

Memo to William Hague | British Politics and Policy at LSE

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Last week, William Hague gave a [speech](#) promoting closer links with emerging economies and a greater role for the UK in the EU. [Professor Christopher Brown](#) of LSE's International Relations department takes a closer look at the relationship between Hague, the FCO, and David Cameron.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office are, in general, very pleased with the appointment of William Hague as Foreign Secretary, not because of his personal qualities. but because the FCO always wants ministers who are politically powerful, which Hague seems to be – he has an independent power base in the Conservative Party, and is needed by David Cameron to help keep in line those worried by the influence of the Lib Dems in the coalition. This is in marked contrast to David Miliband, who was sent to the FCO to keep him out of Gordon Brown's hair.

Image Credit: FCO



The FCO will also have liked much of last week's speech. It seems we are still to attempt to punch above our weight in world affairs, playing a bigger role in Europe, having closer relations with China, India, Brazil and so on which maintaining our close relationship with the US. None of that stuff about 'ethical dimensions' either – all good old fashioned national interest. Still, doubts may soon seep in. Are we sure that China, Brazil, and India will want closer relations with us, all the while we are so closely tied to the US? How exactly is this going to be different from the various strategic dialogues promoted by David Miliband? Will the Europeans want us to play a bigger role, since we will remain out of the Euro, and the European People's Party? Most of all, how are we to pursue these grand initiatives given that the FCO's budget is going to be cut pretty savagely?

Another reason why the FCO's optimism about their new Foreign Secretary may be misplaced can be found in a statement made not by William Hague, but by David Cameron at the G20. When asked whether Nick Clegg was in charge during his absence, he remarked that with modern communications technology there was no need for him to hand over any of the reins of power when out of the country. Memo to William Hague: it doesn't matter who the PM of the day is, they will always want to run the show.

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