

Known Unknowns: EU foreign, security, and defence policy after Brexit

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Abstract

Brexit will have significant consequences for European security. The EU will lose a member state with considerable military and diplomatic capabilities and the UK will lose access to the EU's institutional framework and the multiplier effects of membership. This working paper aims to understand how security and defence collaboration will evolve after Brexit by answering three questions about the motivations and interests of either side: whether the UK's commitment to European defence and security will diminish after Brexit; whether British withdrawal will result in further integration in EU foreign, security, and defence policy; and whether the EU will be willing to afford the UK a strong role in these policy areas after Brexit. We argue the UK and EU member states are most likely to collaborate bilaterally and through NATO since the EU is not likely to offer the UK a significant role in its own security and defence policies.

Keywords

Foreign policy, NATO, CSDP, European security, Brexit.

1. Introduction

The EU has been through a lot in recent times. Despite some optimistic claims that 2016 would be “a time of awakening” (Barnier 2017) for the Union, one must acknowledge the profundity of the existential crisis it presently faces: the United Kingdom’s (UK) referendum on EU membership, the arrival of President Donald Trump in the White House, autocratic regimes on the rise in its near-abroad, continuing instability in the Middle East, rising geopolitical tension, terrorist attacks on European capitals, and the seemingly unstoppable march of populism at home. Brexit, the impending withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU following the 23 June 2016 referendum on membership, complicates the Union’s response to these challenges, offering a host of countervailing challenges and opportunities for the future development of EU security and defence policy. How British withdrawal will fit into the EU’s response to the multifarious crises on its doorstep and how it will factor into its place in the world are questions of paramount importance. With Brexit, Britain’s capabilities (close to full-spectrum military capabilities, substantial latent capabilities, and a roster of prestigious international networks and organisational memberships) will formally cease to be part of the EU. Meanwhile, the UK will no longer have access to EU agencies and decision-making forums. How the EU deals with these changes, and how they affect – or enable – new initiatives in security and defence policy, will go a long way to determining its ability to deal with present and future threats to its security.

Understanding the consequences of Brexit, we argue, requires taking into account a broader set of political questions that will ultimately determine the arrangements adopted to govern the EU’s foreign, security, and defence policy after British withdrawal. In this working paper we set out to answer three questions, each of which is the subject of a number of competing pressures, and upon which the existing literature is undecided: (1) Will the UK’s commitment to European defence and security diminish in the wake of Brexit? (2) Will Brexit result in further integration in the fields of foreign policy, security, and defence? and (3) Will the EU afford the UK a strong role in its foreign, security, and defence policy? These questions help us sort through some of the distinct elements in the complex and interconnected Brexit process. Applying a question-driven approach, rather than focusing on specific theoretical frameworks or methodologies, allows us to benefit from a greater plurality of existing scholarly approaches and to consider a greater variety of competing—and complementary—processes at work (Fierke & Jorgensen, 2015; Griffiths, 2007).

The paper proceeds as follows: In the first section we discuss the effects of Brexit as they are generally agreed upon within the existing literature, noting the assets, capabilities, and resources on each side that will formally cease to be part of the UK–EU nexus, as well as the institutional linkages and memberships called into question by the Brexit vote. We then consider what is missing from the existing literature, noting the level of uncertainty surrounding some of the broader political questions that will determine the nature of Brexit’s anticipated effects on the future direction of European security. In the sections that follow, we systematically assess three questions, considering the different processes and dynamics associated with each, and how these are likely to play out over the coming years. We begin by asking to what extent the UK will seek to associate

itself with EU foreign, security, and defence initiatives after Brexit, inquiring as to the viability of a ‘global Britain’ approach, the strength of incentives for close collaboration on the UK side, and political feasibility of a collaborative. Next, we examine whether London’s decision to leave the Union will result in further integration in EU security and defence, addressing the likelihood of disintegrative tendencies emerging after Brexit, the extent of momentum in the domain of foreign affairs since Brexit, and the prospects for renewed Franco-German bilateralism. We then consider the likelihood that the EU will allow post-Brexit Britain a significant role in Union’s security and defence, examining the EU’s interests in this respect, the effects of new developments on this calculus, and the politics of affording the UK a significant role. Finally, we examine several possibilities for future cooperation between the EU and the UK in foreign, security, and defence policy after Brexit, looking at the CSDP+ (Common Security and Defence Policy), NATO, and ‘French connection’ options in this regard.

2. Brexit and EU Foreign, Security, and Defence Policy

In the past year or so, a voluminous literature on the consequences of Brexit for the EU’s foreign, security, and defence policy has emerged, with scholars, policymakers, and think-tanks alike wading into the complex question of how the UK’s extrication from the Union will affect its external relations. Understanding the future of the EU’s foreign, security, and defence policy requires an assessment of what Brexit means for both the EU and the UK, and how each will seek to pursue these policies in relation to the other. Given the extent to which the UK has come to rely over the years on core elements of the EU’s external action to bolster its position in the world (Whitman 2016b, 510) and the importance of the UK as a defence and security actor within Europe, neither side can afford to ignore the motivations and actions of the other.

2.1 The Brexit Effect: How will Brexit impact EU foreign, security, and defence policy?

The withdrawal of the UK from the EU represents a diminution in the international clout of the Union, since the UK’s formidable economic, military, and political resources will cease to be

How British withdrawal will factor into the EU’s place in the world is a question of paramount importance.

counted among those of the EU. The UK is one of only two military powers in the EU—the other being France—able to deploy close to full-spectrum military capabilities (Pfeifer 2016; Wright 2017) and British withdrawal will occasion a significant reduction in the EU’s collective (if disaggregated) clout, amounting to one quarter of the Union’s total defence capabilities (Black et al. 2017). This also includes the loss of the ‘independent’ British nuclear deterrent, leaving France the sole nuclear power in the Union. Brexit will also remove a significant portion of the EU’s economic clout, since the

UK represents at present approximately one-sixth of the Union’s total combined economic output (Gallo et al. 2017). This will have significant consequences for foreign policy, especially given the

EU's use of its economic power as a form of external action through sanctions, enlargement, and trade, and for defence policy insofar as economic resources constitute 'latent capabilities' (Lieber & Alexander 2005, 116). The UK has also been the fourth-largest contributor to the EU's budget, leaving the Union with a shortfall estimated at around €9 billion per year, which other member states have thus far stubbornly refused to replace through increased contributions of their own (Herszenhorn & Ariès 2017).

The EU also stands to lose access to the UK's substantial overseas aid budget and its formidable diplomatic presence in most countries in the world (Oliver 2017, 525-526). The UK contributes roughly £14 billion per year in overseas development aid, with one-tenth of this channelled through the EU's 'Global Europe' budget and the European Development Fund, making the UK the third-largest contributor to both at 13 and 15 percent, respectively (Koenig 2016, 7). Moreover, the EU stands to lose one of its two member states that hold permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the corresponding benefits of coordination between the UK and other member states in the General Assembly (Dee & Smith 2017, 529-530). It will also cease to directly benefit from the UK's key networks, including its leading role in the Commonwealth (Hill 2018, 189) and its 'special relationship' with the United States, a significant facilitator of the EU's conduct of transatlantic relations (Chalmers 2017, 1; Oliver & Williams 2016, 547; Rees 2017, 561). Finally, the EU stands to lose more-intangible assets than those based on military capabilities, economic resources, or diplomatic and organisational networks.

The UK is one of only two military powers in the EU able to deploy close to full-spectrum military capabilities

Brexit will also occasion considerable change within the EU through the withdrawal of a member state with significant influence and voting weight in the Council and a prior commitment to a specific set of policies and view of what the EU should be, both internally and in its relationship with the rest of the world. Perhaps most important, the UK has been viewed by many as a 'brake' on further integration in the fields of foreign, security, and defence policy (Heisbourg 2016, 15-16; Oliver 2017, 526; Rees 2017, 561). This has spurred renewed initiatives for intensified defence cooperation at the EU level (European Commission 2017a, 24), as well as between key member states, such as France and Germany (Drake 2018, 101).

Moreover, the UK contributed distinct preferences to the EU position which will be lost upon withdrawal. Britain, for instance, has consistently supported the maintenance of strong transatlantic ties and the avoidance of any duplication of NATO's role by the Union (Rees 2017, 562). London pushed hard for sanctions against Putin's Russia, and its departure may occasion a softening of the EU's collective response to the crisis in Ukraine (Oliver 2017, 528). The UK has also been one of the few member states pushing for higher defence spending (Dunn & Webber 2016, 473), and although it has done so primarily with NATO in mind, rather than the CSDP, the loss of an advocate for military force may have effects for the EU further down the line.

2.2 Without the EU: Brexit and UK foreign, security, and defence policy

From the UK's perspective, withdrawal raises the prospect of Britain losing access to many of the multiplier effects of EU membership. While the UK will not directly suffer any loss in material capabilities, Brexit will preclude British access to important institutional forums and processes through which member states' capabilities are coordinated and, as a result, afforded greater collective weight. Most prominently, by leaving the EU, the UK will cease to be a member of the institutions concerned with the formulation and implementation of EU external action, including the monthly meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), the Political and Security Committee (PSC), and the related committees where member-state diplomats meet frequently (Dijkstra 2016, 1). Given the amount of information made available in these forums, which goes beyond equivalent NATO meetings both in breadth and depth, such meetings have proven invaluable to the member states over the years, Britain included. While the UK will be able to align itself with the common EU position, it will not be able to vote on the positions to which it could align itself, nor will it be present in the room when the decision is reached (Wright 2017). In this regard the UK will not only be precluded from participating in common decisions, but also will find itself formally outside of the decision-making process with regard to CSDP operations. While the UK's exclusion would not preclude its participation in these multilateral bodies (Biscop 2016, 440), it would require the UK, like Norway, to forego influence over missions and mandates.

With regard to other defence-specific matters, the UK will cease to be a member of the European Defence Agency (EDA) and will need to consider alternative arrangements for contributing to joint projects in terms of procurement and defence-industrial collaboration (Black et al. 2017, 12). While EU-UK defence collaboration will still be possible after Brexit, British withdrawal is likely to result in considerable dislocation of the complex supply chains in the defence industry, and future cooperation will be contingent upon the UK complying with EU regulations in this area (Uttley & Wilkinson 2016b, 581). Finally, the UK will be nominally excluded from coordination between the member states and other countries and organisations around the world (Dijkstra 2016, 1). This is especially relevant in the United Nations (UN), where British influence "has arguably been boosted by its membership of the EU, which is the most well-organised and well-resourced group at the UN" (Dee & Smith 2017, 529).

British withdrawal from the EU will result in a number of domestic changes in the UK that will likely have implications for the conduct of British foreign policy and thus for the future of UK-EU relations and the path taken by the EU itself. To begin with, most assessments of the economic aspects of Brexit predict a shrinking of the UK's economic output as a result of its dwindling appeal as a site for foreign investment in the EU. If, as currently envisioned by the government, the UK remains outside both the customs union and the single market, the outlook for the UK economy is expected to be decidedly negative for a number of years (Black et al. 2017, 9-10). While the UK will likely not reduce its defence expenditures below the 2 percent of GDP it has committed to, a shrinking economy will result in a lower sum being available for defence and may lead to a number of significant cutbacks (Dunn & Webber 2016, 473). Constrained fiscal

circumstances may also hamper the UK's ability to increase its global presence after Brexit and, relatedly, to bolster the resources of the under-funded Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Wright 2017). A further domestic consequence of Brexit is the need to allocate significant bureaucratic resources to the process of extricating the UK from the Union and negotiating the terms of the future relationship, both of which are likely to take well over the two years allocated by Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty (Eeckhout & Patel 2017, 1). New initiatives in foreign policy and defence will likely prove difficult to achieve within this context, given the distraction of the Brexit process and the diversion of available resources (Blagden 2017, 12).

3. 'Known Unknowns' in the Context of Brexit

The existing literature on the consequences of Brexit for the EU's foreign, security, and defence policy is fairly clear on a number of anticipated effects. There is agreement, for instance, on those capabilities that will cease to be part of the Union upon Britain's withdrawal in March 2019, but which were not subject to the authority of the EU institutions, such as the UK's economy, its full-spectrum military capabilities, and its diplomatic reach. There is also a significant degree of consensus on those resources to which the EU will cease to have assured access to, including the British resources allocated to CSDP missions and the UK's contribution to the EU budget, including the funds channelled through the EU's overseas aid mechanisms.

The literature is also clear on which agencies and forums the UK will cease to be a formal member of, including the FAC, the PSC, the EEAS (European External Action Service), the EDA, and Europol (alongside associated working groups and committees). Yet, beyond agreement on these 'known knowns', there is significant uncertainty about the actual effects of Brexit for the future direction of European and EU foreign, security, and defence policy, given the significant variation in potential outcomes in each of these categories.

We do not know, for example, the extent to which the UK and EU will align their capabilities and defence efforts or how close their relationship will be in the years to come. Thus the extent to which the UK's various capabilities will really cease to be associated, in the broadest sense, with the European position remains relatively unclear. Will the UK and EU agree a comprehensive defence treaty such that the UK's considerable military capabilities continue to be credibly linked to the defence of EU member states, including those outside of NATO? It is also not clear whether the EU will continue to have access to some of the UK's capabilities on which it has hitherto drawn and whether the either side will be willing to countenance such an arrangement. Will it continue to commit troops and resources to CSDP missions? Will the UK continue to see value in contributing to joint efforts in defence procurement, overseas development, or police and judicial cooperation? We do not know the future status of the UK within the various forums from which it will be formally excluded. Will the UK seek 'associate membership', 'consultative observership' or a 'case-by-case' arrangement (Hadfield 2018, 177-178) in EU agencies, for instance? Will it be content

to align itself with the EU's position post hoc, without a voice or a vote in the decision-making process? Or will it seek to forge an independent path, and forego the potential benefits of collaboration and coordination in this field?

Answers to these questions depend upon an adequate understanding of the political relationships and dynamics likely to emerge after Brexit. We identify three questions in particular that need to be answered in order to understand what EU foreign policy, security, and defence will look like after Brexit: (1) Will the UK's commitment to European defence and security diminish in the wake of Brexit? (2) Will Brexit result in further integration in the fields of foreign policy, security, and defence? (3) Will the EU afford the UK a strong role in its foreign, security, and defence policy? In Rumsfeldian language, these three questions constitute the great 'known unknowns' of the Brexit debate as it relates to foreign policy. In the remainder of this working paper, we tackle these three questions head-on. We spell out the competing dynamics at play in each area of inquiry and consider the extent to which recent empirical developments allow us to provide some answers.

4. Will the UK's Commitment to European Defence and Security Diminish in the Wake of Brexit?

To begin with, we ask whether the UK sees value in EU-level collaboration in matters of foreign, security, and defence policy, since this is one important area in which there are substantial divisions in the literature. Dijkstra (2016), for instance, notes that "the UK has traditionally been sceptical of an integrated EU foreign policy, so it is possible it may choose not to pursue continued cooperation... Yet on a day-to-day basis, at the micro as well as at the macro level, a coordinated EU foreign policy has been able to get things done". Discussion of the UK's future interest in pursuing

Will the UK and EU agree a comprehensive defence treaty such that the UK's military capabilities continue to be linked to the defence of EU member states?

foreign and security policy collaboration with the EU has focused on whether Britain will seek to 'go global', as many in the 'Leave' campaign advocated, or whether it will need to double down on its commitment to Europe after Brexit. As Hadfield (2018, 177) has noted: "The benefits to retaining some form of partnership with the EU, whether as a quasi-integrated partner, mid-range associate, or aligned ally requires balancing Britain's interest in remaining an important player in Europe with post-referendum promises made by the British government to become a truly global actor."

In order to understand the extent to which the UK will likely commit to participate in EU security and defence structures after Brexit, it is necessary to assess three distinct elements of the question: (a) the viability of the 'global Britain' alternative, (b) the UK's interest in participating in EU-led policies, programmes, and operations, and (c) whether close cooperation is feasible in the context of the negotiations.

A. The viability of 'global Britain'

Talk of the UK's post-Brexit foreign policy has been dominated by the idea of a 'global Britain' in which the UK seeks to carve out a new role in the international system based on economic openness, trade deals with rising powers such as China, and the renewal of its Commonwealth ties and its 'special relationship' with the US (Martill 2017). Most notably, support for the 'global Britain' idea is not limited to the nationalist wing of the Conservative party, but is endorsed by the highest levels of government (as well as a sizable portion of the electorate). In her Lancaster House speech of 17 January 2017, Theresa May promised a "great global trading nation", noting that the British people "voted to leave the European Union and embrace the world". This 'truly global Britain', she argued, would be "the best friend and neighbour to our European partners, but a country that reaches beyond the borders of Europe too. A country that goes out into the world to build relationships with old friends and new allies alike" (May 2017). The basis for a British claim to a global role is the country's history of global engagement, the legacy positions it holds in major international forums—not least its permanent seat on the UN Security Council—and its significant military and economic capabilities, which outpace those of many other member states (Hill 2018, 189).

It would be wrong to infer that the UK does not have substantial interests in security and defence collaboration.

May's idea of a 'global Britain', however, does not fit with the reality of international politics in the twenty-first century. To begin with, it is unlikely that a revised Anglo-American 'special relationship' can substitute for what Britain will lose when it leaves Europe. Geography presents a fairly sizable obstacle to shifting patterns of trade from Europe to America, and the US itself is increasingly turning its attention (geopolitically and economically) to the Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, Trump's rhetoric notwithstanding, successive American administrations have invested in the Anglo-American relationship precisely because the UK was able to promote US interests in the EU (Oliver 2016b; Rees 2017, 561). Nor is there any demand for an independent Britain in any of the regions with which it hopes to increase engagement. China, Japan, and the Commonwealth are all opposed to British withdrawal from the EU (Yu 2017, 109; Oliver 2017, 529).

The UK is also no longer a major power, with military capabilities declining since the 1960s, calling into question the ability to repeat interventions on the scale of those in the 1990s (Tannock 2017, 22). Britain's nuclear deterrent, meanwhile, "is in practice very closely tied to US strategy and technology and is completely unusable when it comes to the global projection of power" (Hill 2018, 189), while there are concerns its 'soft power' resources have been undermined by the Brexit vote. Such is the unrealistic nature of the idea of a 'global Britain' that leading politicians, while rhetorically espousing such an ideal, have also sought to double-down UK's commitment to European security and its credentials as a 'good European' (Rayner 2017).

B. Is there a British interest in EU-led policies, programmes, and operations?

There are some signs that the UK's commitment to EU security and defence initiatives has been waning in recent years, which inevitably fuels speculation about declining British interest in regional security cooperation. The UK's declining commitment to the CSDP is a good example. Although the initial impetus for European defence collaboration came from the Anglo-French St Malo agreement of 1998, over recent years—and especially since the rupture caused by the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in 2003—the UK has “ceased to invest politically or militarily in the CSDP in any substantial manner” (Heisbourg 2016, 13; Kienzle & Hallams 2016, 467).

Indeed, since London did not consider the missions launched within the CSDP framework as a core channel for its security and defence, British involvement in this policy instrument was rather limited. In terms of personnel, the share of British troops in all civilian and military EU missions instigated between 2007 and 2015 was 4.33 percent (House of Lords 2016, 78-84), whereas the it should have been 14.8 percent to be proportionate to the UK's population size and comparable to the contributions of other EU countries (House of Lords 2016, 78-84). Moreover, as we discuss below, the UK has actively sought to block many EU initiatives in this area. Instead, the UK has prioritised the NATO component of its security and defence policy and the deepening of its bilateral relationships, especially that with France. All of these actions suggest the UK has somewhat lost interest in EU security and defence collaboration in recent years.

The figures indicating declining UK participation in CSDP missions do not lie, but it is worth noting that important exceptions do exist, including the UK's hosting of the operational headquarters for Operation Atalanta (in Northwood) and the placing of Royal Navy vessels at the EU's disposal for Operation Sophia (EU NAVFOR MED). It would be wrong, however, to infer from declining British participation that the UK does not regard itself as having substantial interests in security and defence collaboration.

To begin with, much of the value of EU membership for British foreign policy has been in the coordination of foreign-policy positions through CFSP, rather than direct participation in security operations. From Britain's perspective, important achievements of European coordination have included EEC unity over the British invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982¹, the imposition of sanctions on Russia in 2014, and the Iran nuclear deal of 2015 (Freedman 2016). Moreover, the UK's incentive in Europe-wide foreign-policy collaboration is likely to increase rather than decrease after Brexit. First, the absence of the ‘institutional glue’ provided by Britain's EU membership will increase the effort required to bolster political relations, as will the UK's declining credibility as a regional partner (Besch & Black 2017, 64; Black et al. 2017, 3; Chalmers 2017). Second, should Brexit lead to a weakening of the British economy, as many have suggested, the UK will face increasing incentives to collaborate on defence procurement projects, given the significant benefits of coordination and economies of scale in this sector (Hartley 2003). Third, and consequentially,

1 In the era of European Political Cooperation, the label for pre-CFSP foreign policy coordination.

the deteriorating regional security situation, coupled with concern about declining US interest in the region creates strong incentives for increased UK–EU security and defence collaboration in coming years (Freedman 2016, 11; Sus 2017a, 115; Rostowski 2017).

C. The feasibility of the European option

If ‘global Britain’ is unviable, and if strong incentives for collaboration exist, then what is the likelihood, politically, that the UK will be able to commit to deep collaboration with the EU in the years ahead? After all, it is in the political realm that we find perhaps the most serious constraints on close UK–EU coordination post-Brexit. The negotiations on the terms of British withdrawal have been characterised by damaging rhetoric on both sides, even by the usually conflictual standards of international bargaining, and the image of the EU generated by British politicians and the media has been particularly unhelpful in this regard. Throughout the Brexit process, the EU has been portrayed as something of a dangerous external enemy and the negotiations themselves have been represented in zero-sum terms. These representations risk undermining the trust built up over previous decades and may preclude the kind of compromise needed to achieve the least-worst outcome for both sides.

The nature of international negotiations is such that both sides have an incentive to bluff and to demonstrate their credibility, making it difficult to see how they could be pursued on more congenial terms. Moreover, such negative imagery is reinforced by domestic interests on both sides. Elites in the UK may tap into a substantial anti-EU discourse as a means of scoring political points against the government, or, in the government’s case, to explain away potentially negative developments in the negotiations themselves. The EU, meanwhile, has an incentive to punish Britain in order to prevent ‘contagion’, but it also has an incentive to portray the UK as a spoiler, since this helps reinforce solidarity between the EU27 and distracts from genuine differences between the remaining member states.

It is also clear, however, that the politics of UK–EU relations are somewhat more complex than this conventional image may let on. To begin with, it is likely much of the rhetoric deployed during the negotiations will turn out to be just that: rhetoric. Officially, the UK government has repeatedly emphasised its commitment to continued engagement with Europe, and prominent Eurosceptics in the cabinet have reinforced this message. While the high-level political rhetoric may be fiery, the conduct of the negotiations and formal communication between the two sides has remained cordial.

Statements by some ministers at the end of the first round of negotiations, meanwhile, suggest that the ‘soft Brexit’ initially precluded by May in her Lancaster House speech (May 2017) could be a more likely outcome than previously thought. It is also not clear that anti-EU sentiment will continue to be the dominant driver in British politics for the foreseeable future. While the balance of pro-/anti-EU positions has not shifted significantly since the referendum in June 2016, it is still the case that 48 percent of the British electorate opposed Brexit and would likely support the

continuation of strong relations in the future. Moreover, there is the possibility that, upon formally leaving the EU in March 2019, anti-EU sentiment in Britain will dissipate somewhat. While leave voters are not keen on the EU, withdrawal may open the door for more politically acceptable forms of cooperation perceived as necessitating a lower sovereignty cost. Finally, the possibility also remains that a right-wing leader in the UK will be able to ‘sell’ a more comprehensive agreement to the British public on the basis of their Eurosceptic credentials, although it is too early to tell whether this is a likely scenario.

4.1 Conclusion: Will the UK’s commitment to European defence and security diminish in the wake of Brexit?

In our assessment, the UK will continue to regard close collaboration with EU foreign, security, and defence policy as a core component of the national interest after Brexit. The ideal of an alternative independent ‘global Britain’ is unviable, insofar as it rests upon an inflated sense of Britain’s capabilities and a misreading of the changing international system, which favours both regionalism

The politics of UK–EU relations are somewhat more complex than the conventional image may let on.

and indigenous European security provision. Moreover, far from diminishing the UK’s interest in close collaboration with the EU, Brexit will increase it, since Britain will need to regain lost credibility, correct for the absence of institutional ties, guard against regional instability in a context of waning US commitment, and make efficiencies in security and defence provision at a time of straitened fiscal capabilities. While the

negotiations and the climate of opinion on both sides of the channel make collaboration potentially difficult politically, it is unclear whether this will remain the case in the years ahead, since British withdrawal may itself change the discourse and credibly nationalistic leaders may be able to better ‘sell’ the benefits of security and defence cooperation with the EU.

5. Will Brexit Result in Further Integration in the Fields of EU Foreign, Security, and Defence Policy?

After considering the UK’s prospective commitment to the collaboration with the EU foreign and security policy, it is necessary to reflect upon the likely future direction of this aspect of EU policymaking itself. Here again, there is no consensus in the literature as to whether the EU will pursue further integration, or whether Brexit will unleash disintegrative tendencies. One report in particular notes that: “On the one hand, Brexit may provide impetus for further integration in European defence. ...Alternatively, Brexit may precipitate or accelerate the fragmentation and eventual collapse of EU defence integration efforts” (Black et al. 2017, 12). Blagden, meanwhile, has suggested that: “Brexit in conjunction with...other vulnerabilities could yet prove the shock that leads to the EU’s unravelling. ...Nonetheless, deeper EU federalisation remains a plausible alternative” (Blagden 2017, 14). Hence, the picture is tangled, suggesting a closer examination of

three aspects on the EU side will be helpful. These are, (a) the danger of fragmentation, (b) recent advances in the EU's security and defence, and (c) the changing balance of power and the renewed Franco-German axis.

A. The danger of contagious fragmentation

Many politicians and experts predicted a 'contagious fragmentation' of Europe (Freedman 2016) in the wake of the Brexit vote, which was expected to embolden populists across the continent while setting a precedent for withdrawal. Especially after the victory of Trump in the 2016 American presidential race, 2017 elections in France, the Netherlands, and Germany were closely watched for signs of the predicted Eurosceptic and populist surge. In the end, the anticipated unravelling of the Union did not come to pass. Instead of encouraging disintegration, Brexit appears to have had the opposite effect, reinforcing a sense of 'existential crisis' brought on by Trump's candidacy that has contributed towards greater solidarity among the member states. Indeed, Brexit has brought about a rare moment of consensus between the EU institutions and the remaining 27 member states over the need to protect their shared project. And while the British economy did not immediately suffer the catastrophic downturn predicted by many 'Remain' supporters, narratives of future difficulties after Brexit became a helpful discursive tool for pro-EU parties and governments.

The UK's traditional emphasis on NATO as the preeminent security provider made London reluctant to support any enhancement of CSDP.

Moreover, the significant electoral milestones in 2017 did not prove as damaging to centrist elements as doomsayers had predicted, although populist elements continued to gain ground at the expense of their centrist counterparts. In France, Emmanuel Macron, relying heavily on European symbols, decisively defeated Marine le Pen in the second round of the presidential election, receiving 66.1 percent of the vote. In the Netherlands, the centre-right Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy or VVD) of Prime Minister Mark Rutte lost seats, but defeated Geert Wilders's Partij van de Vrijheid (Freedom Party), which many predicted to fare better than it did. Meanwhile, in Germany, although the right-wing populist Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany, or AfD) succeeded in getting 12.6 percent of the vote and entering the Bundestag for the first time, the mainstream parties condemned the AfD's position and refused to countenance coalition talks with them.

Yet the Union cannot be complacent in the face of the populist challenge. There is still a danger that other member states will move towards anti-EU positions, and the upcoming elections in Italy represent another stress test for Union's integrity. Although the motivations of citizens voting for anti-European and populist parties are primarily domestic, the success of the Brexit campaign could embolden these tendencies. Sceptics of the integration project often refer to London's decision as a 'wake-up call' for the EU. They interpret Brexit as a strong signal for the Union to come back to its single-market roots and end attempts to deepen integration in other policy areas.

Much depends on the perceived success of Brexit in this regard. If the UK is seen to get a good deal from the negotiations there is a risk of moral hazard, with other member states questioning the link between membership in the Union and receipt of its benefits. Moreover, the illiberal turn of countries in central and eastern Europe is troubling. It is not out of the question that Hungary or Poland could begin to question its membership, especially when their contributions to Union's budget start to grow. Their uncertain commitment to the European project poses a greater threat to the EU's integrity than the rise of populist parties in western Europe, which have obtained an electoral foothold, but which have largely been prevented from seizing the reins of power. Thus, despite the fact that the predicted fragmentation did not occur, the divisions within the EU remain, and there is a continued risk that the common European project, the EU, "will plunge into even further disintegration" if it does not regain the trust of its citizens (Sus 2017, 122).

B. Recent advances in EU security and defence

Brexit, in conjunction with external pressures, has created considerable momentum in EU security and defence policy. Significant changes that have been on the cards for much of the recent decade and have been blocked by the UK have now all been launched. As mentioned in the previous section, London has been consistently "obstructive and unhelpful" (Witney 2015) and has hindered any attempts to empower the EU's diplomatic bodies, emphasising that the High Representative (HRVP) and the EEAS were only complementary to national foreign offices (Sus 2016, 66-68). The EEAS even became a subject of the 'Leave' crusade, with the Daily Telegraph publishing an article claiming: "The EU is stealing Britain's diplomatic influence—and so we must leave" (Daily Telegraph 2015). Moreover, in 2011 the UK mission to the United Nations blocked several EU statements proposed by the HR on the grounds that they should be made on behalf of the EU and the member states, not on behalf on the EU alone (Carta & Whitman 2013).

Furthermore, the UK's traditional emphasis on NATO as the preeminent security provider made London reluctant to support any enhancement of CSDP. As noted, the UK opposed the increase of the EDA's budget for five consecutive years owing to concerns it would undermine NATO's role (Major & Voss 2017, 2) and blocked the establishment of the EU military headquarters (Euractiv 2011), reckoning it to be redundant as NATO already has headquarters in Belgium (Ripart 2017). As the risk of a UK veto vanished, however, the EU instigated four key security and defence initiatives. First, the EU Military Headquarters (Military Planning and Conduct Capability) was established in summer 2017 and has assumed command of EU non-executive military missions. Then, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)—the "Sleeping beauty of the Lisbon Treaty" (Juncker 2017)—was launched in December 2017 (European Council 2017), permitting groups of like-minded and capable member states to take European defence to the next level and put forward more advanced projects. Next, the European Defence Fund (EDF) was commenced by the European Commission to allocate money (€600 million yearly until 2020 and €1.5 billion thereafter) for technological innovation, defence research, and technology (European Commission

2017). Finally, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) carried out by the EDA was initiated to monitor national defence spending and to identify possibilities for pooling resources and to deliver joint capabilities.

These developments are not without their limitations, however, and one must be careful not to ascribe undue expectations to their immediate capabilities. While the projects are expected to contribute to more-interoperable national armed forces in the EU, they do not challenge the fundamental premise of national control over militaries or the intergovernmental nature of CSDP decision-making. Nor, for that matter, do they represent a challenge to NATO. Indeed, insofar as e.g. PESCO and EDF are perceived by the member states as a means to rationalise defence spending and procurement, they may even help more member states meet their NATO target of spending 2 percent of GDP on defence.

Moreover, these projects are as much a political statement as an institutional development, and their launch in the wake of the Brexit shock is no coincidence. Important questions remain about the commitment of member states to the new mechanism—especially those, such as France and Poland, that have either hedged their bets or made their participation conditional—(Billon-Galland & Quencez 2017, 5-6; Fiott et al. 2017, 36-39). PESCO's success is not preordained, and the member states will need to invest significant resources if the mechanism is to live up to the (rather lofty) expectations. Ultimately, the future development of PESCO “will depend upon the commitment of the member states and, in particular, their willingness to make significant contributions to the project” (Sus 2017b).

C. Changing balance of power and the renewed Franco-German axis

The new advances within EU's security and defence can be perceived as a step towards a more strategic foreign policy from the Union, and yet institutional developments must be accompanied by political leadership. Thus, a central question is: What could replace the Franco-British engine at the core of EU security and defence? In a broader sense, Brexit is likely to lead to a revival of the original Franco-German axis upon which integration was based in the 1950s. British withdrawal occasions the demise of the complex tripartite relationship in which the UK, France, and Germany balanced one another's influence (Heisbourg 2016, 15-16), leaving a simpler game of bilateral Franco-German cooperation as the key determinant of the future direction of the EU. Macron's election brought to power a keen Europeanist with grand designs on Eurozone reform and European security, and with strong will to work with Germany to achieve them. Macron's twin priorities are to 'reconcile' the French with the EU and, through Eurozone reform and progress on defence policy, to create a “Europe that protects” (Drake 2018, 101).

Meanwhile, Germany is beginning to overcome its historical reticence to get involved in matters of international security. Several policy- and decision-makers in Berlin championed a more-proactive German leadership. It is undeniable that Germany is now evolving from being an almost exclusively civilian power to one more willing to take on greater responsibilities in international security. The

new White Paper on German Security Policy released on 13 July 2016 reflects this gradual change, and sets out the nature and scope of the country's participation in future military operations (Federal Government 2016). All the conditions for Franco-German leadership post-Brexit would, therefore, appear to be in place.

There remain several important obstacles facing this revived Franco-German engine, however. Perhaps the most important of these is the continuing reluctance of German citizens to see their country's greater international role. In 2014 only 37 percent of Germans wanted more engagement

Brexit has already contributed to a strengthening of ties between the 27 remaining EU member states as they seek to safeguard the essence of the European construction.

from their country on the international stage, and 60 percent were reluctant to support a more active international role (Köber Stiftung 2014). In 2017 52 percent claimed that their country should not engage in international conflicts or interventions (Körber Stiftung 2017, 4). A further challenge lies in the differences between French and German conceptions of the future of EU defence, which came to light as PESCO was negotiated. Germany aimed for an inclusive format for the new project, keen to have as many member states on board as possible, while France, concerned more

with operational effectiveness, pushed for a more exclusive approach (Billon-Galland & Quencez 2017, 2-3). Moreover, differences in other key policy areas—especially over the future of the Eurozone—may risk solidarity in the short term, although in some respects the difficulties of Eurozone reform have led to foreign affairs being regarded as the best venue in which to show concrete progress. Finally, the risk remains that the next elections will bring to power leaders who are less supportive of further integration.

5.1 Conclusion: Will Brexit result in further integration in the fields of foreign policy, security, and defence?

In our view, Brexit has already contributed to a strengthening of ties between the 27 remaining EU member states as they seek to safeguard the essence of the European construction, including closer cooperation on defence matters. Thus, despite remaining anti-EU and populist tendencies in some EU countries, the predicted disintegration in the wake Brexit has not taken place. We are witnessing the process of unprecedented advances in security and defence, which are possible due to the political will of the vast majority of member states. Yet, the process of enhancement within the security and defence domain is still in its early stages and the firm member states' commitment to the projects mentioned above remains indispensable. The prevailing differences in national strategic cultures, threat perceptions, and views on the role of NATO can easily disrupt this process. Against this backdrop, the role of leadership is significant. In our view, if it matures, the renewed Franco-German axis offers the possibility of both leadership and reform for the European project

6. Will the EU Afford the UK a Strong Role in its Foreign, Security, and Defence Policy?

The answers to the previous questions allow us to assume that the UK will be committed to European defence and security and that the EU will take the cooperation between its member states within these policy areas to the next level. Against this backdrop, it is now worth considering whether the Union will seek to (or allow) the UK a significant role in external action after Brexit. The literature offers no agreement on that question and identifies the tension for the EU between “allowing Britain to ‘have its cake and eat it’...and ‘cutting off its nose to spite its face’ by denying Britain access to European frameworks” (Tannock 2017, 24). We shed light on three elements that will determine London’s future role in EU foreign and security policy: (a) the existing coincidence of interest between the continental capitals and London, (b) The effect of new instruments in the EU’s security and defence, and (c) the divergence of opinions among the member states and the politics of granting the UK a substantial role after Brexit.

A. Existing coincidence of interests

It is evident, to begin with, that the UK and the EU share a great deal of common interests and priorities when it comes to security and defence. Recent strategic documents from both sides—the European Union’s Global Strategy (EUGS) of 2016 and the UK’s 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR)—emphasise the importance of such mutual interests as tackling terrorism, extremism, and instability; dealing with the impact of technology, especially cyber threats; deterring state-based threats; responding to crises rapidly and effectively; strengthening the rules-based international order and tackling global challenges, including migration and global health security; building resilience at home and abroad; and promoting stability, good governance, and human rights (EEAS 2016; HM Government 2015).

PESCO does not amount to anything like the idea of an ‘EU Army’. It has often been viewed as such by the British press.

Given the geographical proximity of the UK and the EU and their shared history, the coincidence of interests and values is not surprising. Given the strength of the UK’s capabilities, the EU has an obvious interest in harnessing British resources in service of shared goals and values (Hill 2018; Pfeifer 2016; Wright 2017; Besch & Black 2017). Concern about the reliability of the transatlantic alliance in the Trump era also fuels eagerness on both sides of the channel to cooperate with one other (Chalmers 2017; Freedman 2016, 11). Given the extent to which the EU’s interests coincide with those of the UK and the UK’s considerable military and diplomatic capabilities, it has been suggested that “the withdrawal of Britain’s ‘security’ surplus combined with its defence punch will fall disproportionately heavily on the EU” (Hadfield 2018, 179).

There are, however, a few caveats that might impede the EU's willingness for cooperation with London, despite shared interest and values. First of all, the growing defence capabilities of the EU resulted from the recent institutional developments. The genuine will of the member states for the Union to become a security actor might be on a collision course with the British commitment to NATO as the main security provider on the continent. Furthermore, with regard to post-Brexit access to the UK's capabilities, it seems very likely that the EU will face a trade-off between drawing upon British military equipment and know-how on one hand and the Union's ability to safeguard coherent actorness on the other. Reaching out for British resources might undermine the image of the EU as an evolving security actor. In addition, providing London with access to decision-making procedures once it has left the EU will be politically difficult and legally complicated.

Another issue might be the potential competition between Paris and London for leadership in Europe with regard to military capabilities and the power of diplomacy. In light of Brexit, the French position in Europe as the most significant security actor will become stronger. One can also expect that Paris will try to present itself as the EU's new interlocutor for transatlantic relations as London, the traditional 'transmission belt' with the US, leaves the Union (de Hoop Scheffer & Quencez 2018). Hence, taking into account the enduring British interest in remaining a significant source of security in Europe and in continuing the special relationship with Washington, a clash between London and Paris cannot be ruled out.

B. The effect of new instruments in EU security and defence

A further consideration is the extent to which recent EU initiatives in security and defence, presented in detail in the previous section, will affect the Union's ability and willingness to see the UK play a significant role in its foreign, security, and defence policy. Perhaps most significant in this regard is the instigation of PESCO by the vast majority of the member states in late 2017. As of this writing, it is too early to assess the consequences of PESCO, combined with CARD or the EDF, for future cooperation within security and defence, although some potential dynamics can be spelled out at this stage. To begin with, the participating member states have decided that third states may be invited to take part in a particular PESCO project if they would provide substantial added value to the project and contribute to strengthening CSDP. Such an external partner will, however, not be granted decision power in the governance of PESCO (Council of the EU 2017b, 13-14). It has already been suggested that British participation in PESCO may be one possibility for London to stay involved in EU security and defence, and that France and Germany may favour such an option, in particular given their desire to harness British military capabilities for such operations (Billon-Galland & Quencez 2017, 5).

There might be also another consequence of the new projects: while British participation in PESCO may be precluded by the UK's outsider status after Brexit and the noted public reluctance towards closer cooperation in the field of defence, the project itself—the greater coordination with the EU that may result—could provide “a useful platform for coordinating a new security and

defence relationship with the UK” (van Ham 2016, 15), on a bilateral EU–UK basis. Hence, for the EU, the greater cohesion and coordination instigated by PESCO may serve to simplify the conduct of its post-Brexit relationship with the UK.

However, while PESCO represents an effort to promote greater efficiency within member-state militaries and to enhance their interoperability and does not amount to anything like the idea of an ‘EU Army’, it has often been viewed as such by the British press. In fact, every move towards a more-integrated EU security and defence capability may dissuade London from participation, given its consistent stance against further supranational initiatives in this area. Developments on the EU side increase the formal barriers to British participation by requiring the UK to sign up to more onerous commitments, which it has hitherto been unwilling to support. While much of the debate in the UK on this topic has been somewhat misinformed, it is still the case that a considerable proportion of the British population is spooked by the idea of ceding any competences to Brussels in this area. Further integration in the field of security and defence thus makes London’s participation further divorced from the reality of British public opinion.

At the same time, from the EU’s perspective, the further deepening of the cooperation among member states creates problems with British participation in such schemes as PESCO. It risks placing limitations on the further evolution of these mechanisms and potentially re-introduces the problem of the UK as a ‘spoiler’, albeit this time from without, rather than within. The involvement of 25 member states in PESCO (apart from the UK, only Denmark and Malta decided not to participate) indicates a growing general consensus among the member states with regard to security and defence issues. As a result, “defence has emerged as a central theme in proposals by defiant EU leaders to underscore the enduring relevance and vitality of the Union, even with the loss of the UK” (Black et al. 2018, 4). To allow a third country to participate in such schemes if it does not subscribe to the proposals themselves would be to introduce unnecessary risks to the integrity of the EU.

C. Political considerations in a substantial British role

There is another important factor that impacts the EU’s willingness to grant London a substantial role in the post-Brexit period, namely, the different political incentives at play, which will have a strong bearing on the form British participation will take. To begin with, giving London a worse deal might be politically appealing for the EU. As noted, there are a number of member states with growing anti-EU sentiment, and this might be exacerbated should the terms of any Brexit deal be viewed as overly favourable to London. The problem of ‘moral hazard’ will be on the minds of the EU negotiators and will likely limit the willingness of Brussels to offer London a ‘good’ deal. The participation of UK in PESCO offers an illustrative example of this problem. London’s military capabilities can easily offer the significant ‘added value’ a third country is expected to contribute when invited to participate in PESCO projects, leading to expectations that the UK may be offered more than other non-EU countries, such as Ukraine or Norway.

This is, however, unlikely to occur, given the recently announced decision of the European Council not to allow Britain a bespoke arrangement (discussed in the previous section). Keeping in mind British calls for a “special partnership including on foreign, defence, and security, and development engagement” (HM Government 2017, 2) that goes beyond existing third-country arrangements, it seems rather unlikely that the UK will be willing to accept a position of a ‘regular’ third state. Moreover, some countries such as France (and to a lesser extent also Italy) may perceive Brexit as a chance to strengthen their position as leaders within EU security and defence, and may find that sidelining London plays in their favor.

At the same time, the opinions among member states with respect to affording London an important role in EU security and defence differ, and some countries look more favourably on the

Continued British participation in EU foreign-policymaking may prove politically beneficial for the Union by demonstrating Britain’s continued need for EU structures.

idea. Small- and medium-size countries such as Poland and the Baltic states will likely welcome the stronger commitment of the UK to NATO. And yet they may also be afraid that the ‘global Britain’ direction might remove the British interest in contributing to the security of eastern Europe. Thus, from their perspective, providing London with a strong role in security and defence within the EU framework may be seen as beneficial. Furthermore, continued British participation in EU foreign-policymaking may prove politically beneficial for the Union by demonstrating Britain’s continued need for

participation in EU structures, and may contribute to greater effectiveness of CSDP operations. This ‘demonstration effect’ will need to be carefully balanced with the aforementioned risk of moral hazard in the EU’s final decision on British participation and its potential formats.

6.1 Conclusion: Will the EU seek, or allow, the UK a strong role in EU’s foreign, security, and defence policy?

Reviewing the arguments presented above, we find it unlikely that the EU will be willing to grant the UK any special role in its common foreign, security, and defence policies. Although on the face of it the EU has a sizable interest in harnessing UK capabilities, there is a clear trade-off between capabilities and actorness, and the EU is unlikely to be willing to pay the price placed by the UK on its involvement (participation in EU decision-making). Recently established instruments in EU security and defence present an additional obstacle for London’s role in this respect, since they introduce more onerous commitments for an already-sceptical UK and increase the costs for the EU of introducing a ‘spoiler’ into its new initiatives. Finally, there are important political incentives at play, and the EU will need to balance the ‘demonstration effect’ of a strong CSDP with the moral hazard inherent in offering the UK a bespoke deal outside the Union.

7. Ways Forward for Post-Brexit European Security: CSDP +, NATO, and the ‘French Connection’

Understanding the interests of the EU and the UK and the political realities of their approaches allows us to examine the options for post-Brexit European security in somewhat greater clarity. In this final section we discuss three ways forward for European security and defence arrangements post-Brexit: (a) UK participation in CSDP as a third country, (b) a broadening of NATO’s role on the continent, and (c) renewed bilateralism and the ‘French connection’.

A. CSDP +: The UK as a ‘third country’

The option most commonly suggested by observers of European security is that of British participation in EU initiatives as a third country. UK participation in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) would be one way of taking into account the strong mutuality of interest between the EU and UK discussed above. Moreover, this option would be politically unproblematic for the UK, since, unlike the single market, third-country participation in CFSP and CSDP does not come with intrusive obligations under EU law. Third-country participation is indeed already common practice in the CFSP. For instance, a number of third countries, including candidate countries, members of the European Economic Area and European Free Trade Association, and those targeted by the European Neighbourhood Policy are invited to ‘align’ with EU declarations on foreign policy once these have been agreed among the member states (Cardwell 2016, 605).

Some countries, such as Ukraine, Norway, and Turkey have consistently aligned themselves with a number of CFSP declarations (Dimitrova & Dragneva 2009, 862). Within CSDP, some 45 non-EU countries (such as Norway, Switzerland, countries of the western Balkans, Ukraine, Russia, and Canada) have participated in military and civilian missions either on an ad hoc basis or within the legal foundation of the Framework Participation Agreement (FPA) (Tardy 2014). By signing such an agreement, a third state quite explicitly recognises the EU as a viable partner in crisis management, and vice versa.

The ability of the UK to participate in the Union’s foreign, security, and defence policies as a third country is limited by problems regarding agenda-setting and decision-making.

In defence-industrial collaboration, moreover, the EU’s emerging defence market allows for participation from firms based in non-EU countries, meaning Brexit does not automatically preclude collaborative projects between EU and UK firms (although access to the single market may loom large in this area in particular) (Uttley & Wilkinson 2016a, 576). Thus, the UK’s withdrawal from the Union does not preclude close collaboration with EU member states through alignment with common positions and participation in CSDP missions, nor does it (in theory) preclude cooperation on defence procurement.

And yet the ability of the UK to participate fully in the Union's foreign, security, and defence policies as a third country is limited by fundamental problems regarding agenda-setting and decision-making. Third countries are invited to align with EU common positions only after an agreement has been reached (Cardwell 2016, 605), and contributions for CSDP missions are sought from non-member states only once the plans have already been drawn up (Dijkstra 2016, 3). This means third countries are not afforded any formal say over which issues or regions are placed on the agenda and which decisions are taken. Moreover, informal forms of influence have proven inefficacious, as in the case of Norway, whose influence in the FAC is limited by the tendency for Norwegian proposals and positions to be undone post hoc by the member states.

Taking into account the recent statements of EU officials, it seems most probable that the UK will not be granted any special status but, like other non-EU states, it will be offered a regular FPA². Indeed, Michel Barnier, Europe's chief Brexit negotiator, has noted that "EU leaders seem united in their position that...the UK should lose any benefits it used to have as a member state" (Barnier 2017). He also confirmed that the UK would not be given a seat at the table during the FAC and the PSC meetings and that there is no possibility for London to take command of EU-led operations or lead EU battlegroups (Barnier 2017)³. This is understandable since, as Hill (2018) put it, "a state which has wilfully given up its privileged position in foreign policy consultations is not likely to be welcomed back to the centre of discussions". But this creates something of a dilemma, since the UK's status as a significant global actor makes it a key (potential) contributor to EU statements and missions but also precludes its willingness to act as a 'rule taker' rather than a 'rule maker'. London clearly expects a "special partnership . . . that goes beyond existing third country arrangements" (HM Government 2017, 2). Hence, since the UK refuses to accept a 'tail wagging the dog' scenario in which it would have no say over the direction of the policies to which its resources would be committed, and since the EU refuses to countenance UK membership of the decision-making process, third-country participation may be all but precluded for the time being.

B. Broadening NATO's role on the continent

In the seeming absence of a workable arrangement for the UK's participation as a third country, the option of working primarily through NATO is often mooted as a potential alternative. This is understandable, as NATO has been the pre-eminent provider of security and defence in Europe since the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949, helping to 'cushion' the effects of Brexit in security and defence, and prevent a 'cliff edge' scenario (Black et al. 2017, 3; Heisbourg 2016, 13). Since the EUGS recognizes NATO as the primary framework for collective defence, and since UK traditionally fought for the strengthening of ties between the pact and the EU security initiatives, it is safe to assume that much future EU–British cooperation will take place through the Atlantic alliance.

2 The FAC invited the HR to develop a more strategic approach to csdp partnerships in May 2017. This should focus on partner countries that share EU values, including the respect for international law (Council of the EU 2017a, 2). It could lead to a more differentiated approach to csdp partnerships within which the UK, together with other countries that share EU values, would be offered a closer form of cooperation.

3 There remains, of course, the possibility that these statements form part of a broader negotiating strategy, in which case final positions may be different.

The Alliance could become a platform for cooperation, since it offers an elegant solution to combine British independence from the EU with the necessity of close collaboration in the face of security challenges. For the UK, the NATO option is certainly an attractive one. Britain is one of the few NATO members meeting the targets for defence spending (2 percent of GDP, with 20 percent of this on R&D) and has consistently defended the pre-eminence of NATO as continental security provider within the EU. Moreover, defence–industrial collaboration between the UK and (the majority of) the EU27 could also continue using NATO mechanisms, since “UK defence acquisition policies can continue to embrace national ventures, joint equipment development, and other forms of defence technology transfers with EU and non-EU NATO allies, notably the US” (Uttley & Wilkinson 2016a, 576). If a post-Brexit British government decides to maintain or expand its involvement in NATO operations, London would solidify its role as one of the major diplomatic and military powerhouses, to the benefit of the overall security of Europe. Under these new post-Brexit circumstances NATO may even find itself acting as a bridge between Brussels and London.

While the NATO option is the default setting for European security and defence after Brexit, there are some important caveats to note. To begin with, there is less demand for the NATO option from the EU27 than from the UK. With many member states keen to further develop their ability to act outside of NATO. As a member of the EU, the UK could veto initiatives it regarded as challenging NATO’s supremacy, but it is no longer in a position to veto such initiatives. Concern about declining US commitment to European security and defence more broadly reinforces the demand for indigenous security provision. This was evident from Obama’s ‘re-balancing’ towards Asia in 2011, but has become more widely recognised in light of Trump’s wavering on the Article 5 commitment and concerns about an American détente with Putin’s Russia (Ten-Brinke 2018). If the Europeans prefer to develop non-NATO initiatives, as seems likely, it would naturally throw off-kilter any UK desire to transfer engagement with their EU allies to the Atlantic alliance.

There is also the more immediate problem of how to deal with the gaps in NATO’s membership and operations, which has been (at least partially) overcome only through EU membership. The division of labour in which NATO takes primary responsibility as the collective defence provider on the continent while the EU leads on crisis management undermines claims that the two organisations are functionally transposable. CSDP missions cover a broader remit than NATO operations, for instance, with a greater emphasis on conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and policing, as well as missions in the Sahel and North Africa where deployment under a NATO flag would be problematic⁴.

Moreover, the distinct memberships of the two organisations (Sweden, Finland, Austria, Ireland and Cyprus are in the EU, but not NATO) means some countries are not covered by the collective defence provisions of Article 5 (Tannock 2017, 21). Finally, although there is no reason to believe the souring of relations between the EU and UK will be a permanent feature of the political

⁴ A list of csdp missions, past and present, can be found on the EEAS website: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/430/Military%20and%20civilian%20missions%20and%20operations

landscape, it will be difficult in the short- to medium-term to prevent squabbles over Brexit from spilling over into NATO discussions and priorities, thereby risking further diminution of alliance solidarity and credibility (Major & Voss 2017; Dunn & Webber 2016, 476). Thus, while the existence of NATO will prevent a ‘cliff-edge’ scenario in the security and defence field, for the organisation to become the sole ‘bridge’ between the EU and the UK in security and defence will require these issues to be resolved.

C. Renewed bilateralism and the ‘French connection’

Another option alongside third-country participation in the CFSP and increased engagement with NATO is that of a bilateral approach with key European allies. The Franco-British relationship is most often mentioned as a possibility, owing to key similarities between the two countries when it comes to questions of international security⁵. Both are former colonial powers with spheres of influence (or responsibility) abroad; both have a similar profile in terms of military capabilities and institutional networks; both are in possession of nuclear weapons; both can deploy the full spectrum of military force; both hold permanent seats on the UNSC; and both exhibit similarly ‘interventionist’ strategic outlook, in stark contrast to civilian powers, such as Germany. Collaboration between France and the UK in the security and defence field is already well developed. In 2010 David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy signed the Lancaster House Treaties, which committed the two states to the establishment of a Joint Expeditionary Force and to increasing the interoperability of their respective militaries (Pannier 2016, 483-484).

Brexit will not diminish the UK’s commitment to European defence and security.

Moreover, although France has committed itself to PESCO, there are signs that Paris is simultaneously sounding out a more intergovernmental approach. In its *Revue stratégique* of October 2017, the French government proposed the already-noted European Intervention Initiative (EII) that provides countries the possibility of acting militarily outside of existing EU and NATO structures. In short, France wants the option of joining forces with other countries interested in deploying military operations in a flexible and non-bureaucratic way. The initiative opens the door to close bilateral military cooperation between London and Paris, which may have the adverse effect of undermining the EU’s initiatives in this area, especially if France loses interest in PESCO projects (Major & Mölling 2017). Politically, enhancing the ‘French connection’ makes sense for London, given that this mode of cooperation does not invoke the same level of opposition from Eurosceptics as does participation in EU initiatives. Moreover, an intergovernmental initiative with a like-minded partner is easy to manage and requires few difficult trade-offs.

Yet there are limitations to a bilateral approach. Anglo-French collaboration is never going to be as powerful, diplomatically, as the ability to invoke the support of the combined might of the EU member states. This is likely to be especially problematic in contentious military deployments where

⁵ Efforts to improve bilateral Anglo-German cooperation in security and defence have also been stepped up in recent years (Saxi 2017; Wagstyl 2017).

legitimacy matters most and in which the civilian credentials of the EU would be more beneficial to invoke than the shared interests of two former colonial powers. Moreover, while a bilateral approach is well suited to areas of clear mutual concern—unrest in the Sahel, say—it fails to solve the question of how to maintain the UK’s security commitment to non-NATO EU members, or how the UK would respond to other potential crises, not least one involving Putin’s Russia, the actions of which are viewed very differently from London than it is from Paris. A series of bilateral relationships would also be far more costly to manage than would be participation in CFSP, and will likely incur greater transaction costs as a result.

Perhaps the most important limitation of the ‘French connection’, however, is the emerging competition between Britain and France in this area, as we already noted. As we mentioned above, Brexit has placed Paris in prime position to take a greater leadership role in the EU, since it is now by far the most powerful member state in terms of military capabilities. Moreover, recent overtures from Macron to President Trump suggest Paris is interested in capitalising on its EU membership and military prowess as a means of becoming the new ‘transatlantic bridge’ between the US and the Union. With the UK no longer able to fulfil this role, France would be the obvious choice to act as interlocutor between the EU and US. Moreover, France has other important relationships to nurture—not least with Germany and the EU itself—and will not be willing to let its security relationship with the UK override these. The continued need for Macron to work with Germany to achieve reform in the EU as well as the considerable ‘shadow of the future’ created by their shared EU membership are especially instructive indicators of where France may view its long-term interests lying. For this reason, Paris is hedging its bets, investing simultaneously in PESCO and the EII.

In the absence of institutional ties, the UK will need to focus more on building its political relations across the continent.

8. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

8.1 Summary of key claims

The overarching aim of this paper was to examine the impact of Brexit on EU foreign, security, and defence policy and to consider the possible options for the future cooperation between Brussels and London within this policy domain. By drawing on the existing literature, we formulated three essential questions and, alongside a discussion of the different options available, made four distinct claims about the effects of Brexit on security and defence in the EU:

First, Brexit will not diminish the UK’s commitment to European defence and security. The ideal of a ‘global Britain’ does not have the potential to move beyond comforting rhetoric, since it is incompatible with the realities of the UK’s (limited) capabilities and the interests of other major powers. The UK, moreover, has a greater incentive to collaborate with other European countries

after Brexit since this represents the only way to overcome its damaged credibility, make up for lost institutional ties, and make efficiencies in this area in response to straightened fiscal circumstances. Whether collaboration with the EU in this regard is politically feasible will depend on how the discourse evolves over the coming months.

Second, Brexit will result in further integration in EU foreign, security, and defence policy, and indeed it is clear this is the direction in which the member states are moving. Rather than risking the break-up of the Union, as some predicted, the Brexit vote led to a rare and efficacious sense of solidarity among the member states, one consequence of which was unprecedented advances in security and defence. Developments such as PESCO, CARD and an EU military headquarters are potentially revolutionary, though they must be furnished with the necessary resources by the member states. Perhaps most important, the renewed Franco-German relationship offers an unprecedented opportunity in this respect, which must be seized in spite of clear divergences on some issues.

Third, the EU is unlikely to afford the UK a strong role in the formulation of its foreign policy, despite an interest in harnessing British capabilities for its own ends. Regardless of shared security interests and geographic proximity, there are two main obstacles for the EU to grant London a special status: the recently established instruments in EU security and defence aiming to deepen the cooperation in this policy area and the moral hazard for the EU associated with offering London a good deal.

Fourth, in terms of options for the future relationship, it is most likely that the EU and UK will work almost exclusively through NATO and bilateral relationships (or smaller multilateral formats) in the future. The UK's hope of obtaining a significant role in foreign policy decision-making runs counter to the EU's strong incentive not to offer London the benefits of membership from without, and there is a gulf between the two sides on this issue. NATO provides one option for continuing EU–UK security and defence collaboration, although the gaps in operations and memberships (not to mention concern about the credibility of the American security guarantee) mean this option can never be a substitute for UK involvement in CFSP and CSDP. A bilateral approach, such as strengthening Anglo-French security cooperation, offers another avenue for coordination going forward, but will require that Paris and London manage their competitive instincts in a number of respects, and that Paris especially does not undermine its parallel interest in supporting renewed initiatives with the EU in this area.

8.2 Policy recommendations

Important policy recommendations follow from the above assessment, we argue, both for the EU and for the UK. The EU has an incentive to focus on developing indigenous structures capable of dealing with the range of security threats facing the Union. To this end, member states must ensure that PESCO do not end up a paper tiger; it must be furnished with capabilities and reinforced through shared practice, such that the lofty rhetoric begins to approximate reality. The initial list of

PESCO projects is promising,⁶ but their implementation will be a stress test for the political willingness of national leaders. The member states must ensure that the coincidence of Franco-German reform efforts and the solidarity engendered by Brexit are not wasted, and take the opportunity to push for lasting changes in EU security and defence. Crucially, they must ensure to the best of their ability that domestic problems and the national interest (narrowly defined) are not allowed to impinge upon their commitments in this area, as to do so would lead to a collective weakening of security on the continent. The UK, meanwhile, must invest considerable more energy in bolstering its bilateral relationships with key member states and ensure that it commits the necessary resources such that it can continue to be the key European player in NATO. In the absence of institutional ties, and given the unlikelihood of the UK being afforded the level of influence within the CFSP it believes it deserves, it will need to focus more on building its political relations across the continent. This is both to allow for renewed bilateralism and to prevent any contagion effect whereby political ill-will further undermines the solidarity of the Atlantic alliance. This will require greater efforts on the UK side to manage rampant Euroscepticism and to ‘sell’ the idea of collaboration on security and defence matters. The ‘global Britain’ ideal, while politically useful at the domestic level, belies the extent to which the UK will continue to rely upon its EU partners after Brexit and contributes to unhelpful expectations that the UK can somehow ‘go it alone’.

In regard to cooperation between the EU and the UK post-Brexit, we recommend two avenues in particular. First, the Union should recognize British calls for a special status when it comes to its involvement in CSFP and CSDP decisions and missions. Even though full access to decision-making procedures is ruled out, there are various other models conceivable, such as providing London with the possibility to be consulted and to contribute to the decision-making process before PSC or FAC meetings, to grant the UK an observer status during FAC sessions or to develop a new platform for consultation with London (PSC+ or FAC+). Taking into account the uniqueness of British military capabilities, the decision not to offer such a solution to any other third country would be defensible. Having access to the British capabilities would be beneficial for the credibility of CSDP decisions and statements as well as for its effectiveness. Additionally, such a special form of cooperation with the UK would strengthen the significance of the EU as a security hub and bolster the European position in the world. Second, future cooperation between Brussels and London could also take the form of a security partnership between the EU and the UK on the basis of an exclusively bilateral arrangement between the two actors. The purpose of any such arrangement would be to address the shortcomings of an exclusive reliance on NATO, especially with regard to the removal of the security guarantee from Britain to non-NATO members, by essentially replicating the EU’s collective defence clause (Article 42(7) of the Lisbon Treaty) through other means. It would also help hedge against the risk of American isolation-cum-rebalancing by contributing toward an indigenous European security and defence provision. A security partnership would also be more politically acceptable for both sides, allowing for joint EU–UK decision-making outside the formal structures of the Union that would not force the UK into becoming a ‘rule taker’ nor risk damaging the EU’s own initiatives in security and defence.

⁶ See the overview of PESCO projects: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32082/pesco-overview-of-first-collaborative-of-projects-for-press.pdf>

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