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# Policy Failure and Policy Change

## British Security Policy After the Cold War

James I. Walsh
*University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

The failure of a policy to achieve its goals is often an important reason for the decision to replace it. Failure alone, however, is rarely a sufficient explanation of the timing and direction of policy change. Change follows failure when alternative policies exist that are politically viable—that is, able to garner support from powerful actors—and that can explain past failure persuasively, and offer new policy prescriptions. This article evaluates this argument through a case study of British international security policy after the end of the cold war. British decision makers' initial policy was to rely on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as the vehicle through which to organize multilateral responses to "crisis management tasks." The failure of this policy to deal successfully with the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia led British decision makers to search for and evaluate alternative policies. They concluded that the rival idea of basing more multilateral crisis management on a European rather than North Atlantic institution best explained the failures in the former Yugoslavia. This policy was not politically viable, however, leading the government to continue to rely on NATO for such missions. Only a change in government—the election of the Labor government in 1997 with a large parliamentary majority—allowed decision makers to adopt and implement this new policy.

***Keywords:*** *policy failure; policy change; policy ideas; European Security and Defense Policy*

What is the relationship between the failure of a policy and the decision to replace it? Why does significant policy change follow failure in some cases but not in others? I explore why failure does and does not prompt policy change and how failure shapes the content of subsequent policy.

Focusing on failure alone does not provide much guidance regarding the degree of change or the content of subsequent policy. Decision makers advo-

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cate significant changes in policy after failure only if two conditions are met. First, decision makers usually face an array of alternative policies but are uncertain about which will produce the results that they want. Decision makers find most persuasive alternative policies that can both explain the failure that has just occurred and offer new policy prescriptions that promise to avoid such failure in the future. The causal ideas, the links between various options and outcomes, that provide conceptual support for an alternative policy are attractive to decision makers if they offer the immediate and practical benefits of placing past failure in context and justifying a new policy. Second, decision makers prefer new policies that will maximize their political support among important constituents. They reject even persuasive explanations of past failures if they are unlikely to secure political support for the alternative's policy prescriptions. The identity and power of these constituents varies across issue areas and institutional contexts; the point made here is that an alternative policy must offer both a convincing explanation of past failure and a new way forward that is acceptable to individuals and groups whose support is important to decision makers. If either of these two conditions is missing, decision makers will allow policy to drift, making only minor and perhaps contradictory changes after failure.

The following sections elaborate this argument in greater detail and evaluate it through a case study of British international security policy after the end of the cold war. British decision makers' initial policy was to rely on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as the vehicle through which to organize multilateral responses to crisis-management tasks. The failure of this policy to deal successfully with the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia led British government leaders to search for and evaluate alternative policies. They concluded that the rival idea of basing more multilateral crisis management on the European Union rather than on NATO best explained the failures in the former Yugoslavia, which, from their perspective, suffered from a lack of common interests on the part of the United States and its European allies. This policy of creating an autonomous European capability able to engage in crisis-management tasks was not politically viable, however, leading the government to continue to rely on NATO for such missions despite the fact that this policy had been discredited by recent experience. A change in government—the election of the Labor government in 1997 with a large parliamentary majority—allowed decision makers to act on and implement this new policy. The case study documents that other plausible causes of policy change, such as the actions of other states or the discourse surrounding this issue, did not influence this decision, and the conclusion suggests how this approach to the relationships between policy failure and change could be extended in future research.

## Policy Failure and Policy Change

When does the failure of a policy lead decision makers to alter or replace it? How does policy failure influence the form and content of subsequent policy? Three streams of research address these questions.

What might be termed the "accountability" approach starts from the premise that decision makers have as their primary goal maintaining their political influence, for example, by retaining office. Policy failure exposes decision makers to public criticism and demands more effective action; failing to act on such demands may weaken decision makers' influence. This gives them strong incentives to alter policy in ways that will be more effective in the future. One strand of work in this tradition examines how some political institutions more effectively insulate decision makers from the political consequences of policy failure (Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, & Morrow, 2003). Another analyzes how institutional arrangements that diffuse authority over policy raise the bar for advocates of change, requiring them to convince many political and bureaucratic leaders of the merits of their position (Checkel, 1997). A third shows why decision makers may reject a convincing new policy proposal because they lack the institutional capacity to implement its prescriptions (Ikenberry, 1988).

The insight that decision makers must produce some level of policy success to retain office and influence is important. Decision makers should respond to failure by searching for and implementing new policies. But this does not shed much light on which alternative policy they will select. The implicit conclusion is that decision makers will select the alternative policy they believe will be most successful in the future. But this begs the question of how decision makers decide which alternative will succeed. If decision makers had perfect information about the relationship between policies and outcomes, policy failure would never occur as they would always select the most successful policy. Below, I discuss how the experience of failure itself influences decision makers' estimates of the viability of alternatives in important ways.

Research on ideas and public policy has devoted considerable attention to analyzing how failure influences subsequent policy choices. This work takes seriously the point that decision makers often face great uncertainty about the available policy options and the outcomes associated with each. Policy ideas are important because they identify alternatives, provide explanations about the expected effects of such policies, and supply political criteria for selecting among them. Policy ideas are useful to decision makers, especially those that are not expert in the policy area and whose time and resources are stretched across many issues, because they identify coherent solutions to

pressing policy problems. Policy failure is an important reason why decision makers seek out and evaluate new policy ideas. Decision makers are never certain about the true relationships between the policy options available to them and the outcomes each will produce. Implementing a policy provides concrete evidence about its effects. Negative effects undermine decision makers' confidence in their estimates of the relationship between actions and outcomes and create pressure for decision makers to consider alternative policy ideas. More specifically, it is unexpected policy failure that influences the likelihood of change. As Legro puts it, "Ideational prescriptions carry a set of social expectations of what should or should not result from group action. When expectations of what should happen are not matched by the consequences of experienced events, there is pressure for collective reflection and reassessment" (Legro, 2000, pp. 424-425). In sum, unanticipated policy failure with dramatically negative consequences provides decision makers with self-interested reasons to consider alternative ideas previously marginalized in policy debates.

There is empirical support across a wide array of issue areas that failure can prompt dramatic changes in ideas and policy. Many works on foreign policy explore this connection. Policy failure figures prominently in Jervis's psychological model of policy learning (Jervis, 1976, pp. 275-279). Levy's (1994) review of the literature of learning and foreign policy accords a key role to policy failure, often in combination with other variables, in prompting change. Checkel (1997) shows how the failure of many of the Soviet Union's foreign and domestic policies led Mikhail Gorbachev to consider seriously and then attempt to implement a wide array of alternatives grouped under the term "new thinking."[1] Reiter (1996) argues that the success or failure of a state's choice between alliance and neutrality in one period has a decisive impact on alliance policy in subsequent periods. McNamara (1998) shows how the failure of monetary and fiscal expansion in Western Europe in the 1970s to produce acceptable economic outcomes led to the diffusion of new policy ideas that supported tightening monetary policy, granting independence to national central banks, and cooperating more closely to stabilize exchange rates in the 1980s. Others working on the role of ideas in domestic policy reach similar conclusions. Hall (1993) shows that policy failure led to a fundamental rethinking of the goals and tools of macroeconomic policy in Britain during the 1970s. Heclo's influential study of the development of the welfare state in

1. Checkel (1997) also devotes significant attention to how Soviet political institutions shaped Gorbachev's access to new policy ideas and his ability to implement them. Mendelson (1993) draws similar conclusions about the role of failure, in particular the failure of the war in Afghanistan, in promoting wide-ranging policy change.

Britain and Sweden in the 20th century demonstrates that decision makers in each country responded to negative national experiences when developing new policies (Heclo, 1974, especially pp. 315-318). In his study of the diffusion of policies across polities, Rose (1993, pp. 50-76) attaches much importance to how failure in one polity leads its decision makers to investigate the policies pursued in other polities.

But this work on ideas and policy leaves two questions unanswered. First, why does failure sometimes not cause changes in policy? In some cases, policy after failure drifts in the sense that it lacks coherent intellectual links between policy tools and desired outcomes. This drift can take the form of continuing to implement failed policies or altering the selection and settings of policy tools in cosmetic or contradictory ways that do not address the sources of failure. For example, every informed observer has concluded that the U.S. health care system fails to achieve important objectives, but significant policy change in this area has proven impossible to achieve despite the fact that countless serious reform proposals have circulated for years. Second, assuming that failure leads decision makers to abandon current policy, which alternative policies will they find most attractive? Many of the empirical studies of policy failure cited earlier do not explain why decision makers are persuaded to adopt one rival policy rather than another after experiencing failure and often assume (e.g., Legro, 2000) or select cases in which only a single rival policy is considered seriously.

A third strand of work that addresses the links between policy failure and change grows out of the "garbage-can approach" to decision making (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972), which has been applied to public policy in important works by Kingdon (1995) and Zaharaides (2003). In Kingdon's influential formulation, the public policy agenda is set by the intersection of three independent "streams": the problem stream, which identifies issues where extant policy is seen as deficient; the policy stream, which identifies specific solutions to problems; and the political stream, which includes the larger political forces and coalitions operating within the polity. Issues or problems dominate the agenda when these three streams interact to form a policy window, an "opportunity for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 165). Such "policy entrepreneurs" seek openings in the political stream to call attention to failure in the problem stream and to push their preferred solutions in the policy stream.

This approach is important and influential because it acknowledges that the policy agenda is set and policy choices are made by forces beyond the control of any one political actor or set of political actors. Yet it has proved difficult to use the garbage-can approach to generate clear expectations about

decision making. It is not apparent if this is the deliberate conclusion of the theory's formulators. Some work in this tradition, particularly the early work of Cohen et al. (1972), seems intent on emphasizing the role of chance in determining how the agenda is set and decisions are made. March and Olsen (1986) themselves later described the approach as a metaphor rather than a theory that makes clear predictions about the content of the policy agenda or of policy choices. Much subsequent work, as well the influential computer simulation in Cohen et al., would seem to imply that the garbage-can model can in fact be used to generate expectations about outcomes under various conditions. But as one influential review concludes, such formulation still "lacks the rigor, discipline, and analytic power needed for genuine progress" (Bendor, Moe, & Shotts, 2001, p. 169). An additional difficulty with this approach is how it conceptualizes the role of solutions. Solutions are advocated by policy entrepreneurs, and their degree of success in advocating solutions depends on their "time, energy, reputation, money" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 179). Little attention is given to how the actual content of a solution, the concrete policy goals and tools that it identifies, makes it more or less appealing to decision makers. Instead, the influence of a solution depends solely on the political and lobbying skills of its advocates.

## Policy Failure and Change: An Integrated Explanation

The accountability, policy ideas, and policy streams approaches all shed important light on how policy failure influences subsequent policy choice. Each leaves out important parts of the story as well. In what follows, I seek to draw on the strengths of each of these arguments by integrating them into a more satisfying understanding of the relationships between policy failure and policy change. I start by defining the concept of policy failure. Policy failure occurs when the decision makers responsible for initiating the consideration of and approving new policies conclude that current policy is no longer achieving the political and program goals they prefer. Their perception of policy failure, then, is driven by their larger political objectives; they conclude that policy has failed when continuing to implement extant policy seriously interferes with their ability to reach their political aspirations. I treat these objectives as exogenous; they may include retaining political influence, as the accountability approach assumes, but also might include a genuine desire to achieve personal or programmatic policy goals. Other actors with different preferences, information, and biases may disagree with the conclusion that

policy has failed, and below, I investigate how the fact that other actors do not share this assessment influences subsequent policy change.

As emphasized in the work on policy ideas, unexpected policy failure undermines decision makers' belief in the utility of extant policy. The size or magnitude of a policy failure should create greater pressures for change. Enormous, unexpected, and politically visible policy failures, such as a severe economic depression, hyperinflation, or loss of a war, make any alternative policy look attractive.[2] But, alone, failure does not provide a clear guide to which alternative policies will be more successful in the future. Rival policies' intellectual contents are an important source of their influence. Decision makers find them more plausible and useful guides to action if they both persuasively explain why failure occurred in the past and draw on this explanation to provide new prescriptions for more successful policy in the future. As an example, consider the rise of "monetarist" policy ideas in British politics in the 1970s. Monetarist policy prescriptions had circulated among professional economists for many years. But it was only in the context of the high inflation, unemployment, and slow economic growth of the 1970s that they gained any real political influence. Decision makers were attracted to particular monetarist prescriptions, such as instituting strict rules for the rate of growth of the money supply, because they provided both a coherent explanation for the failure of contemporary policy and a guide to policies that would be successful in reversing these failures.[3] As the policy streams literature emphasizes, unexpected policy failure also provides advocates of rival policies inside and outside of the government the opportunity to develop their explanations and prescriptions and to present them to decision makers. Decision makers, in turn, are more receptive to evaluating new policies that might mitigate their now-heightened uncertainty about the relationships between policy tools and outcomes and that provide coherent and comprehensive packages of policy changes that can be explained to bureaucratic and public audiences.

In other words, alternative policies identify not simply the actions that a government should take but also the reasons they should take such actions in the context of past failure. The ideational component of a policy—the causal connections it draws between various policy actions and outcomes—is an important source of its influence vis-à-vis other alternatives because it reduces uncertainty in the minds of decision makers about the range of options available to them and the consequences that would result from the

2. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for emphasizing this point.

3. See the discussion in Hall (1993, p. 277). Hall is one of the few analysts of policy ideas that draws attention to how the content of the idea itself shapes its political salience.

implementation of these options. This ideational component of a policy serves as a "road map" that "limits choice because it logically excludes other interpretations of reality or at least suggests that such interpretations are not worthy of sustained exploration" (Goldstein & Keohane, 1993, pp. 11-12). The most persuasive policy proposals define and prioritize the immediate policy problems that decision makers face, posit causal relationships between policy tools and outcomes, and provide concrete prescriptions for how decision makers can translate their general desire to maximize utility into specific goals and actions (Halpern, 1993; Odell, 1982, pp. 62-63).

Note that this differs from the claim that it is difficult or impossible for decision makers to imagine alternative policies. Such alternatives are almost always available. Government departments, independent agencies, research institutes, political parties, interest groups, universities, international organizations, and political leaders themselves are in the business of creating, evaluating, and lobbying for alternative policies. Kingdon (1995, pp. 116-117) makes this point nicely:

> Much as molecules float around in what biologists call the "primeval soup" before life came into being, so ideas float around in these [policy] communities. . . . While many ideas float around in this policy primeval soup, the ones that last, as in a natural selection system, meet some criteria. Some ideas survive and prosper; some proposals are taken more seriously than others.

This variety of alternatives presents a real problem to decision makers; how are they to determine which should "survive and prosper," given their limited time and expertise? What makes one of many alternatives more plausible and persuasive to such decision makers? My argument is that the ability to explain past failure is the principle criterion of what Kingdon (1995) calls the "selection system" for alternative policy proposals. Busy decision makers want to avoid repeating the mistakes of the immediate past. They are thus most attracted to alternative policies that if implemented, promise this. Consider again the British experience of reorienting economic policy in the 1970s (see especially Hall, 1993). Once they concluded that the status quo policy had failed, officials in the governing Labour Party and opposition Conservative Party were confronted with a dizzying array of alternative macroeconomic policies. These included granting independence to the central bank, participating in a European exchange-rate system, strict rules for minimizing budget deficits, coordinating wage demands and increases with employers and unions, and the monetarist option that the Labour Party began implementing and the Conservatives dramatically reinforced on taking office in 1979. What made monetarism more attractive than the alternatives? The crucial ingredient

seems to have been that monetarism offered a coherent explanation of the economic problems of time. All of the other alternatives had either been tried in the recent past and failed (such as fixing the exchange rate or wage concertation) or offered only theoretical promises of improved policy without directly addressing recent sources of failure (such as central-bank independence).

The ability of an alternative policy to explain past failure does not alone explain why it might be attractive. The political viability of an alternative is also important to decision makers. They may lack sufficient political support from powerful constituents such as swing voters, coalition partners, or interest groups to implement the policy proposal that they conclude best explains past failure and offers new prescriptions. As the accountability and policy streams approaches emphasize, these constituents may block implementation because of ideological opposition to proposed policy changes, because they wish to weaken decision makers' hold on power, or because they fear they will bear a disproportionate share of the costs of the new policy. Decision makers are thus attracted to new policies whose analytical underpinnings and policy prescriptions can be "packaged" as consistent with constituents' ideological and policy preferences (Campbell, 1998; Hansen & King, 2001). Based on this point, we can expect decision makers to select the rival policy that promises, compared with the status quo, not to decrease net support from important constituents. The identity of such constituents varies a great deal depending on the policy issue and institutional context. Some issues, such as macroeconomic policy or foreign policy, may be salient to large constituency groups such as political parties or labor unions. Others, such as issues of regulatory politics, may attract the support or opposition of narrower associations such as interest groups, individual firms or business groups, or interested legislators or government agencies. As the works by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) and by Checkel (1997) have demonstrated, the nature of political institutions can insulate or expose decision makers to new policy ideas or punishments for past failures. In the case study that follows, I specify the identity of the relevant constituents and how the institutional context influences the authority of decision makers.

Figure 1 summarizes this understanding of the relationship between policy failure and change as a two-stage process. In the first stage, policy failure reduces decision makers' confidence in current policy and leads them to search for alternatives. They select a new policy that best explains failure and offers prescriptions that promise successful policies in the future. If no such policies exist, subsequent policy drifts in the sense that it lacks coherent intellectual links between policy tools and desired outcomes. This drift can take the form of continuing to implement failed policies or of altering the selec-

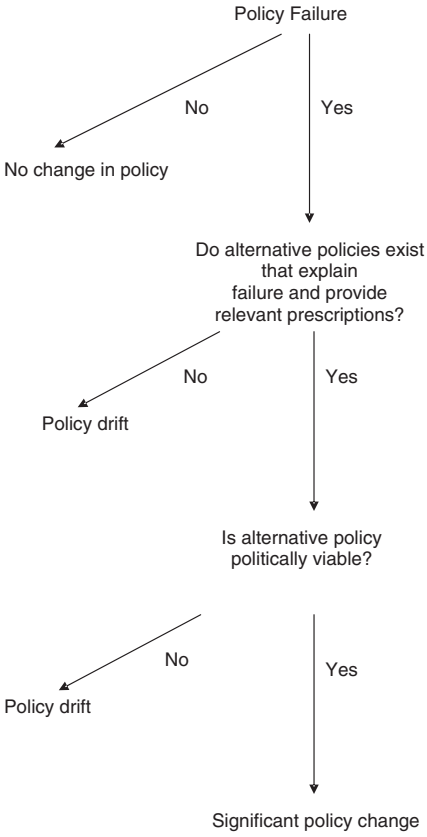
tion and settings of policy tools in minor or contradictory ways. Decision makers also evaluate the political viability of their preferred policy's prescriptions. Low levels of political support or a lack of authority over relevant policy tools renders the idea politically unviable, hinders successful implementation, and causes policy drift. Absent these constraints, decision makers move to implement the new policy. In real cases, this distinction between the adoption of new policies and the decision to implement their prescriptions is likely to prove artificial, because decision makers will evaluate the plausibility and political practicality of such policies simultaneously. But the analytic distinction between these stages is important because it highlights how policy failure might not lead to significant policy changes through two different causal mechanisms—either because decision makers cannot locate plausible new policies or because these policies' prescriptions are politically unrealistic.

This explanation of the relationship between policy failure and change addresses the weaknesses of the accountability, policy ideas, and policy streams literatures identified earlier. It builds on the accountability argument that decision makers select new policies supported by powerful constituents. But it also acknowledges that decision makers face uncertainty about the range and consequences of the policy options available to them, which hinders their ability to choose the policy that will best secure their political position. The accountability, policy ideas, and policy streams literatures have difficulty explaining how decision makers deal with this uncertainty. Each explains how policy failure creates pressure for change, but none provides a convincing explanation of how failure influences the content of the policy they will select. I argue that decision makers prefer new policies that provide a convincing and consistent explanation of past failure as well as a coherent package of policy prescriptions that will avoid failure in the future. And in contrast to the policy ideas literature, the explanation put forward here shows how policy failure might not lead to the adoption of a wholly new policy. Failure does not always produce change; instead, its effects are mediated by the interests of important constituents and alternative policies' accounts of past failures, and either of these can block the adoption of a new policy.

## British Security Policy after the Cold War

This section evaluates the plausibility of these arguments through a case study of British security policy after the cold war. The focus is on how policy failure interacts with alternative policies' prescriptive power and political viability regarding crisis-management tasks—the coordination, threat, and use of military force to resolve conflicts overseas. The case study evaluates this

**Figure 1**
**Policy Failure and Policy Change**




argument through controlled comparisons and process tracing (for a good review of these research designs, see van Evera, 1997, pp. 64-89). There are controlled comparisons between three episodes within the case: the initial policy adopted by the Conservative government led by Prime Minister John Major about how best to handle crisis-management tasks, the Major government's response after this policy failed in the war in Bosnia, and the actions of the Labor government under Prime Minister Tony Blair elected in 1997. Comparing the first two episodes indicates that the failure of British and allied governments to manage successfully the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia led decision makers to search for a new policy that would not repeat this outcome, whereas comparing the second and third episodes demon-

strates that a change in the government's political situation allowed the Blair government to adopt the rival policy that its predecessor had lacked the support to implement. The second method is process tracing the private speech and acts of decision makers. This evidence, which is based on public sources and confidential interviews with senior decision makers, is consistent with the ideas that the failure in the former Yugoslavia of the government's initial policy for crisis management motivated the search for new policies, that the existence of a persuasive alternative policy attracted the attention of decision makers, and that the adoption of this idea was influenced in important ways by the government's estimates of its political viability.

## Initial Policy

During the cold war, British defense and security policies were geared primarily toward fulfilling the country's role in NATO. The end of the cold war and the threat from the Soviet Union led many to question to future viability and usefulness of the alliance, but the Major government retained the policy that held that NATO should remain the principal vehicle for providing security in Europe. NATO had clear advantages over possible alternatives, such as the European Union or Western European Union. The Atlantic alliance had an established track record of successfully coordinating its members' security policies during the cold war. NATO alone involved an American commitment to maintain stability in Europe, and Britain enjoyed considerable influence with the United States through the alliance. In contrast, neither the Western European Union nor the European Union had any real experience in coordinating security and military policies, and strengthening these institutions might alienate the United States and lead it to reconsider its role in maintaining European security (Rees, 1996). The Major government was a strong advocate of the revised NATO strategic doctrine issued in November 1991 that identified new goals for NATO, including limiting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, counterterrorism, and improving the alliance's ability to engage in crisis management.

The primacy that British decision makers attached to NATO led them to resist attempts to grant other institutions, such as the European Union or Western European Union, significant security-policy responsibilities. Because of demands by Britain and a few other member states, the Maastricht treaty, negotiated in 1990 and 1991, merely stated that the member states of the European Union were "resolved to implement a common foreign and security policy including the eventual framing of a common defense policy, which might in time lead to a common defense." The Western European Union was meant to fulfill this modest role in defense. The Major government preferred that the

Western European Union serve as the locus for a European caucus precisely because of its lack of independence from NATO and because its strictly intergovernmental character meant that the British would be able to block proposals with which they disagreed (Forster, 1994, p. 15). In 1992, the member states assigned the Western European Union the role of fulfilling the "Petersberg tasks" such as humanitarian and rescue missions, peacekeeping, and crisis management. But this proved to have little practical effect because the Western European Union did not have the capacity to organize or command military forces, as well as because, at roughly the same time, NATO agreed that the alliance would take responsibility for very similar missions (Duke, 2000, p. 241).

## Policy Failure

The alliance's experience in the former Yugoslavia, particularly in the conflict in Bosnia until 1995, undermined British decision makers' belief that relying on NATO alone was the best way to deal with crisis-management tasks on a multilateral basis. From their perspective, the key failing of the alliance was the divergent interests of the United States and the European members. This divergence manifested itself in two ways in the early 1990s. First, the United States was more reluctant than Britain and other European states to consider using diplomatic pressure and military force to resolve the conflict. The Bush administration did not regard the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1990 and 1991 as a key security threat and did not engage in active attempts to resolve the conflicts among Yugoslavia's constituent republics (Gow, 1997, p. 27). The United States opposed an active role for the alliance and preferred that European countries take the lead in dealing with the crisis. Until 1995, the Bush and Clinton administrations refused to consider using American ground troops in large numbers either as peacekeepers or as an intervention force that would settle the conflict in Bosnia, whereas Britain, France, and other European states contributed thousands of peacekeepers to the region under UN auspices.

Second, on those occasions when the United States did use its diplomatic and military leverage, it advocated steps that Britain and other European states saw as dangerous for their interests. European attempts to mediate the conflict drew the criticism of the United States. The United States offered little support for the Vance-Owen peace plan negotiated in 1993, criticizing it as giving in to Serb aggression and accepting partition of Bosnia along ethnic lines (Gow, 1997, pp. 243-245). American advocacy of a policy of "lift and strike"—which would have lifted the arms embargo on the Bosnians and implemented NATO air strikes against Serb targets—also disturbed the

European allies, who feared that such steps would endanger their peacekeeping forces (Daalder, 2000, pp. 7, 13-19, 31-33).

These conflicting preferences led to a deep crisis in the alliance. William Hopkinson, who served as assistant under secretary of state for policy in the Ministry of Defense from 1993 to 1997, would later conclude that "for a long time [during the conflict in Bosnia], the US showed great unwillingness to become directly involved militarily, and certainly on the ground. Nevertheless it constantly pursued its own agenda politically, effectively frustrating the Vance-Owen proposals" (Hopkinson, 2000). These conflicts were resolved in 1995, when the United States committed itself to using significant military power, including large numbers of ground troops, alongside its allies, to persuade the parties to negotiate a peace agreement and then to enforce this agreement. But this change in American policy came only after the European countries threatened the United States that they would withdraw their peacekeeping troops from the region, a move which American decision makers feared would fatally undermine the alliance (Daalder, 2000).

The outcome of the conflict in Bosnia led senior British politicians and civil servants to conclude that the policy of relying on NATO had failed. But, for reasons explored below, they were unable to construct a viable alternative. This contradiction created an enormous sense of failure and frustration among decision makers. Politicians involved in the decision making who later produced public accounts, such as Major (2000) and Hurd (2004), were somewhat circumspect in expressing this in print. Subsequent testimony by and interviews with senior civil servants in the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defense indicate that this sense of failure was widespread in policy-making circles. All of these individuals tried to act on their conclusion that policy had failed by considering alternatives and constructing better policies for the future.

## The Search for A New Policy

The interalliance discord revealed by the experience in Bosnia undermined British decision makers' belief that NATO was the appropriate tool for multilateral conflict management. After the conclusion of the Dayton agreement, senior Foreign Office and Defense Ministry officials investigated, with the permission of Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, how Britain and other interested countries could develop alternative multilateral security institutions that would avoid such problems in the future. They soon concluded that the best way forward was the creation of formal arrangements within the European Union that would allow it to engage in crisis management without the participation of the United States. These British officials proposed the development

of a standing European military command structure that would take directions from the European Council of heads of state and government to undertake Petersberg tasks. The alliance would retain its existing role in crisis management, and if members agreed to intervene collectively in a crisis area, NATO would coordinate their actions. But if such agreement was not forthcoming, the European countries now would have the capacity to intervene on their own. Policy development along these lines thus would address the major problem that the Bosnia crisis exposed—the possibility that the United States and major European states might have different preferences regarding any steps that the NATO alliance should take.[4]

NATO's failure in Bosnia not only motivated the search for a new policy but also influenced which ideas decision makers found persuasive. Decision makers considered a number of alternative policy ideas but concluded that developing an EU capacity was the solution that was most likely to avoid the problems that NATO had encountered in Bosnia. From the British perspective, rooting autonomous structures for political control and military command within the European Union now had a number of advantages over other alternatives considered by political leaders and officials. Further strengthening the Western European Union in principle would have created an autonomous capacity for European action. But unlike the European Union, the Western European Union

> had never engaged the personal attention of heads of government, nor had it commanded a sense among that its shortcomings and disappointments were their own. . . . By contrast, the European Union, while itself by no means free of bureaucratic impediments and unflattering public perceptions, was seen by governments as the biggest game in town, and one to which heads of government regularly committed their time and their credit.[5]

The Western European Union still lacked effective mechanisms necessary for crisis management, such as a clear command structure and intelligence capabilities. Although the European Union also lacked such capabilities, it would not be much more difficult to develop them in either organization.

Another alternative decision makers considered was the further development of NATO's combined joint task force (CJTF) concept. CJTFs would consist of command structures within NATO that could be temporarily placed under the control of the Western European Union but that utilize

4. Interviews with former senior Foreign Office and Defense Ministry officials, London, June 2002.

5. Quinlan (2002, p. 31-32) and interview with former Defense Ministry official, London, June 2002.

NATO assets and draw on the assets of nonparticipating members with their permission. This would allow the Western European Union to draw on American air and sea transport, communications networks, and intelligence without directly involving American military personnel in large numbers. The modalities of CJTF were still being negotiated within the alliance in the mid-1990s, and British officials feared that even if such structures were developed on paper, in practice they would lead to many of the problems that the alliance had encountered in Bosnia. Relying on CJTFs and NATO assets would still give the United States significant power to block actions with which it disagreed. Furthermore, focusing on the development of the CJTF concept likely would have made it difficult to secure the active participation of France, which remained outside the alliance's integrated military command (Quinlan, 2002, p. 39). The slow pace of the negotiations within the alliance over the creation of CJTFs also led many officials to conclude that the concept was unlikely to work in practice; one senior Defense Ministry official described the idea as "hot air" and "wind and rhetoric" and held that it "failed to produce anything."[6]

Rooting a crisis-management capability in the European Union had three significant advantages over the status quo of relying on NATO, modifying NATO through the adoption of CJTFs, and strengthening the Western European Union. First, politicians and officials had close knowledge of how, and how well, the European Union worked to coordinate national policies in other areas. The European Union was much more of a known quantity than a reformed Western European Union, which lacked experience with reaching important decisions or attracting the attention of important political leaders (Graham & Parker, 1998). British officials understood how to negotiate in the European Union and that their voices would carry weight on security issues because Britain's capabilities to deploy force overseas was far more advanced than all of the other members except France (Quinlan, 2002). Second, the British knew from experience that they could design any European capability in military and security policy in ways that would not infringe much on the member states' sovereignty and autonomy. In other issue areas, such as common foreign and security policies and justice and home affairs, most of the member states had agreed to preserve a significant degree of autonomy for the member states and opposed, for example, taking decisions by qualified majority vote or with much involvement by the European Parliament and European Court of Justice (Wagner, 2003). Third, and in their eyes most important, the United States was not a member of the European Union. Developing a European Union capability for crisis management would thus allow the Europeans

6. Interview, London, June 2002.

to act collectively when the United States did not wish to participate, while still preserving the option of transatlantic cooperation through NATO when the Europeans and the United States had similar interests in a crisis. Developing a European alternative to NATO, especially one that could be directly tied into the European Union's existing policies related to crisis management, such as the provision of humanitarian and foreign aid and the imposition of economic sanctions (Smith, 2003), would give the British a new alternative for cases when their interests in a crisis were not aligned with those of the United States.[7]

## Political Viability

Before analyzing the political viability of these alternatives in detail, it is important to specify the relevant decision makers and interested constituents. In Britain's highly centralized political system, major decisions about foreign and defense policies are made by the prime minister with input from departmental ministers and senior civil servants. Few interest groups and other constituency groups take a direct interest or lobby the government on broad issues of foreign policy, such as the design or participation in European security structures, although some such groups—such as defense contractors, human rights groups, or associations of former military personnel—do try to influence specific foreign and defense policy decisions such as spending on weapons systems, support for military intervention overseas, and the size and structure of the armed forces. The key constituencies outside of the executive branch on general questions of foreign policy, especially Britain's role in European security institutions, are the political parties and members of parliament. Both major parties have been divided internally on questions of European integration since the 1940s, and the leaders of each have had to carefully cultivate support for European initiatives (Forster, 2002).

How did these decision makers and constituents react to the policy alternatives circulating after the failure of NATO policy to prevent the Bosnian war? Whereas Foreign Secretary Hurd allowed officials to move forward with this work and to discuss it with other European governments, Defense Secretary Malcolm Rifkind vetoed the proposal for a European Union crisis-management capability. At a ministerial meeting with Hurd and officials, he read out a statement that Major made in 1993 during the ratification of the Maastricht treaty holding that Britain would never agree to the development of a European Union role in defense. Despite the proposal's explicit focus on

7. Emphasized in interviews with former senior Foreign Office civil servant and Defense Ministry officials, London, June 2002.

reinforcing rather than replacing NATO and its minimal role for formal union decision-making structures, Rifkind's opposition led ministers and officials to drop the proposal despite widespread support for it in policy-making circles.[8]

Many in the government thought that a stronger European Union role would go a long way toward solving the problems with NATO that the Bosnia conflict revealed, but the government's domestic political position constrained its room for maneuver. The Major government began its term of office with a parliamentary majority of only 21 seats and a Conservative Party that was divided in the questions of Britain's role in Europe and of Major's ability to win the next election. On the first issue, a small number of "euro-skeptic" Conservative members of parliament repeatedly defied the Party leadership and voted against bills they saw as transferring British sovereignty to the European Union. On the second issue, the Major government feared that its inability to deal with the euro-skeptics might lead other Conservative members of parliament to withdraw their support for his leadership. This political position made it difficult for the Major government to pass legislation such as the Maastricht treaty—approved only on a vote of confidence in 1993—as well as to negotiate with other European states.

These political constraints left the government with a policy—relying solely on NATO for multilateral crisis-management tasks—that it no longer believed to be effective. All that the government could do was to agree to some minor and technical changes to the existing role of the European Union and Western European Union. Thus the Major government supported the creation of CJTFs in NATO. But it also realized that the CJTF concept was unlikely to work without stronger American backing and the development of solely European political decision-making capacities. During the negotiation of the Amsterdam treaty of the European Union—which was conducted by both the Major government and the Blair government elected in 1997—the British again resisted granting the European Union additional authority over defense and blocked the proposed merger of the European Union and Western European Union, but they did agree that the European Union could assume responsibility for Petersberg tasks and to the further evolution of the Western European Union so that it would be able to organize for small-scale operations without the participation of the United States (see Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1995, 1996).

The public statements of members of the Labor government elected in May 1997 on the question of European defense sounded remarkably similar to those of the preceding Major government. Labor's 1997 general election man-

8. Interviews with former Foreign Office and Defense Ministry officials, London, June 2002.

ifesto held that "our security will continue to be based on NATO" and mentioned the Western European Union only in passing; the section dealing with a possible EU role in security noted only that if elected, Labor would press for the "retention of the national veto over key matters of national interest, such as . . . defence and security." Prior to the 1997 general election, David Clark, a senior party member, held that Labor would oppose attempts to give the European Union a defense component (*Defense News*, 1997, p. 21). The new government adopted essentially the same position as its predecessor at the final negotiations of the European Union's Treaty of Amsterdam, 1 month after the election. After the Amsterdam summit, Prime Minister Tony Blair announced to the House of Commons that

> Getting Europe's voice heard more clearly in the world will not be achieved through merging the European Union and the Western European Union or developing an unrealistic Common Defence Policy. We therefore resisted unacceptable proposals from others. Instead, we argued for—and won—the explicit recognition, written into the treaty for the first time, that NATO is the foundation of our and other allies' common defence. (House of Commons, 1997)

Within a year, the government would reverse its position and become a powerful advocate of giving the European Union the ability to organize and command the use of military force for crisis-management tasks. Two factors drove this change in the government's policy ideas on this issue. The first was the developing conflict in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo. The Kosovo conflict motivated ministers to review Britain's security policies and to learn about the failure of NATO in earlier conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. The second reason was the government's domestic political position. Unlike the Major government, Labour had a large and pliant parliamentary majority, which gave it greater power to implement a new security policy.

During early 1998, the government launched a wide-ranging review of Britain's position in the European Union, soliciting ideas and position papers from inside and outside government departments. A number of these contributions repeated earlier calls within the bureaucracy for giving the European Union a stronger role in crisis management. Robert Cooper, a Foreign Office diplomat, circulated in May 1998 a memorandum suggesting the development of "a European capacity to act independently in the defence field" (Cooper, 1998). Richard Hatfield, then the policy director at the Ministry of Defense, submitted similar ideas (see his testimony in House of Commons, 2000, p. 4). Also in the summer of 1998, Charles Grant, director of the Centre for European Reform, published his widely discussed pamphlet *Can Britain*

*Lead in Europe?*, which argued that Britain could play an important role in leading the European Union in the security field. This debate exposed Labour ministers, who before taking office had not given sustained attention to this question, to expert analyses of the performance of NATO in the conflicts in Bosnia and to arguments about possible alternatives.

Such arguments were salient because of the crisis developing in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo in late 1998. Policy failure in the Kosovo conflict did not directly drive the change in British policy, but it did bring the issue of security management to the attention of senior decision makers and led them to review the earlier experience in Bosnia more closely. Armed conflict between the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army and the Serb police and military units led to massacres by Serb forces and created hundreds of thousands of refugees. The conflict in Kosovo soon revealed many of the same problems of interallied relations that had occurred in earlier conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. British ministers and officials (along with their counterparts in some other EU countries) worked from early on to place the issue on the international agenda, for example, ensuring that the Contact Group—the informal steering group that coordinated the policies of France, Italy, Germany, Russia, Britain, and the United States—discussed it as early as 1997, in the hope that early action by the United States and its allies could prevent the conflict from escalating. American officials were more reluctant to take active steps to deal with Kosovo at this early stage. This difference placed Britain in a difficult position because the European members of NATO lacked the capability to intervene in the conflict without the active support of the United States (Clark, 2001).

As early as August 1998, the British government concluded that resolving the conflict likely would require the threat or use of ground forces either to force the Serbs out or to enforce a peace settlement, and it decided it was willing to contribute large numbers of troops to such an operation. But the United States was unwilling to consider or discuss deployment of ground troops. This put the British and other European countries in the position of having to follow the American strategy of seeking a negotiated solution and, if that tack failed, to rely solely on air strikes to coerce the Serbs (Daalder & O'Hanlon, 2000, pp. 54-56, 96). Some NATO members (but not the United States) deployed ground forces to Macedonia in late 1998 as part of an "extraction force," which could have served as the nucleus of any invasion or peacekeeping force for Kosovo. They also made public their willingness to participate in the peacekeeping operation before the United States did so and, in February 1999, decided to "predeploy" a total of 12,000 troops for movement into Kosovo (Daalder & O'Hanlon, 2000, pp. 73-74, 98; Judah, 2000, pp. 186-187).

The crisis in Kosovo drew ministers' attention in 1997 and 1998, exposed them to existing critiques inside and outside of the bureaucracy of NATO performance in the Bosnia conflict, and drove them to conclude that a more autonomous European capacity to engage in crisis management would be the best way to prevent a repeat of the interallied conflicts over Bosnia. In other words, by 1998, the Blair government had reached conclusions similar to those that some Conservative ministers and many officials drew after the conflict in Bosnia. The key difference was that unlike his predecessor, Blair had a very large parliamentary majority of 179 seats in the House of Commons. This made it difficult for Labour members of parliament that may have opposed giving the European Union a stronger defense to organize a large enough group of dissidents to seriously challenge the government's position. Thus Blair, unlike Major, did not need to worry about the government's parliamentary majority once he concluded that the European Union should take on a more significant role in crisis management.

The real change in policy came in November 1998 at the bilateral summit between Blair and French President Jacques Chirac in St. Malo. The two leaders issued a joint declaration on European defense, which stated that "the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises." They emphasized that the purpose of such a development would be to allow the European states to act "where the Alliance as a whole is not engaged," thereby reiterating the importance of NATO. But the envisioned changes to the European Union's responsibilities would be substantial, including the development of "appropriate structures and a capacity for analysis of situations, sources of intelligence, and a capability for relevant strategic planning. . . . The European Union will also need to have recourse to suitable military means (European capabilities pre-designated within NATO's European pillar or national or multinational European means outside the NATO framework)."

The next 3 years would largely be devoted to securing agreement to this framework from the Americans and other European states and to developing new security institutions and capabilities within the European Union. At the NATO summit in Washington the following April, the alliance agreed to lend its assets "for use in European Union–led operations." At the Cologne European Council Summit in June 1999, the member states adopted the major proposal outlined at St. Malo that the European Union develop a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) that would allow it to use military force autonomously of NATO, to terminate the Western European Union and absorb its political functions into the European Union, and to establish a

Political and Security Committee to oversee military operations, a Military Committee to provide advice, and military staff. A bilateral meeting between Blair and Chirac in London in November proposed that the European Union develop a rapid reaction corps, and 1 month later, the European Council meeting in Helsinki agreed that this would by implemented by 2003 and consist of a force of 50,000 to 60,000 personnel capable of performing Petersberg tasks that could be deployed within 60 days for up to 1 year.

The member states moved quickly to establish a stronger European Union role on crisis management after the Blair government's change in position on this issue. Subsequent events, such as the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States and the American decision to invade Iraq, led many to question the continued viability of this policy. In particular, the Blair government's decision to support with its own military forces the American invasion of Iraq, a move which France and Germany strongly opposed, was widely seen as a dramatic failure for the European Union's ambition to develop common security and defense policies. The European Union's role in international security has been described as a failure both because the tasks for which it was designed are much less relevant in a world where terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are seen as the key threats and because the divisions over the American policy on Iraq demonstrated that its underlying assumption that the major member states would define threats to their security in similar ways was incorrect.

Yet the Blair government has continued to support the development of a European Union role in international security along the lines of the St. Malo accord and, since 2001, has agreed to a number of important steps in this area. These include a police mission in Bosnia; small peacekeeping missions in Macedonia and the Congo; the adoption of new union policies on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and the Mideast peace process; and more-detailed agreements on commitment of national forces to the Rapid Reaction Force (Howarth, in press).

How can we explain this combination of the widely perceived failure of ESPD with the British government's continued support? Answers to this question must be tentative, but one starting point might be to question the conclusion that the transatlantic and intra-European conflict over Iraq represented a failure for the policy of supporting the development of a union role in international security. ESDP was not designed for something like the preemptive invasion of a state outside of the European periphery; instead, it was intended for more modest conflict-management tasks in nearby areas. The fact that ESDP has not failed directly at a task for which it was designed creates little pressure for the Blair government to abandon its support of this development.

The increased priority that the government attached to counterterrorism, stopping the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and forging closer relations with the United States on these issues does mean that developing the European Union's role in international security ranks as less of a priority for the government but is still seen as a useful policy for the problems it was designed to solve.

## Alternative Explanations

This section briefly considers the explanatory power of three alternative understandings of the sources of policy change. The purpose is to document that although these explanations are important and useful in other empirical contexts, they do not adequately explain the decisions analyzed here. This heightens the confidence in the conclusion that these decisions were motivated and shaped by policy failure, the existence of a persuasive alternative policy, and the political viability of this policy.

### Turnover

A straightforward explanation of Britain's policy shift in 1998 is that the new government elected the previous year had defense policy preferences that differed from those of its Conservative predecessor. Mathiopoulos and Gyarmati (1999, p. 66), for example, conclude that "the New Labour government in Britain . . . brought with it a corresponding transformation in British attitudes toward Europe—London . . . adopted a more constructive role toward Europe than its predecessors." But this explanation is not well supported by the timing of the government's shift. There is no evidence that Labour preferred to strengthen the European Union's security role prior to Blair's comments at the Pörtschach Summit of the European Council in October and the St. Malo declaration in December 1998. As discussed earlier, the Labor Party supported the Major government's pro-NATO position during the 1990s and defended this position when it assumed responsibilities for finalizing the negotiation of the Amsterdam treaty shortly after taking office.

### Costs of Exclusion

An alternative explanation holds that although Labour did not come to office with the idea of strengthening European security institutions, the actions of other member states convinced the government that such a step was its best available option. In particular, some have argued that the Blair

government worried that its decision not to participate in monetary union would rob it of influence within the European Union. Such a development would not be unprecedented in the history of European integration. Many conclude that Britain favored a looser arrangement to govern trade in the 1960s than the European Economic Community but felt compelled to seek membership once the community had been created, because exclusion was more costly than membership. Moravcsik (1998, pp. 351-352, 364) and Garrett (1992) detail how Britain came to support the extension of qualified majority voting in the Single European Act in part because the French, Germans, and others threatened to move ahead without British participation. The most plausible explanation of this sort is that the government shifted to support a European Union role in crisis management because of concerns about the costs of exclusion from monetary union. By the time that Labour came to office in 1997, it was clear that the other member states were determined to introduce the euro 2 years later. Labour was unwilling to participate in this project for a variety of reasons but feared that a monetary union without it might dilute British influence in the European Union and on the wider international stage. British support for a stronger union role in international security—a development that had long been supported by Germany and especially by France—would counteract its loss of influence. This link between (self-imposed) exclusion from monetary union is widely posited (Rodman, 1999; van Ham, 2000, p. 216).

There is circumstantial evidence that the Blair government moved on European defense because of its fears about exclusion from other areas of European Union policy. The timing of the government's initiative in fall 1998 came just months before the introduction of the euro. Defense was a logical policy area for a British initiative because it would fulfill a long-standing French demand for movement in this area (thus perhaps making the French more willing to compromise with British demands in other areas) and because Britain's substantial military forces guaranteed it would play a leading role in the development of a European Union role in crisis management. British decision makers did worry that cooperation among the member states participating in the euro could undermine the British influence. During 1996 and 1997, for example, the British opposed the development of a "Euro Council" consisting of finance ministers from only countries adopting the single currency.

Balanced against this, however, are a number of points. First, the link between the timing of the Blair government's initiative and the introduction of the euro is less clear than it might seem at first sight, because most of the issues that concerned the British, such as the powers of the Euro Council, already had been settled. Furthermore, the British government did not seek specific concessions on other issues in return for its new defense policies. One might

argue that this was an attempt to develop influence and goodwill among member states that would be useful in securing future concessions, but this seems a highly uncertain strategy that would have to be balanced against the possibility of alienating the United States. Furthermore, at least in public, British officials did not justify their new defense orientation primarily in terms of asserting British influence within the European Union.

## Persuasion

If others did not force the British to take the initiative on defense, perhaps they persuaded them to do so. Recent work on international politics and European integration claims that governments do not always have well-defined preferences over policy choices or even the outcomes to be achieved by such choices and, under some conditions, can be convinced to change their ideas about foreign policy. Such attempts at persuasion can be defined as "a social process of interaction that involves changing attitudes about cause and effect" (Checkel, 2001, p. 220). Persuasion is most likely to be effective when the target holds weak prior beliefs and faces a novel situation and the persuader holds authoritative knowledge and makes reasoned arguments in a private setting (Checkel, 2001, p. 222; see also Risse, 2000). This sort of explanation of policy change is similar to the one advanced in this article in the sense that it may lead to an alteration in the target's policy ideas but for reasons that may have little to do with policy failure.

Some member states, notably, France and Germany, as well as the European Commission, favored a stronger union role in security policy throughout the 1990s. Britain's relatively powerful military forces and important role in NATO, however, meant that they had few material resources with which to pressure the British. Instead, we can understand much of their activity as attempts to persuade the British that a stronger European Union role was in the country's long-term interest. Furthermore, most of the conditions for successful persuasion existed: British governments faced novel situations with the end of the cold war and the wars in the former Yugoslavia, and those attempting to persuade the British government had at least as much authoritative information, made arguments that such a move was in Britain's interests, and had the opportunity to make these arguments in countless formal and informal settings out of the public limelight. But a focus on persuasion does not explain the timing of the shift in British policy. Many other influential and knowledgeable European actors consistently attempted to persuade the British to alter their position, and it is unclear why persuasion would have been ineffective after NATO's unsatisfactory response to the war in Bosnia but effective a few years later.

## Conclusions And Implications

This article addresses a simple but important question: When does policy failure lead to significant changes in subsequent policy? The answer in the existing literature is insufficient because it focuses on past policy failures to explain the adoption of a new policy. Although studies have documented cases in which failure causes changes in subsequent policy, we lack a complete understanding of the conditions under which failure does—and does not—lead to such changes. This article develops more fully a number of points that have remained implicit or unconnected in the literature on this question. Existing studies have usefully concluded that decision makers act in the face of uncertainty. They are uncertain about the true relationships between policy tools and outcomes. Policy failure reduces their faith in the dominant policy idea and leads them to search for alternatives. I extend this point, arguing that significant policy change is most likely to occur when two additional conditions are present—the existence of an alternative policy that explains and offers remedies for past failures and that is politically viable in the sense that it can secure the support of powerful constituents.

The empirical evidence presented in the case study supports these contentions. The policy idea informing the Major government's policy on crisis management after the cold war emphasized the importance and value of working through the NATO alliance. The failure of NATO to live up to the expectations of this policy idea led decision makers to consider alternatives. They were quickly attracted to the idea of a European military structure autonomous from NATO. This rival policy idea was more plausible than other ideas circulating among decision makers because it most convincingly explained the failure of earlier policy and offered policy prescriptions that could avoid many of the problems the alliance encountered in the former Yugoslavia. But the Major government, with its small and rebellious parliamentary majority, lacked the political capacity to act on this idea. It took a change in the government's political capacity—the election of the Labour government with a large and generally pro-European parliamentary majority—to implement the new idea. The analysis is further supported by the fact that other plausible influences on policy change—new government preferences and the actions of other states—had little influence on British decision makers' choices during this period. Of course, we must be careful not to attach too much importance to the conclusions of a single case study, but the evidence does demonstrate the plausibility and promise of the model developed here and of its possible applicability in quite different contexts.

In closing, I note an important limitation of the empirical analysis that suggests a possible extension of this model. The case study takes place within a

single institutional context, the British polity, in which a government's ability to implement new policy ideas depends in large measure on maintaining the support of, or at least not alienating, its parliamentary majority. Governments operating in other institutional settings often must secure the support of more political actors, such as coalition partners, other branches or levels of government, autonomous agencies, and so on, to translate new ideas into policy. In such cases, political institutions are likely to be a particularly important mediating influence on the effects of failure because decision makers have less power to implement new policy ideas they may adopt. Conversely, decision makers in nondemocratic polities are likely to be less accountable to outsiders and thus attach much less importance to the political viability of a new policy idea than their counterparts in democratic polities. A useful expansion of the empirical work here would be to vary the institutional context across cases to investigate such effects more thoroughly.

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**James I. Walsh** is an associate professor of political science at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He is the author of European Monetary Integration and Domestic Politics.