential positions in the United Kingdom, continental Europe and Washington, mostly acquired during her time working for the State Department. Thirdly, and relatedly, she mobilised this network and provided its members with policy ideas and solutions through, for example, organising study groups and other events at Chatham House geared to influence the policy debate on Europe and transatlantic relations in elite foreign policy circles. Finally, she also reached out to the wider public and disseminated her views in articles in the quality press.

Her role raises several issues. First, it shows that the process of foreign policy formulation in the United Kingdom in the 1960s was more open to institutional outsiders than some scholarship focusing on the United Kingdom's relationship with Europe has suggested.⁸ Giles Scott-Smith, staking out the research field of a 'new diplomatic history', argues that 'the dividing line between state and non-state identities [is shown] to be a fiction maintained to ground a pristine, policy-focused research field. By dislocating the state as the prime adjudicator of diplomatic legitimacy, New Diplomatic History accepts the individual as an international political actor in their own right'.⁹ According to this view, diplomacy is a field that includes para-diplomatic actors such as think tanks and individuals attached to such institutions and beyond. One weakness of studies in this field is, however, the difficulty of effectively showing the impact and influence of such actors on the diplomatic process and decision-making. Indeed, Giles Scott-Smith found that 'their input into policy-related decision-making is diffuse at best and absent at worst'.¹⁰ This might underestimate the role of someone like Camps, who was acting within a well-structured and influential 'power field' and whose expertise was explicitly sought by civil servants, diplomats and politicians. The case of Camps and the UK attitude towards the empty chair crisis explored in this article can therefore serve as an example where influence can be demonstrated.

This article will focus specifically on Camps's role at Chatham House in the mid-1960s, where she was Senior Research Fellow in charge of the United Kingdom's relationship with Europe. Chatham House was founded in 1920 as the British Institute of International Affairs with the aim of 'conducting research and providing top-level information on international affairs'.¹¹ The think tank became part of the UK foreign policy field, closely connected to members of government, the civil service, the press and business interests. Chatham House and other think tanks contributed to the production, discussion and adoption of foreign policy ideas and standpoints, and at times also challenged certain viewpoints and pushed ideational boundaries. In the 1960s, key individuals who were involved in formulating UK policy towards Europe, such as the diplomat Sir Con O'Neill, were regular attendees at Chatham House events.¹² For those involved in formulating UK policy towards the EEC, in particular, think tanks as unofficial channels offered the opportunity to break out of the narrow parameters of official departmental or government policy and diplomacy. Civil servants sought out Chatham House groups in order to engage in frank discussions and become acquainted with new ideas, as well as becoming equipped with policy solutions that might challenge established positions.¹³ Historians of

⁸ E.g. Wolfram Kaiser, *Using Europe, Abusing the Europeans: Britain and European Integration, 1945–63* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996); N. Piers Ludlow, *Dealing with Britain: The Six and the First UK Membership Application* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Melissa Pine, *Harold Wilson and Europe: Pursuing Britain's Membership of the European Community* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007); Helen Parr, *Britain's Policy Towards the European Community: Harold Wilson and Britain's World Role, 1964–1967* (London: Routledge, 2006); Alan S. Milward, *The United Kingdom and the European Community, Vol. I: The Rise and Fall of a National Strategy, 1945–1963* (London: Frank Cass, 2002); Stephen Wall, *Britain and the European Community, Vol. II: From Rejection to Referendum, 1963–1975*; Jane Toomey, *Harold Wilson's EEC Application: Inside the Foreign Office 1964–7* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2007).

⁹ Giles Scott-Smith, 'Introduction: Private Diplomacy, Making the Citizen Visible', *New Global Studies* 8, no. 1 (2014), 1–7, 3.

¹⁰ Scott-Smith, 'Introduction', 2.

¹¹ Parmar, *Think Tanks and Power*, 28.

¹² E.g. List of Meetings, Chatham House Archives [CHA], 9/69b.

¹³ On this point, see Louise Kettle, 'The Role of the Policy Planning Staff in British Foreign Policy: Historical Lessons and Contemporary Insights', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 31, no. 3 (2020): 504; Allen Pietrobon, 'Peacemaker in the Cold War: Norman Cousins and the Making of a Citizen Diplomat in the Atomic Age' (PhD thesis, American University, 2016), 3–6.

European integration have not considered the role of foreign policy think tanks in formulating UK policy towards the EEC in the 1960s. The historiography of the United Kingdom's journey into the Community focuses mainly on decision-makers in government, Whitehall, political parties and the media.¹⁴ As the article will show, Foreign Office officials were also part of para-diplomatic circles and did adopt the policy solutions that Camps proposed in the summer and autumn of 1965.

Reconstructing Camps's activities at Chatham House allows, firstly, an assessment of the kind of agenda she set for debates; secondly, in what terms these issues were discussed; and thirdly, to what extent her ideas entered the realm of formal diplomacy and government action. The piece will first reflect on the idea of Camps as a diplomatic policy entrepreneur as part of the wider foreign policy field. In doing so, the article also provides an invitation to scholars researching the United Kingdom's relationship with Europe to look beyond the narrow confines of Westminster, Whitehall and the media, and consider the role of unofficial diplomats as foreign policy actors. The piece will then analyse Camps's activities at Chatham House in 1965, before exploring how she used her Chatham House Study Group to influence the Foreign Office's position on the EEC's empty chair crisis. The last section demonstrates how Camps's 'maximalist' position became the accepted position of the Foreign Office and Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart.

Para-diplomacy, Policy Entrepreneurs and the Foreign Policy Field

Historian Kenneth Weisbrode counts think tanks among the 'para-diplomacy bodies' that extend the field of diplomacy beyond formal diplomatic institutions set up by states, for example foreign ministries and embassies. Its members 'are also diplomats of a kind'.¹⁵ In a similar vein, Dino Knudsen, in his study on the Trilateral Commission, a transnational elite network created in 1973 to foster cooperation between the United States, Europe and Japan, emphasises the fluidity of diplomacy. Diplomacy, he argues, reaches beyond formal institutions; governance and policy formulation are collaborative acts that include 'interest groups, private business, charity, think tanks, etc.'¹⁶ Such unofficial diplomatic actors can contribute to 'broaden the diplomatic agenda; go ahead of public opinion in the causes they promote and contribute to shaping public understanding of particular issues; function as agenda-setters on different levels'.¹⁷ If diplomacy is a fluid field consisting of a multitude of actors, it can also be conceptualised, following French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, as a field of power in which actors compete for resources and influence.¹⁸ A field is a constructed space that can help visualise networks and relationships between actors. Members of a field possess social capital such as their educational background, expertise, proximity to power as well as a network of high-level contacts. The fact that Camps remained an influential diplomatic actor after her State Department career had ended is therefore perhaps not surprising. As a former diplomat in the State Department, she had the professional background, expertise and network to play an important role in this field of power. Camps had learned and internalised the behaviours, attitudes and norms of professional diplomats, and she was able to transfer these skills and ways of working across to foreign policy think tanks. She was able to capitalise on the many contacts she had established during her time at the State Department. Over time, Camps occupied different positions in the field, occasionally returning to more formal diplomatic roles in the State Department. For example, from 1967 to 1970, she served as Vice-Chairman of the Policy

¹⁴ Among the most important works on the United Kingdom's relationship with Europe in the 1960s are: Kaiser, *Using Europe*; Ludlow, *Dealing with Britain*; Pine, *Harold Wilson*; Parr, *Britain's Policy*; Milward, *The United Kingdom*; Wall, *Britain*; and Toomey, *Harold Wilson's EEC Application*.

¹⁵ Kenneth Weisbrode, *Old Diplomacy Revisited* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 48; cf. also Scott-Smith, 'Introduction'.

¹⁶ Dino Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission and Global Governance: Informal Elite Diplomacy, 1972–82* (London: Routledge, 2016), position 41.4–57.4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See Pierre Bourdieu, *Propos sur le champ politique, avec une introduction de Philippe Fritsch* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2000).

Planning Council, the State Department's in-house think tank. In the US context, in particular, it was not unusual to cross boundaries between the private sector, academia, think tanks and government. Inderjeet Parmar shows that 'almost half of all top foreign policy officials in Washington, D.C., between 1945 and 1972 were CFR members'.¹⁹

Narrow definitions of diplomacy as the prerogative of professional diplomats in the service of a government meant that scholarship in diplomatic history has underplayed the role of women in diplomacy if understood in terms of official interstate relations conducted by a professional class of diplomats.²⁰ Until fairly recently, women have been excluded from, or at least faced barriers to accessing, official roles in state and government.²¹ This made them prone to becoming what an emerging literature in political science and international relations, but also increasingly history, designates as 'citizen' or 'unofficial' diplomats. These concepts are not clearly delineated or indeed distinguishable, but citizen diplomacy tends to be applied to grassroots movements or individuals coming together to work on an issue such as peace negotiations or conflict mediation which can then 'trickle up' and contribute to a negotiated diplomatic solution.²² Unofficial diplomacy is similarly focused on private individuals' engagement in diplomatic processes, but tends to be more geared to exploring individuals and institutions close to formal diplomacy as defined by state institutions.²³ Camps can therefore be classed as an unofficial diplomat, operating within the wider diplomatic field.

However, when considering Camps' actions and her pursuance of one specific policy goal in 1965, namely changing the government of the United Kingdom's position on the empty chair crisis, she can usefully be defined as a diplomatic policy entrepreneur. This concept describes an individual holding one or more specific policy goals which they promote and seek to get adopted. For Michael Mintrom, 'Policy entrepreneurs reveal themselves through their attempts to transform policy ideas into policy innovations and, hence, disrupt status quo policy arrangements'.²⁴ They are close to decision-makers, 'embedded in social networks' and crucially 'serve to bring new policy ideas into good currency'.²⁵ When Camps lost what she herself described as 'insider' diplomatic status, in return she gained freedom of manoeuvre, of initiative, of pursuing her own aims and ideas whilst holding on to the social and professional capital that she had accumulated while 'inside'. In short, she became the ideal policy entrepreneur.

Extending the analysis of foreign policy formulation to include para-diplomatic spaces such as think tanks and unofficial diplomats including policy entrepreneurs is also a way of bringing women back as actors in international relations and diplomacy.²⁶ Women tend to have more variegated and flexible careers and, often precisely due to exclusionary measures barring them from

¹⁹ Inderjeet Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012), 55.

²⁰ Karin Aggestam, and Ann Towns, 'The Gender Turn in Diplomacy', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 21, no. 1 (2019), 9–28, 11.

²¹ See Helen McCarthy, *Women of the World: The Rise of the Female Diplomat* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

²² E.g. Reena Bernards, 'Women as Citizen-Diplomats', *Women's Studies Quarterly* 26, no. 3–4 (1998), 48–56; Editor's Forum, 'Who is a Diplomat? Diplomatic and Policy Entrepreneurs in the Global Age', *New Global Studies* 8, no. 1 (2014), 1–152; Richard Langhorne, 'The Diplomacy of Non-State Actors', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 16, no. 2 (2005), 331–9.

²³ Joe Johnson, and Maureen Berman, 'The Growing Role of Unofficial Diplomacy', in *Unofficial Diplomats*, eds. Maureen Berman and Joe Johnson (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1977), 3, refer to 'individuals who have contact with private citizens or government officials from other countries as well as with their own government'. Two examples include: Susanna Erlandsson, 'Off the Record: Margaret van Kleffens and the Gendered History of Dutch World War II Diplomacy', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 21, no. 1 (2019), 29–46; Albertine Bloemendal, 'Between Dinner Table and Formal Diplomacy: Ernst van der Beugel as an Unofficial Diplomat for an Atlantic Community', *New Global Studies* 8, no. 1 (2014), 103–19.

²⁴ Michael Mintrom, 'So You Want to be a Policy Entrepreneur?', *Policy Design and Practice* 2, no. 4 (2019), 307–23, 307.

²⁵ Michael Mintrom and Sandra Vergari, 'Advocacy Coalitions, Policy Entrepreneurs and Policy Change', *Policy Studies Journal* 24, no. 3 (1996), 420–34, 422.

²⁶ On the recovery of women international thinkers, see Patricia Owens and Katharina Rietzler, eds., *Women's International Thought: A New History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

official roles, were more open to exploring opportunities of influencing inter-state relations through other means. Until the early 1970s, married women in the United States were barred from continued service in an ‘official’ capacity in foreign relations.²⁷ Fluid careers and boundary crossings were thus the norm for women such as Camps. Chatham House was relatively open to employing women and had in fact employed women since the inter-war period, mainly as research assistants and librarians, but by the 1960s some held senior appointments.²⁸ Think tank work could provide women with a career in research and scholarship when universities were still more hostile to employing women and, in the case of Camps in particular, they could serve as a base for continued diplomatic activity.²⁹ However, Chatham House was the exception among the elite foreign policy think tanks. The institution’s US counterpart, the CFR, for example, did not admit women as members until 1969. In spite of this policy, the CFR did employ Camps in 1963 on a part-time research post, with the other half funded by Chatham House.³⁰ Camps had links with key figures in the CFR, dating back to her time in the State Department, who became her champions and secured her appointment.³¹ It is difficult to determine if her gender mattered – and how it mattered – for her role at Chatham House and as a policy entrepreneur. Camps herself rarely discussed her gender and any disadvantages she might have experienced.³² Male colleagues at Chatham House and CFR discussing Camps behind closed doors never openly referred to her gender, but seemed rather more interested in her abilities, her experience and her network of contacts. So what seemed to have mattered rather more than her gender – at least for a woman like Camps, coming from an elite background and already in an established position – were her previous experience in the State Department and her expertise in European integration.

Camps as a Policy Entrepreneur at Chatham House

In September 1963, Chatham House appointed Miriam Camps as a Senior Research Fellow.³³ Her appointment coincided with a difficult period in the relationship between the United Kingdom and the EEC. On 14 January 1963, French President Charles de Gaulle had rejected UK membership in the EEC, ending the accession negotiations that had started in 1961.³⁴ Since then, UK policy towards, and its relationship with, the EEC were uncertain, lacked direction and real options. Consensus on UK membership in government and the wider population was weak and, as long as President de Gaulle remained in power in France, any new bid to join the EEC was unlikely to succeed. While the Macmillan government had taken the decision to apply for membership in 1961, this decision did not reflect a broad consensus in society or among the elites.³⁵ The perceived negative consequences

²⁷ Homer L. Calkin, *Women in the Department of State: Their Role in American Foreign Affairs* (Washington, DC: Department of State Publications, 1978), 274–5.

²⁸ Katharina Rietzler, ‘U.S. Foreign Policy Think Tanks and Women’s Intellectual Labor, 1920–1950’, *Diplomatic History* 46, no. 3 (2022), 575–601; Inderjeet Parmar, *Think Tanks and Power in Foreign Policy: A Comparative Study of the Role and Influence of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1939–1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 35, 44. Women in senior positions in the 1960s included the political economist Susan Strange and Rosalyn Higgins, an expert in international law.

²⁹ E.g. Geoffrey Field, ‘Elizabeth Wiskemann, Scholar-Journalist, and the Study of International Relations’, in *Women’s International Thought: A New History*, eds. Patricia Owens and Katharina Rietzler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 199, 205.

³⁰ Research Committee, 83rd Meeting, 9 July 1963, CHA, pt. 1603.

³¹ Camps’s appointment at CFR on account of her ‘brilliance’ is recorded in the minutes of the Committee on Studies meeting on 13 Apr. 1965. Her gender was not mentioned in the minutes, Committee on Studies, 1965–6, Seeley Mudd Library, Council on Foreign Relations Records, Princeton University, Box 7, Folder 3.

³² One exception is an outbreak of anger related to her work in the CFR in a letter to her friend, William Diebold. ‘For four years those boys ignored my advice’, she wrote. Camps to Diebold, Cambridge, 26 Jan. 1978, MHCA, Box 1, Folder 9.

³³ Research Committee, 83rd Meeting, 9 July 1963, CHA, pt. 1603.

³⁴ See, e.g., Oliver Bange, *The EEC Crisis of 1963: Kennedy, Macmillan, De Gaulle and Adenauer in Conflict* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

³⁵ Kaiser, *Using Europe*; Ludlow, *Dealing with Britain*.

of membership, such as the loss of sovereignty, the necessary loosening of ties with the Commonwealth as well as the disadvantages of the CAP, the protectionist agricultural policy the EEC was developing, remained important issues. The United Kingdom was still managing its post-war transformation from an imperial world power to a post-imperial regional power and had, in US Secretary of State Dean Acheson's words, 'not yet found a role'.³⁶ Relations with the United States were also less close than they had been during the war and immediate post-war years.³⁷

A new Labour government came to power in October 1964 with Harold Wilson as Prime Minister. In terms of the domestic and foreign policy context, the period 1964–6 was critical for the United Kingdom, but also for the EEC and NATO. The period was marked by a continued assessment of the UK relationship with the EEC and whether or not the government should submit a new bid for membership. For example, an inter-departmental report was prepared upon Wilson taking power. The so-called Pitblado report, published in October 1964, made a strong case in favour of UK EEC membership, seen as vital to preserve the United Kingdom's global role.³⁸ A shift towards Europe was seen as necessary by some in Whitehall, particularly the Foreign Office, to compensate for the weakening of the United Kingdom's defence spending and its dwindling resources.³⁹ In this view, the United Kingdom should also increase its role in Europe in order to maintain influence with the United States, not least as the US government was pressuring the United Kingdom to join the EEC. Wilson himself did not commit to pursuing EEC membership when he took office, but his preferred policy alternatives of reviving the Commonwealth and creating a stronger link between the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the EEC in a 'bridge-building' initiative had come to very little by the summer of 1965.⁴⁰ In January 1966, Wilson resigned himself to commissioning a series of secret studies on the benefits and disadvantages of EEC membership.⁴¹ In August 1966, another pro-European, George Brown, took over the Foreign Office, and Wilson himself came to see EEC membership as the key to resolving the United Kingdom's political and economic problems; the sterling crisis in the summer of 1966, as well as the government's decision to withdraw troops east of Suez, arguably played an important role in Wilson's determination to launch a new membership bid.⁴² In October 1966, his government decided to embark on 'the probe' – exploratory visits to the capitals of the six EEC member states to discuss the conditions and chances of success of another UK membership bid.

While historians tend to pay more attention to the October 1966 decision to undertake the probe and the subsequent decision to submit an application for membership in early 1967, the period between the summer of 1965 and the January 1966 decision to undertake studies on membership should be seen as an important turning point for the Wilson government.⁴³ It was the EEC crisis

³⁶ Dean Acheson, Speech at the Military Academy, West Point, 5 Dec. 1962.

³⁷ James Ellison, *The United States, Britain and the Transatlantic Crisis: Rising to the Gaullist Challenge, 1963–68* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

³⁸ The United Kingdom and the European Economic Community. A Report by a Group of Officials from the Foreign Office, Treasury, Commonwealth Relations Office, Board of Trade and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, under the Chairmanship of Mr. D. B. Pitblado, Treasury, Oct. 1964, The National Archives, Kew [TNA] T312/1013.

³⁹ Parr, *Britain's Policy*, 17.

⁴⁰ On bridge-building, see Burke Trend to Harold Wilson, Links between EFTA and EEC Draft Memorandum for the Prime Minister, 10 May 1965, TNA, PREM 13 307.

⁴¹ Toomey's book on the second application underscores the role of the Foreign Office in convincing Wilson to submit a second bid for membership: Toomey, *Harold Wilson's EEC Application*. However, neither Toomey nor Helen Parr mention Chatham House or indeed Camps's role at the think tank. Parr merely writes that Camps judged that the government 'missed an opportunity' during the empty chair crisis, not saying that she steered the Foreign Office towards that solution. Helen Parr, 'Gone Native: The Foreign Office and Harold Wilson's Policy towards the EEC, 1964–67', in *Harold Wilson and European Integration: Britain's Second Application to Join the EEC*, ed. Oliver Daddow (London: Routledge, 2003), 79.

⁴² Parr, 'Gone Native', 82; for the importance of the UK's withdrawal east of Suez, see Ellison, *United States*, chapter 5.

⁴³ Parr, *Britain's Policy* and Toomey, *Harold Wilson* both gloss over the empty chair crisis. For them, the NATO and sterling crisis of spring 1966 were more important in changing Wilson's stance on the EEC. Parr also makes this argument in 'Question', 438.

of 1965/6 which provided civil servants in Whitehall with a window of opportunity for thinking creatively about the United Kingdom's relationship with Europe and exploring new avenues into how the United Kingdom could become involved in Europe.

One of Chatham House's founders, Lionel Curtis, 'believed the way to spread an idea was to capture the elite and convert them and they . . . would spread the ideas'.⁴⁴ At Chatham House, Study Groups and Discussion Groups were one important means for getting members of different (elite) backgrounds together to exchange, discuss and 'spread ideas'.⁴⁵ Wilson's government showed a renewed interest in policy analysis both within government and in think tanks and universities. Chatham House benefited from this both through funding and a renewed sense of direction and relevance. William Wallace called the period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s the 'golden age of forum foreign policy think-tanks in Britain'.⁴⁶

There is little doubt that Chatham House's leadership felt it was crucial to deepen in-house expertise on the EEC which could inform policy-makers but also journalists and academics, and facilitate 'building political and societal consensus' on the United Kingdom's relationship with Europe.⁴⁷ The two leading permanent staff members at the time were Kenneth Younger and Andrew Shonfield. Younger was a former Labour politician who, while at the Foreign Office in the 1940s, had developed an interest in developing international relations through supranational organisations.⁴⁸ He left parliament in 1959 to become director of Chatham House. In this role he was keen to promote a strong role for the United Kingdom in international organisations, including the EEC. Shonfield was a political economist and journalist who joined Chatham House in 1961 as director of studies. In 1972 he became the institution's director. An expert in international economic relations, in his 1972 Reith Lectures he discussed UK entry into the European Community and the long-term future of the EC.⁴⁹ Camps thus joined an institution where leading staff were pro-European and valued her field of expertise. Camps's appointment was seen as critical both due to the publication of her recent book, *Britain and the European Community 1955–1963*, which was referred to in a Chatham House Research Committee meeting as the 'standard book on the subject', and because Camps had access to policy-makers and 'will continue to keep in close touch with developments at the policy-making level both in the Community and in London'.⁵⁰ At Chatham House, Camps was expected to convene study groups, conferences and meetings on the United Kingdom and Europe in addition to preparing publications. In 1965–6 she convened the 'Study Group on Europe'.

At the Foreign Office, the Treasury and the Department for Economic Affairs a group of pro-European civil servants that included Sir Con O'Neill, Sir Eric Roll and Michael Palliser were deliberating how the United Kingdom should react to the crisis of 'the Six' and whether the government could use the crisis to improve its relationship with the EEC. For them, this period of upheaval became a critical juncture and an opportunity to reconsider policy. At such critical junctures, policy entrepreneurs such as Camps were arguably able to have more impact on policy formulation within government and the civil service than in periods of well-defined government policy and aims. Expertise and ideas are in demand when policies are in flux. Discussing ideas with academics and 'outside' diplomatic figures suddenly seemed more attractive for busy civil servants. Camps and the Study Group on Europe therefore became an unexpectedly popular meeting point for individuals involved in British foreign policy formulation. In addition to working with the members of the Study Group, Camps seized the initiative and offered her advice and ideas directly to government officials, advice that was heeded.

⁴⁴ Parmar, *Think Tanks and Power*, 31.

⁴⁵ William Wallace, 'Between Two Worlds: Think Tanks and Foreign Policy', in *Two Worlds of International Relations: Academics, Practitioners and the Trade in Ideas*, eds. C. Hill and P. Beshoff (London: Routledge, 1994), 146.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 148–9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 143. Parmar, *Think Tanks and Power*, 107.

⁴⁸ Entry 'Younger, Sir Kenneth Gilmour,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁴⁹ BBC Reith Lectures 1972. Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p00h64qp> (accessed 29 Mar. 2023).

⁵⁰ Research Committee, Minutes of the 91st Meeting, 20 July 1965, CHA, Appendix B.

The Study Group on Europe: From Medium-Term Forecasting to Crisis Opportunism

Outlining her aims for the Study Group in January 1965, Camps made it clear that the group was to take it as a given that UK membership in the EEC was desirable.⁵¹ She thus had no intention of reopening the issue of membership, even though the case for membership was far from agreed within the Labour Party, the government, the civil service or indeed the country. As membership was the declared aim, she thought the group should focus on analysing the situation in the near future 'say, 1967 and the kind of arrangements with the Six that might then be made, having regard to probable developments within the Six and in the UK in the interim'.⁵² This rather vague brief became redundant when in late June 1965 the EEC entered into its most serious crisis yet, absorbing the group in discussions about the opportunities these current developments might bring for the United Kingdom.

For membership of the Study Group, Camps drew on her extensive network of contacts. These contacts were often long-standing friends and were located in the US State Department, the British Foreign Service and the wider foreign policy field, as well as within the new European institutions in Brussels. She was well acquainted with, for example, Max Kohnstamm, former Secretary of the High Authority of the ECSC, close collaborator with Jean Monnet and generally a relentless lobbyist for European integration.⁵³ François Duchêne, who had also worked for Jean Monnet both at the High Authority and the Action Committee for the United States of Europe, was also a friend of Camps and a regular participant in Chatham House events. During the 1960s, Duchêne was a journalist at *The Economist* and, from 1969 to 1974, he was Director of the think tank International Institute for Strategic Studies. Camps was also close to John Pinder, director of PEP, where Camps had worked in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This was the core group of individuals Camps drew on for discussions, study groups and conferences. Joining this group were civil servants from the Foreign Office and other government departments, politicians, bankers and representatives of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI).⁵⁴

The Study Group was attended by a small number of key civil servants from the Foreign Office and the Treasury. Sir Con O'Neill was the most loyal and regular participant – and one of the most influential ones. At the Foreign Office, O'Neill was closely involved with the formulation of the UK policy towards Europe. From 1963 to 1965, he had been British Ambassador to the EEC. He then took up the post of deputy under-secretary for foreign affairs (economic/European economic) in the Foreign Office. From 1970 to 1973 he would lead the UK negotiation team taking the United Kingdom into the Community. Other attendees were John Barnes, head of the Western Organisations Department between 1962 and 1969; Lucius Thompson-McCausland, an economist and advisor to the Bank of England and to the Treasury during the sterling crisis; the pro-European liberal politician Baron Gladwyn (Gladwyn Jebb), former Ambassador to Paris and leader of the Liberals in the House of Lords (1965–88); Sir Michael Cary, who led the UK's delegation to NATO in the 1950s and was deputy secretary at the Ministry of Defence; and the international relations scholar Hedley Bull, then briefly director of the arms control and disarmament unit in the Foreign Office. Michael Palliser participated in later meetings of Camps's Study Group. Palliser was a key figure in the Foreign Office who had been head of the policy planning staff (PPS) in 1964/5. Married to the daughter of Belgian politician Paul-Henri Spaak, Palliser was ardently pro-European and an advocate of the United Kingdom joining the EEC. In April 1966, Palliser became Wilson's private secretary for foreign affairs. Some individuals only attended occasionally, such as Patrick Hancock from the Foreign Office, David Pitblado from the Treasury, author of the Pitblado report of October 1964 on the United Kingdom

⁵¹ Miriam Camps, Study Group on Europe, 29 Jan. 1965, CHA, 9/69b.

⁵² Miriam Camps, Study Group on Europe: Proposed Work Programme for Discussion at First Meeting on Tuesday, 2 Mar. 1965, CHA, 9/69b.

⁵³ On Kohnstamm see Anjo Harryman and Jan van der Harst, *Max Kohnstamm: A European's Life and Work* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2011).

⁵⁴ Study Group on Europe, Addresses, CHA, 9/69d.

and the EEC,⁵⁵ and Sir William Gorell Barnes, under-secretary of state at the Colonial Office. The pro-marketeer Labour politician and Home Secretary Roy Jenkins also ‘received copies of papers’ of the Study Group.⁵⁶

Camps also invited high-level speakers from the the United States and continental Europe to some sessions. Among them were Robert Schaetzel, a US diplomat and, from 1966 to 1972, US Ambassador to the European Communities; Ivo Samkalden, a Dutch Labour politician, law professor and director of Leiden University’s Europa Institute; and Guido Colonna di Paliano, commissioner for the internal market in the EEC Commission.⁵⁷ This would have given the participants insight into both the United States and continental European thinking on UK membership, as well as a behind-the-scenes account of the dramatic events unfolding during the empty chair crisis. Chatham House meetings were confidential and group participants were able to speak frankly and openly. While the unrestrained discussion of the important issues of the day, the weighing up of ideas and the opportunity to network with a range of influential individuals from the United Kingdom, the United States and continental Europe were certainly seen as useful, it was in particular Camps’s plan of action, which she first presented to the group on 8 July, that penetrated Whitehall and became the adopted position of the Foreign Office.

The Study Group sessions took place between March 1965 and May 1966. The first meetings reflected the lack of a sense of direction of the UK policy towards the EEC. O’Neill, who was the principal speaker of the first session in March, expressed his pessimism about the UK’s chances of joining the EEC or indeed influencing its development from the outside. He felt that the Community had turned ‘inward to their own affairs’ and was not receptive to views of third countries.⁵⁸ Since France had raised a veto on UK membership in January 1963, it was felt that France would again be the stumbling block should the United Kingdom decide to re-apply for membership.⁵⁹

It was only from July 1965 onwards, with the onset of the empty chair crisis, that the Study Group’s discussions gained traction. Miriam Camps’s own paper was discussed at the sixth meeting on 8 July 1965, shortly after the failed EEC Council of Ministers meeting in Brussels that had led to the outbreak of the EEC crisis when France withdrew its Permanent Representative from Brussels.⁶⁰ Camps immediately interpreted these events as an opportunity for the United Kingdom to rethink its European policy and exploit the rift between France and the remaining five member states for its own gains, that is, achieving membership, or at least articulating its strong intention of becoming a member. Rather than siding with France in the crisis and hoping that France’s policy would lead to a curbing of supranationalism in the EEC, something that many, not least Wilson himself, felt was in the UK interest,⁶¹ Camps argued that the government should embrace what she called a “maximum” development of the EC into a close and fairly far-reaching construction that could act effectively as a unit externally’. This was ‘far more in Britain’s real interest, than was a “minimum” development, although a loosely-knit, rather incoherent grouping had usually been considered to be preferable – from a British stand-point – even by many pro-Europeans in this country’. She thus confronted the Study Group with a – for UK sentiments – rather extreme position. Camps argued that, firstly, gaining influence in the world would only work if Europe operated as a tight-knit unit and that this was also a surer way to an effective Atlantic partnership, something the UK government coveted. According to her, a ‘maximalist Europe’ with more developed common policies would mean that the United Kingdom

⁵⁵ The United Kingdom and the European Economic Community. A Report by a Group of Officials from the Foreign Office, Treasury, Commonwealth Relations Office, Board of Trade and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, under the Chairmanship of Mr. D. B. Pitblado, Treasury, Oct. 1964, TNA T312/1013. Con O’Neill was also involved in drafting the report.

⁵⁶ Study Group on Europe, Addresses, CHA, 9/69d.

⁵⁷ E.g. Study Group on Europe, List of Meetings, CHA, 9/69b.

⁵⁸ Study Group on Europe, Notes on discussion at the first meeting of the group on Tuesday, 2 Mar. 1965, CHA, 9/69b.

⁵⁹ Study Group on Europe: Notes on discussion at the second meeting of the group on Monday, 12 Apr. 1965, CHA, 9/69b.

⁶⁰ See Ludlow, *European Community*, esp. chapter 3.

⁶¹ Parr, *Britain’s Policy*, 43; 58; Ellison, *United States*, 44.

would get more out of the Community than if it were just restricted to the CAP and the Common Market.⁶²

While these were compelling arguments, they were also counterintuitive for many UK civil servants. While views in Whitehall were far from homogeneous and some, especially in the Foreign Office, had come to the conclusion that the United Kingdom needed to accept membership along the lines Camps explored, in departments such as the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) or the Treasury many still believed that the United Kingdom had a world role to play in its own right, alongside the United States. The special relationship with the United States was also something that many felt would be undermined by EEC membership and exchanged for a less attractive set of relationships with their European counterparts. Finally, the idea of 'more Europe' seemed particularly counterintuitive to a government that struggled to accept that EEC membership entailed acceptance of the CAP and encroachment on its sovereignty. More supranational policies were almost unthinkable, even for those in favour of EEC membership.⁶³

However, Camps's proposals reflected current thinking in the US State Department, to which she had close ties; she was still advising Under Secretary of State George Ball, who was critical of the 'special relationship' and felt that the United Kingdom should join the EEC as soon as possible.⁶⁴ The State Department, more than US President Lyndon B. Johnson himself, kept pushing Wilson towards the EEC.⁶⁵ For the 'Europeanists' in the State Department, UK membership in the EEC promised to solve a range of issues: it would strengthen the Atlantic alliance, particularly at a time when France was becoming increasingly unreliable; it would turn the EEC into a strong partner of the United States, lending more credibility to the idea of an Atlantic Partnership between (almost) equals; and, finally, it would overcome the economic split in Western Europe between the supranational EEC and the intergovernmental EFTA in a solution that favoured the EEC Common Market. Camps's proposals were also decidedly anti-De Gaulle, another position she shared with 'Europeanists' in the State Department who were still resentful about De Gaulle's veto on UK membership two years earlier and dismayed at De Gaulle's anti-NATO utterances.⁶⁶ She strongly urged the government to side with the 'Five' against France and, if necessary, to risk breaking up the Community, and for the United Kingdom to take France's place. Perhaps surprisingly, the group was 'in immediate and general agreement with this view'.⁶⁷

Camps's ambitions for the Study Group's impact on current policy making increased as the empty chair crisis deepened. She suggested reconvening the Study Group in the autumn of 1965 to

ensure that it is made up of those people in the Civil Service and those people outside Government Departments who are particularly well-informed on these European developments and who are also actively working on these questions. In this way any useful ideas that may be developed outside Government circles will not be lost: conversely, those on the outside will be helped to channel their research and other activities in useful directions. In addition most, if not all, of the members of the Study Group have wide-ranging personal contacts with influential Europeans. The existence of the Study Group and the regular discussions in the Group should help to ensure that any opportunity for improving relations with the Six is fully exploited.⁶⁸

⁶² Miriam Camps, Points for discussion at Study Group Meeting on Thursday, 8 July 1965, 29 June 1965, CHA, 9/96b.

⁶³ See, e.g., Parr, 'Gone Native.'

⁶⁴ See, e.g., George Ball's book, *The Discipline of Power: Essentials of a Modern World Structure* (London: The Bodley Head, 1968).

⁶⁵ See, e.g., O'Neill to Dean, Record of Conversation with Hinton in State Department, 30 Nov. 1965, TNO, T312/1015, cited in Parr, *Britain's Policy*, 58.

⁶⁶ On the State Department's anti-Gaullism, see Weisbrode, *Atlantic*, 185–6.

⁶⁷ Study Group on Europe, Notes on discussion at the sixth meeting of the group on Thursday, 8 July 1965, CHA, 9/69b.

⁶⁸ Miriam Camps, Points for discussion at Study Group Meeting on Thursday, 8 July 1965, 29 June 1965, CHA, 9/96b.

The group should thus work its way into the centre of policy formulation in government by attracting more high-level civil service and government members, and it should serve as a platform for deepening contacts between UK and European policy-makers.

Camps's 'Maximalism' Enters the Foreign Office

In Whitehall, civil servants were also grappling with what the EEC crisis could mean for the United Kingdom and whether or not the government should make a move towards the Six and, if so, what this move should consist of. However, these thoughts were not as radical as those of Camps. A paper drafted in the Foreign Office and circulated to departments on 20 September 1965 also argued in favour of exploiting the EEC crisis for the United Kingdom's gain, but it did not go so far as asking the government to accept the Treaty of Rome and current EEC policies. The dominating view in this document was still that the government would make demands to change the CAP as a condition of joining; it also discussed the eventuality of France making an offer to the United Kingdom to allow it into the EEC to weaken its supranational character, something that Camps had argued was not in the UK's interest. Overall, the report reflected more of Wilson's attitude that the United Kingdom would only join 'the right sort of Community' in which 'essential British interests' would be safeguarded, rather than advocating a new policy.⁶⁹

Camps did not rely on the Study Group alone to disseminate her ideas. In early October 1965, Camps travelled to Brussels to touch base with her European network and to meet with the UK Ambassador to the European Communities, James Marjoribanks. She successfully used Marjoribanks, and Study Group member O'Neill, as conduits for her policy ideas so that they were fed into the Foreign Office and interdepartmental discussions on Europe in the autumn of 1965, with the result that her suggested approach to the empty chair crisis became the solution Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart presented to Prime Minister Wilson in a memorandum in December 1965.

Following their meeting, Marjoribanks sent a dispatch to Norman Statham, the Head of the European Economic Organisation's Department in the Foreign Office, on 7 October, reporting at length on a conversation he had had with 'Mrs Miriam Camps' in Brussels.⁷⁰ The dispatch was circulated by the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to officials in the Foreign Office, the Treasury, the Board of Trade, the DEA and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. In the letter, Marjoribanks reiterated Camps's arguments why the United Kingdom should take an initiative in the EEC crisis: 'What was wanted in her view was a statement by the British Prime Minister in general terms that we recognised the Community as the basis for the development of European unity and looked forward to the United Kingdom's participation in it whenever that became possible.' The statement should be vague and would serve to bolster the determination of the Five to stand up to France: 'if France fails them Britain will join them.' Camps felt that such a statement would either motivate the French to compromise and end the crisis or 'lead to a solution of the crisis in the opposite sense, i.e. rupture with France and the possible entry of the United Kingdom. In either case Britain would be better off.' Marjoribanks added weight to Camps's argument by affirming that

I myself think there is a great deal to be said in favour of her analysis and her proposal The main thing, as she said, is to change the atmosphere, to emphasise that the United Kingdom stands ready to play a part in European affairs and that we are happy with the type of organisation represented by the Community.⁷¹

At that point, the idea that the United Kingdom was 'happy with the type of organisation represented by the Community' was not accepted government policy and this view was contested in Whitehall (indeed, Statham had written: 'but are we [?]' in the margins of the letter).⁷²

⁶⁹ Nicholas Statham, 'British Policy Towards Developments in the European Economic Community', circulated on 20 Sept. 1965, TNA, T312/1015. See pt. 26 for the condition that 'essential British interests' need to be safeguarded.

⁷⁰ Marjoribanks to Statham, Brussels, 7 Oct. 1965, TNA, T312/1015.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

In a letter to O'Neill on 10 October, Camps went even further in her advice that the United Kingdom needed to adopt a new position in its policy towards the EEC. O'Neill forwarded Camps's letter to the group of officials who had received Marjoribanks' dispatch, including William Nield, Deputy Under Secretary at the DEA. Like Marjoribanks, O'Neill introduced the views of an 'outsider', a policy entrepreneur, into the formal diplomatic government machine. In his covering note to the letter, he lent Camps's opinions authority by reiterating her pedigree as an expert on the United Kingdom's relationship with the EEC, mentioning her work for the US State Department, for the UK think tanks PEP and Chatham House and her publications, in particular her 'massive and masterly volume called "Britain and the European Communities, 1955–1963"', stressing that '[s]he probably knows more about the European Communities than anyone else in this country, inside or outside government circles'.⁷³

With this letter, Camps was urging the slow-moving government machinery to react to a new opportunity to 'get in'. She felt the UK government should give 'encouragement' to the Five to stay firm, arguing that the Five would be tougher in any meeting with France to try to settle the crisis if they could be assured that 'the British would be ready, in the reasonably near future, to become full members of the Community, accepting not only the Treaty of Rome but the "Community method" the French are now attacking'.⁷⁴ She referred to her consultations with key individuals in Brussels, from the Commission and representatives of the member states, to underscore her point that the United Kingdom had a chance to turn the tables on France and solve the issue of membership: 'Now some of these same people [who had been mildly in favour of the United Kingdom's membership] look to British membership as the only hope for "saving Europe". This is an utterly different situation.' And one Camps felt should trigger a quick rethink and decision-making on the part of the UK government. Camps cleverly raised a few hypothetical outcomes of the crisis she knew the United Kingdom would rather avoid, for example, the French withdrawing from the Community, the Five not being able to continue on their own, leading to a weakening, if not a breaking apart, of the EEC. This, Camps mused, could lead to the Germans pursuing a more independent national policy and the United States withdrawing support for European integration and striking a bilateral deal on defence with Germany. Especially the latter – a United States–German nuclear deal – was anathema to the Wilson government.⁷⁵ Camps ended on a melodramatic note, stressing that the next six months would be crucial and that it was in the United Kingdom's hands 'to determine whether General de Gaulle's emphasis on nationalism sets the pattern in European developments for the next decade or so, or whether more sophisticated ways of arranging international relationships still have a chance. Perhaps they [the UK] are the only ones who can do so'.⁷⁶

To further corroborate the idea that Chatham House discussions were used to reconsider the United Kingdom's position on the EEC, the file containing Camps's notes also contained the minutes of the discussion of the Chatham House Study Group on Europe's seventh meeting on 20 October 1965, during which the group accepted Camps's analysis and the need for the United Kingdom to make a move towards the Five.⁷⁷ Completing her lobbying attempts was an article for *The Times*, published on 25 October, in which Camps reiterated her argument why joining the supranational EEC in its current form was in the United Kingdom's interest, rather than joining a Gaullist dream of a Europe of nation-states.⁷⁸ She concluded by appealing to Wilson's vanity, saying that: 'By one of the queer twists of fate, Harold Wilson is perhaps the only man who can reverse the tide that is now flowing towards nationalism.'⁷⁹

⁷³ O'Neill to Nield, 13 Oct. 1965, TNA, T312/1015.

⁷⁴ Camps to O'Neill, Abingdon, 10 Oct. 1965, TNA, T312/1015.

⁷⁵ On this issue in relation with the NATO crisis in early 1966, see Ellison, *United States*, 56–9.

⁷⁶ Camps to O'Neill, Abingdon, 10 Oct. 1965, TNA, T312/1015.

⁷⁷ Chatham House, Study Group on Europe. Notes on discussion at the seventh meeting of the group on Wednesday, 20 Oct. 1965, TNA, T312/1015, 3.

⁷⁸ Miriam Camps, 'Britain's Opportunity in Europe', *The Times*, 25 Oct. 1965, 11.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Camps's ideas were of course not unopposed, nor did Wilson immediately heed her advice. Camps held discussions with other officials more critical of her ideas, such as Nield, who felt that the United Kingdom would let EFTA down if it made a move towards the EEC and that the situation was more complex than Camps suggested. However, he conceded that the question of membership was again on the table: 'I would agree, however, that there is a case for considering our position in Europe, and thought is being given to this.'⁸⁰ Eric Roll, an economist and permanent secretary of the DEA who had been part of the UK delegation negotiating membership in the EEC from 1961 to 1963, was also opposed to the kind of initiative Camps proposed, mainly because he thought the United Kingdom should let the Six sort out the crisis before the United Kingdom looked at membership afresh.⁸¹

Historians writing about the United Kingdom and the EEC during Wilson's premiership mention Camps's letter, but they do not dwell on the issue that official government papers contained policy advice by a government outsider and that this advice was heeded by key figures in Whitehall. They also do not trace the ideas Camps advanced through to the letter and memorandum that Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart sent to Wilson a few weeks later. Parr, for example, merely writes that 'Stewart wrote to Wilson in December to urge a more proactive policy towards the crisis', without probing the origins of Stewart's rather strongly worded document and how these ideas had penetrated the Foreign Office in the first place. For Parr, the declaration of intent suggested in the letter was Stewart's policy and idea.⁸² Stewart's letter did not come out of nowhere but was the result of Camps's lobbying, including discussions and opinion formation occurring between Camps and the Chatham House Study Group with O'Neill as a key member, as well as Marjoribanks in Brussels.

The Foreign Office adopted as its own Camps's view that the UK government should become involved in the empty chair crisis by making a declaration of intent to join the EEC. This emerges from a Treasury brief for William Armstrong for an interdepartmental meeting on Europe chaired by Roll in which Owen wrote:

Foreign Office view. 3. As I told you this morning, the Foreign Office are opposed to any such new exercise [more studies on membership]. They are concentrating all their attention on the immediate future and have recommended to the Foreign Secretary that the U.K. should take an initiative which would demonstrate to the Five that we are solidly behind them and wish to join the Community when circumstances permit. At the least they hope to influence the way the crisis is resolved as far as possible in our interests.⁸³

Shortly after, on 10 December 1965, Stewart, in a communication to the Prime Minister that was most likely drafted by Palliser and O'Neill, recommended Wilson change the government's stance on the EEC and make a declaration as Camps had suggested. In this letter, Stewart recommended that the government

clarify, and indeed change, our present policy towards the European Community, and that we should do so by issuing in the very near future a Declaration (Annex A) of our readiness to negotiate the entry of the United Kingdom into the European Economic Community as soon as the member States of the Community are ready to enter into such a negotiation.

Stewart argued precisely, as Camps had done, that the EEC crisis had created an opportunity for the United Kingdom. He wrote: 'In my view we are faced by the need for a major decision about British

⁸⁰ Nield to O'Neill, 21 Oct. 1965, TNA, T T312/1015.

⁸¹ On Roll, see Parr, *Britain's Policy*, 58.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 59–60.

⁸³ J.G. Owen to D. Rickett, 'Europe,' 17 Nov. 1965, TNA, T312/1015 (highlighted in the original text). See also British Policy Towards Europe. Note of a Meeting held in Sir Eric Roll's room, Department of Economic Affairs, 18 Nov. 1965, T312/1015.

policy towards Europe. A turning-point, both for the Community itself and for our relations with it, may soon be upon us.⁸⁴

The memorandum attached to the letter, entitled 'The United Kingdom and the Crisis in the European Economic Community', expressed the idea that as long as the Wilson government appeared undecided, French influence in Europe 'will continue to grow and British influence to diminish'.⁸⁵ It then proposed that the government made a declaration in December or January saying that it is in principle ready to 'accept the Treaty of Rome and join the EEC'.⁸⁶ The timing of the proposed declaration was also interesting as Stewart proposed this should be launched before the resolution of the crisis, as Camps had recommended, to 'influence the outcome of the crisis by strengthening the Five and making it less likely that they would virtually capitulate to French demands'. Stewart also reiterated Camps's idea that 'a settlement of the crisis on broadly French terms would be extremely dangerous for British interests; and, second, my belief that the action I propose would make such a settlement less likely'. The 'dangers' of a French victory were also the ones Camps had painted on the wall: an inward looking 'little Europe', detached from the United States, an even more unfavourable CAP, and the spreading of French nationalism to other EEC member states, especially Germany, which would act more independently also in defence. Stewart then directly responded to Wilson's reservations about the move, namely why the United Kingdom should fear a French victory if it might lead to a less supranational Community, responding that the French 'will not let us in to their type of Community, to share and perhaps dispute their control of it'. He also argued that a breaking-up of the Community was not in the UK's interest either, arguing that the 'force of idealism behind the Community concept' was generally a good thing; if the Community died, Europe 'could easily become a more dangerous continent'. This referred to the possibility of a resurgent Germany which, unchained from the EEC, could succumb 'to dangerous temptations'.⁸⁷ Stewart's memorandum thus proposed exactly the course of action Camps had recommended, and he was using the same arguments about the threats that non-action or indeed a breaking up of the EEC would pose to the United Kingdom and Europe that Camps herself had advanced.

The Foreign Secretary was, however, not able to convince Wilson to follow this recommended course of action. Wilson had not yet made up his mind about the United Kingdom joining the EEC. His advisors in 10 Downing Street, in particular his personal advisor on economic affairs, Thomas Balogh, and his private secretary, Oliver Wright, were opposed to 'the Foreign Office view'.⁸⁸ However, Wilson agreed to forward Stewart's paper to civil servants to explore options. Wilson then tasked a group of permanent secretaries, chaired by Roll and with the participation of O'Neill, with studies on membership and the consequences of the United Kingdom joining the EEC.⁸⁹ It is likely that Wilson was not willing to follow the Foreign Office's radical proposal. For him, the case for membership at the time was less compelling and his advisors were cautioning against any rash decisions. However, Wilson's agreement to seriously look into the issue of membership shows that Camps's unofficial diplomacy around framing the empty chair crisis as a window of opportunity did have an effect on Whitehall and the government. In late January 1966, the empty chair crisis was resolved, however, and the Community returned to business as usual. The window of opportunity had closed and a more measured approach to weighing up the government's options seemed in order.

The Study Group also returned to its original purpose of medium-term planning. In January 1966, the group agreed to set up two sub-groups to study the issues that were seen as obstacles to UK membership. One group would look at agricultural policy while another group would study the issue of

⁸⁴ Michael Stewart to Harold Wilson, 10 Dec. 1965, TNA, T312/1016.

⁸⁵ The United Kingdom and the Crisis in the European Economic Community, undated [Dec. 1965], TNA, T312/1016, 1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ E.g. T. Balogh to Prime Minister, Economic Aspects of joining the Common Market. Comments on Foreign Secretary's letter to Prime Minister of 10 Dec. 1965, and Annexes, 13 Jan. 1966, TNA, PREM 13/904.

⁸⁹ Future Relations with Europe. Note of a Meeting in Sir Eric Roll's room, 26 Jan. 1966, TNA, T 312/1016; Wilson to Stewart, 2 Feb. 1966, PREM 13/905.

'political union'.⁹⁰ The sub-group on political union crucially included Palliser, until 1966 head of the Foreign Office's policy planning staff, its in-house think tank.⁹¹ In March 1966, Palliser would become Wilson's private secretary for foreign affairs, another sign that the government had reset its course towards EEC membership.⁹²

Conclusion

The Study Group on Europe at Chatham House had been set up to discuss medium and longer-term prospects of the United Kingdom's relationship with the EEC. Confronted with the empty chair crisis, however, Camps changed the group's purpose to focus on influencing immediate policy-making. In summer 1965, the UK government and civil servants in Whitehall were suddenly confronted with a new situation that Camps and others felt was in fact a window of opportunity for the United Kingdom to take a bold initiative to demonstrate its seriousness about EEC membership and regain the initiative in Europe. It was Miriam Camps who drove this agenda and who, in this instance, became an effective policy entrepreneur, able to influence 'inside' policy-making due to her central position in the foreign policy field as a nexus between civil servants in London, diplomats and Commission officials in Brussels and her foreign policy network in Washington. That this has potential implications for the democratic legitimacy of such solutions should also not be neglected.

Camps's effectiveness as a policy entrepreneur depended on several factors. Her background and expertise, firstly, lent credibility to her analyses and, secondly, was recognised by a group of key academics, civil servants and policy makers in the United Kingdom, the United States and continental Europe. She was therefore able to assemble a group of influential UK, European and US individuals for her study group. With the United Kingdom's outsider status in Europe in 1965/6, such a line-up at Chatham House would have provided foreign policy actors with the opportunity to gather first-hand information and informally discuss the government's policy options during the empty chair crisis and regarding a possible membership bid. Certainly, formal diplomatic channels were also probing these issues, but the meetings at Chatham House gathered different sets of people and arguably provided a broader range of views and, crucially, they were informal and confidential. The meetings thus provided a space for controversial discussions and blue-sky thinking, something that was usually difficult to fit into the working day of a civil servant. The timing in relation to events was a crucial factor explaining why Camps's ideas were more in demand and entered policy discussions in Whitehall in 1965/6 rather than, say, in 1964 or 1967. In 1965, the United Kingdom had a relatively new government that faced the challenge of finding a new role for the country in Europe and the world. Enough time had passed since De Gaulle's veto in early 1963 to tentatively bring UK EEC membership back onto the agenda. The unexpectedly deep and long-lasting crisis of the EEC from July 1965 to January 1966 was both a challenge and an opportunity for the UK government to reconsider its options. Camps exploited this opportunity skillfully, using a multi-pronged approach to get her ideas across, firstly using the study group discussions to disseminate her ideas, secondly, feeding her ideas directly to key 'insider' individuals such as Marjoribanks and O'Neill and, thirdly, publishing articles in the quality press to inform a wider elite audience about her proposed solutions.

The article has shown that, particularly during periods of change and uncertainty, unofficial diplomats can make a strong impact. But can Camps's case be generalised? In many ways she was an exceptional and key figure within the dense transatlantic network of the 1950s and 1960s. Kenneth Weisbrode even called her a 'female American version of [Jean] Monnet'.⁹³ But her case shows that such figures existed, hidden in plain sight, and have so far not been systematically integrated into

⁹⁰ Study Group on Europe, Notes on discussion at the seventh meeting of the group on Wednesday, 20 Oct. 1965, CHA 9/69b.

⁹¹ Kettle, 'Policy Planning Staff.'

⁹² Miriam Camps, Study Group on Political Union, Chatham House, 12 Jan. 1966, CHA, 9/69c.

⁹³ Weisbrode, *Atlantic*, 106.

historical studies of European integration. When studying the formation of foreign policy positions in national capitals, historians should thus look beyond the corridors of power in government and state bureaucracy, or indeed Brussels, and to other actors in the foreign policy field, including women.

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