Original Article

Political Studies Association | BJPIR

The British Journal of Politics and International Relations
2018, Vol. 20(4) 846–863

DOI: 10.1177/1369148118796979
journals.sagepub.com/home/bpi
SAGE

Post-Brexit EU/UK security cooperation: NATO, CSDP+, or 'French connection'?

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to understand the EU/UK security relationship after Brexit and the institutional form(s) it may take. Taking stock of the literature on the consequences of Brexit for European foreign affairs, this article employs a question-driven approach to examine uncertainties regarding the future EU/UK security relationship. These questions relate in particular to the United Kingdom's commitment to European security after Brexit, the nature of post-Brexit developments within the Union, and the European Union's willingness to afford the United Kingdom a substantial role after withdrawal. This article examines each of these questions in turn, before considering the viability of three frequently mooted institutional arrangements post-Brexit: UK participation in the CSDP as a third country; increased engagement with NATO that becomes the main platform for cooperation between the United Kingdom and the European Union; and the enhancement of bilateral ties between the United Kingdom and key European allies – especially France.

Keywords

Brexit, CSDP, EU foreign policy, EU security and defence, France, NATO, PESCO

Introduction

Brexit, the impending withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU), has drawn the attention of scholars to the possibility of European *disintegration* and reignited older debates over the likelihood of greater differentiation in the EU itself after Brexit. Post-Brexit developments in security and defence policies are of particular interest, since it is these areas in which existing structures are more open to alteration and development, in which the capabilities on each side are more evenly matched, and in which the stakes are particularly high, especially in the current international climate. Examining the dynamics underpinning the evolution of EU security and defence policy post-Brexit, whether integrative or disintegrative, differentiated or harmonised, is crucial

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for understanding what European security will look like. Developments in this area depend upon several factors, including whether it chooses to go down the path of further integration or not, and how open it is to offering differentiated access to members and non-members.

Yet the nature of European security arrangements post-Brexit is shrouded in uncertainty. Existing works have largely shied away from answering the broader questions relating to the interplay of interests on either side and the likelihood of different institutional arrangements being adopted. In this article, we ask whether the UK's commitment to European security will diminish, whether the EU will move towards further integration, and whether it will be prepared to offer the UK a strong role in its post-Brexit security policy. Understanding these different aspects of the relationship is crucial to understanding the viability of different options for EU-UK security collaboration after British withdrawal. We argue that, of the possible options – North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Common Security and Defence Policy-plus (CSDP+), and the 'French Connection' – a combination of the first and last options provides the most likely outcome. This outcome is because the EU is unlikely to afford the UK a strong role in the formulation of its security policy, which is likely to become more integrated, more internally harmonised and which will preclude a significant role for the UK, even as its interests push it in the direction of Europe and not elsewhere.

The article proceeds as follows. In the first section, we discuss the changing theoretical landscape of EU studies after Brexit, situating our analysis of the EU/UK security relationship within recent work on disintegration and differentiation. The next three sections are dedicated to examining the three questions posited above in order to understand the processes and interests at work on either side. We then examine the viability of three options for the future relationship (NATO, CSDP+, and 'French Connection') in light of the answers provided to the three questions, before providing a summary of our main findings.

Integration theory after Brexit

Brexit has renewed scholarly attention to the dynamics of European integration (Bulmer and Joseph, 2016; Hodson and Puetter, 2018: 466). First, it has renewed attention to the integrative versus disintegrative dynamics of crises, given the unprecedented challenge to the EU's efficacy and legitimacy arising from the decision (Chopin and Lequesne, 2016: 541; Cini and Verdun, 2018; Schimmelfennig, 2018). These works have built on earlier theoretical studies examining the integrative (Börzel, 2018: 475; Mény, 2014: 1350; Niemann and Ioannou, 2015) and disintegrative (Hooghe and Marks, 2009; Jones, 2018; Lefkofridi and Schmitter, 2015; Schmitter and Lefkofridi, 2016; Vollaard, 2014; Webber, 2014: 350; Zielonka, 2014: 23) consequences stemming from the EU's myriad recent crises (Nugent, 2018: 54). Second, Brexit has opened up greater discussion of whether the post-Brexit EU will move towards greater harmonisation or differentiation, since Brexit represents both a failure of the 'internal differentiation' manifest in successive British opt-outs and renegotiations (Chopin and Lequesne, 2016: 531) and a potential future model of 'external differentiation' (Schimmelfennig, 2018). These studies have built themselves on earlier theoretical works extolling the virtues of differentiation for optimising certain policy areas and responding to individual member state concerns (Jamet, 2011: 567; Natali, 2016; Schimmelfennig et al., 2015: 769) as well as the pitfalls of allowing some countries to lag behind others and introducing potentially harmful variation (Chopin and Lequesne, 2016: 534).

The direction, and nature, of the EU's evolution post-Brexit is of particular interest in the field of security and defence policy. This area is one in which existing structures are more open to alteration and development, in which the capabilities on each side more evenly matched, and in which the stakes are particularly high, given concerns about the credibility of the US commitment to Europe and the less secure international environment. Both sides stand to lose from British withdrawal. Britain is one of only two EU countries able to deploy close to full-spectrum military capabilities, representing one quarter of the Union's total defence capabilities (Black et al., 2017), and has been the fourth largest contributor to the EU budget (Herszenhorn and Ariès, 2017). The EU also loses one of its two member states with permanent seats on the UN Security Council (UNSC) (Dee and Smith, 2017: 529–530) as well as the benefits of the UK's considerable diplomatic networks, including the Anglo-American 'special relationship' (Chalmers, 2017: 1; Oliver and Williams, 2016: 547; Rees, 2017: 561). Meanwhile, Brexit deprives the UK of access to key decision-making forums and institutional structures, including the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), the Political and Security Committee (PSC), the European Defence Agency (EDA), and Europol (Dijkstra, 2016: 1; Wright, 2017). Whether these effects can be minimised depends on how the EU responds to Brexit, whether it follows the path of further integration in this policy area, and whether it aims for greater differentiation or greater harmonisation (both between existing members, and between members and non-members). Minimisation of these effects also depends upon the willingness of the UK to plug into any such arrangements on the EU side. Understanding the pattern of integration/disintegration and differentiation/harmonisation in foreign affairs is thus key to understanding EU/UK security relations after Brexit. And yet, within the (considerable) literature on the topic, there is no consensus on how the security domain will evolve (for example, Biscop, 2016; Black et al., 2017; Blagden, 2017; Dunn and Webber, 2016; Hadfield, 2018; Kienzle and Hallams, 2016; Koenig, 2016; Whitman, 2016a, 2016b).

In this article, we seek to understand how Brexit will affect European security by providing answers to three key unanswered questions in the literature, namely: (1) whether the UK's commitment to European defence and security will diminish, (2) whether Brexit will result in further integration in this field at the EU level, and (3) whether the EU will afford the UK a strong role in its security and defence policy. In the following sections, we discuss each of these three questions in turn. Methodologically, our starting point is one of analytic eclecticism (for example, Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 2009; Moravcsik, 2003; Nitoiu and Sus, 2017; Reus-Smit and Snidal, 2008; Sil and Katzenstein, 2010b), a broad approach to social science research that seeks to generate complex causal stories that selectively recombine analytic components from explanatory theories embedded in competing research traditions (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010a). Since approaching empirical problems from individual theoretical lenses entails simplification and partiality, we adopt a question-based approach that allows us to explore how a diverse range of interests, mechanisms, and processes come together and interact with one another to bring about particular outcomes (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010b: 10).

Will the UK's commitment to European defence and security diminish in the wake of Brexit?

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: (1) the viability of the 'global Britain' alternative; (2) the UK's interest in participating in EU-led policies,

programmes, and operations; and (3) whether close cooperation is feasible in the context of the negotiations.

The viability of 'global Britain'. Discussion 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. In her Lancaster House speech of 17 January 2017, Theresa May (2017) promised a 'great global trading nation', noting that the British people 'voted to leave the European Union and embrace the world'. 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 UNSC – and its significant military and economic capabilities, which outpace those of many other member states (Hill, 2018: 189).

May's idea of a 'global Britain', however, does not fit with the reality of international politics in the 21st 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 precludes any attempt to shift patterns of trade from Europe to America, while the United States 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, 2016a; Rees, 2017: 561). Nor is there much demand for an independent Britain from any of the regions – namely China, Japan, and the Commonwealth – with which it hopes to increase engagement (Oliver, 2017: 529; Yu, 2017: 109). The UK's military capabilities, meanwhile, have been declining since the 1960s (Tannock, 2017: 22) and its nuclear deterrent '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). 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).

Is there a British interest in EU-led policies, programmes, and operations? There are some signs that the UK's commitment to EU security 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 the last decade the UK has 'ceased to invest politically or militarily in the CSDP in any substantial manner' (Heisbourg, 2016: 13). 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% (House of Lords, 2016: 78–84), whereas it should have been 14.8% 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, choosing instead to prioritise the NATO component of its security and defence policy and the deepening of bilateral relationships, especially with France.

It would be wrong, however, to infer from declining British participation that the UK does not regard itself as having substantial interests in security 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 the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), rather than direct participation in security operations. From Britain's perspective, important achievements of European coordination have included European Economic Community (EEC) unity over the British invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982, the imposition of sanctions on Russia in 2014, and the Iran nuclear deal of 2015 (Freedman, 2016). 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 and Black, 2016: 64; Black et al., 2017: 3; Chalmers, 2017). 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 from economies of scale in this sector (Hartley, 2003). The deteriorating regional security situation, coupled with concern about declining US commitment, reinforces incentives for greater European collaboration (Freedman, 2016: 11; Rostowski, 2017; Sus, 2017b: 115).

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? It is in the realm of politics that we find 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. 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', and an incentive to portray the UK as a 'spoiler', since this helps reinforce solidarity among the 27 remaining EU members (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 echoed this message. While the high-level political rhetoric may be fiery, the conduct of the negotiations and formal communication between the two sides remains cordial. Statements by some ministers at the end of the first round of negotiations, meanwhile, suggest that the 'soft Brexit' initially precluded by 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. Indeed, it is possible that, upon formally leaving the EU in March 2019, anti-EU sentiment in Britain will dissipate. While leave voters are antipathetic towards the EU, withdrawal may open the door for more politically acceptable forms of cooperation with a lower sovereignty cost.

Will Brexit result in further integration in the fields of EU security and defence policy?

To reflect upon the likely future direction of EU policymaking within security and defence, one has to closely examine three aspects: (1) the danger of fragmentation, (2) recent advances in the EU's security and defence, and (3) the changing balance of power and the renewed Franco-German axis.

The danger of contagious fragmentation. Many politicians and experts predicted a 'contagious fragmentation' of Europe in the wake of the Brexit vote (Freedman, 2016), 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, the 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' 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 significant electoral milestones, moreover, did not prove as damaging to centrist parties as doomsayers had predicted, although populist elements continued to gain ground at the expense of their centrist counterparts, most recently in the Italian elections in March 2018.

The Union cannot be complacent in the face of the populist challenge and the danger that other member states will move towards anti-EU positions still exists. 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 that other member states will begin to question the link between EU membership and the receipt of benefits from the single market. 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 their membership, especially as their contributions to the Union's budget begin to grow.

Recent advances in EU security and defence. Brexit, in conjunction with the aforementioned 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 the risk of a UK veto vanished, the EU instigated four key security and defence initiatives. The EU Military Headquarters (Military Planning and Conduct Capability) was established in summer 2017 and has assumed command of EU non-executive military missions. 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 (2017) to allocate money (€600 million yearly until 2020 and €1.5 billion thereafter) for technological innovation, defence research, and technology. Finally, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) was initiated to monitor national defence spending and to identify possibilities for pooling resources and to deliver joint capabilities. Apart from these four projects, Brexit could also contribute to a change in the decision-making process in CFSP. The voices that the EU should move towards Qualified Majority Voting in this policy area are getting more prominent and the threat of a British veto is no longer an issue (Blockmans, 2017: 5–6).

These developments are not without their limitations, however. While the projects are expected to contribute to greater interoperability between 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, for example, PESCO and EDF are perceived by 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% 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, which have, respectively, hedged their bets and offered only conditional participation (Billon-Galland and 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 its expectations (Sus, 2017a).

Changing balance of power and the renewed Franco-German axis. 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 in France brought to power a keen Europeanist with grand designs on Eurozone reform and European security, and with a strong will to work with Germany to achieve them. The new president'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 and 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 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. Furthermore, the bilateral axis could be reinforced by Italy and Spain, which have been regularly consulted by France and Germany during the negotiations of PESCO. Berlin and Paris integrated their southern neighbours' ideas and presented the proposals as a joint effort at the EU level.

There remain, of course, several important obstacles facing this revived Franco-German engine. Perhaps the most important of these is the continuing reluctance, in spite

of recent changes, of German citizens to see their country's greater international role. In 2014, only 37% of Germans wanted more engagement from their country on the international stage, and 60% were reluctant to support a more active international role (Körber Stiftung, 2014). In 2017, 52% 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 and 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 it may be possible to demonstrate concrete progress.

Will the EU afford the UK a strong role in its security and defence policy?

Next we shed light on three elements that will determine London's future role in EU security policy: (1) the existing coincidence of interest between the continental capitals and London, (2) the effect of new instruments in the EU's security and defence, and (3) the divergence of opinions among the member states and the politics of granting the UK a substantial role after Brexit.

Existing coincidence of interests. As we established above, the UK and the EU share a great deal of common interests and priorities when it comes to security and defence. The 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). 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 the service of shared goals and values (Hill, 2018; Wright, 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 another (Chalmers, 2017; Freedman, 2016: 11).

There are, however, a few caveats that might impede the EU's willingness for cooperation with London, in spite of these shared interests and values. First, the desire of member states for the Union to become more of 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 is likely that the EU will face a trade-off between drawing upon British military equipment and know-how on the one hand and the Union's ability to safeguard coherent actorness and decision-making autonomy on the other hand. Providing London with access to decision-making procedures once it has left the EU will be politically difficult and legally complicated.

Moreover, competition may arise between Paris and London over military and diplomatic leadership in Europe. In light of Brexit, France's credentials as a significant security provider – and its ability to act as a trans-Atlantic 'interlocutor' – will only strengthen (De Hoop Scheffer and Quencez, 2018).

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 will affect the Union's ability and willingness to see the UK play a significant role. Perhaps most significant in this regard is the instigation of PESCO. 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 of the CSDP. External partners, however, would not be granted decision-making power in the governance of PESCO (Council of the European Union, 2017: 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, given their desire to harness British military capabilities (Billon-Galland and Quencez, 2017: 5). There might also be 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' on a bilateral EU–UK basis (Van Ham, 2016: 15). 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 enhance 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 misinformed, it is still the case that a considerable proportion of the British population is alarmed by the idea of ceding competences to Brussels in this area. At the same time, from the EU's perspective, the further deepening of cooperation among member states creates problems with British participation in schemes such as PESCO, since it risks placing limitations on the future evolution of these mechanisms by re-introducing the threat of the UK veto, albeit this time from outside, rather than inside the Union. The involvement of 25 member states in PESCO (of the EU27, only Denmark and Malta will not participate) is indicative of growing consensus among the remaining member states. To allow a third country to participate in such schemes may be to introduce unnecessary risks to the integrity of the EU.

Political considerations regarding 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 have a strong bearing on the form British participation is able to take. In the first instance, giving London a worse deal might be politically appealing for the EU. As noted, there are a number of member states where anti-EU sentiment is rising, and this might be exacerbated should the terms

of any Brexit deal be viewed as overly favourable to London. This problem of 'moral hazard' may limit the willingness of Brussels to offer London a 'good' deal. The participation of the 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 scenario is, however, unlikely to occur, given the decision of the European Council not to offer 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, countries such as France (and to a lesser extent also Italy) may see in Brexit an opportunity to strengthen their position as leaders within EU security and defence and may find sidelining London to be in their favour.

At the same time, opinions among member states with respect to affording London an important role in EU security differ, and some countries look more favourably on the idea. Small- and medium-sized countries such as Poland and the Baltic states, for instance, will welcome the stronger commitment of the UK to NATO. Yet they may also be afraid that the 'global Britain' direction might lead to a diminution of the UK's commitment 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 the Union's foreign policymaking may prove politically beneficial by demonstrating Britain's continued need for participation in EU structures, and while any reputational gains from greater effectiveness in CSDP operations would accrue to the EU itself. Such demonstration effects 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.

Ways forward for post-Brexit European security: CSDP+, NATO, and the 'French connection'

Our answers to the questions above help shed light on the future direction of EU foreign, security and defence policy after Brexit, and whether it will be characterised by dynamics of integration or disintegration, and of harmonisation or differentiation. Since, at the EU level, member state interests are converging around a number of new initiatives, and since the EU is keen to keep members inside and non-members out, we suggest that the post-Brexit EU security architecture will be characterised by integration and harmonisation rather than disintegration and differentiation. Understanding these developments allows us to examine the options for post-Brexit European security provision with greater clarity and to establish those options that are more viable than others. In this final section, we discuss three ways forward for European security and defence arrangements post-Brexit: (1) UK participation in the CSDP as a third country, (2) a broadening of NATO's role on the continent, and (3) renewed bilateralism and a 'French connection'.

CSDP+: The UK as a 'third country'

The option most commonly suggested by observers of European security is that of British participation in the CSDP as a third country. This option represents one way of taking into

account the strong mutuality of interest on both sides. Moreover, this option would be politically unproblematic for the UK since, unlike the single market, third country participation in the CSDP does not come with intrusive obligations under EU law. Third country participation is already common practice. Candidate countries, members of the European Economic Area and the 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). Within the CSDP, some 45 non-EU countries 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 recognises the EU as a viable partner in crisis management and vice versa. 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 security policy as a third country is limited by fundamental problems regarding agenda-setting and decision-making. Third countries are invited to align with EU 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 non-EU 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 statements of EU officials, it seems most probable that it will not be granted any special status but, like other non-EU states, it will be offered a regular FPA. Indeed, Michel Barnier (2017), 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'. 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). This creates 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 expects a 'special partnership […] that goes beyond existing third country arrangements' (HM Government, 2017: 2). 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.

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 an alternative. This is understandable, since NATO has been the pre-eminent provider of European security, 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 recognises NATO as the primary framework for collective defence, and since the UK has

traditionally sought to strengthen ties between the pact and EU security initiatives, it is safe to assume that much future EU–British cooperation will take place through the Alliance. NATO 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 an attractive one. Britain is one of the few NATO members meeting the targets for defence spending and has consistently defended the pre-eminence of NATO as continental security provider. 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 and Wilkinson, 2016: 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 act as a bridge between Brussels and London.

While the NATO option is the default setting for European security after Brexit, there are some important caveats to note. In the first instance, there is less demand for the NATO option from the EU than from the UK. If the Europeans prefer to develop non-NATO initiatives (that is, through PESCO), this would naturally undermine any UK desire to transfer engagement with their EU allies to the Alliance. As a member of the EU, the UK could previously veto initiatives it regarded as challenging NATO's supremacy, but it is no longer in a position to do so. Concern about the declining US commitment to European security more broadly reinforces the demand for indigenous security provision. This demand has become more widely recognised in light of Trump's wavering on the Article 5 commitment (Ten Brinke, 2018). There is also the more immediate problem of how to deal with the gaps in NATO's membership and operations, which have been only partially overcome through EU membership. The division of labour in which NATO takes primary responsibility as the collective defence provider while the EU leads on crisis management undermines claims that the two organisations are functionally equivalent. CSDP missions cover a broader remit than NATO operations, for instance, with a greater emphasis on conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and policing, and often take place in the Sahel and North Africa where deployment under a NATO flag would be problematic. Moreover, the distinct memberships of the two organisations mean 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 EU-UK relations will be a permanent feature of the political landscape, it will be difficult in the short to medium term to prevent Brexit-induced squabbles from spilling over into NATO priorities, thereby risking further diminution of alliance solidarity and credibility (Dunn and Webber, 2016; Major and von Voss, 2017: 476).

Renewed bilateralism and the 'French connection'

Another option 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 international security. Both are former colonial powers; both have a similar profile in terms of military capabilities and institutional networks; both are nuclear powers; both can deploy the full spectrum of military force;

both hold permanent seats on the UNSC; and both exhibit similarly 'interventionist' strategic outlooks, in stark contrast to civilian powers, such as Germany. Moreover, collaboration between France and the UK in the security field is already well developed. The Lancaster House Treaties, signed in 2010, committed the two states to the establishment of a Joint Expeditionary Force and to increasing the interoperability of their militaries (Pannier, 2016: 483–484). 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*, the French government proposed a European Intervention Initiative (EII) that would provide a mechanism for countries to act 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 cooperation between London and Paris, which may have the adverse effect of undermining the EU's initiatives in this area (Major and 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 fewer difficult trade-offs.

Yet there are limitations to a purely bilateral approach. Anglo-French collaboration will never be as powerful, diplomatically, as the combined might of the EU member states. This is likely to be especially problematic in contentious military deployments where legitimacy matters most and in which it would be more beneficial to invoke the civilian credentials of the EU 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, not least when it comes to the question of deterring Putin's Russia, which is viewed very differently from London and Paris. A series of bilateral relationships would also be far more costly to manage than participation through already existing CSDP structures and would 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 noted 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, the overtures from Macron to Trump suggest Paris is interested in becoming the new 'transatlantic bridge' between Brussels and Washington, since the UK is no longer able to fulfil this role. Moreover, France has other important relationships to nurture – not least with Germany and with 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 his desired EU reform, as well as the considerable 'shadow of the future' created by their shared EU membership, are instructive indicators of where France may find its long-term interests lie.

Conclusion

This article aimed to shed light on post-Brexit security cooperation between Brussels and London. Nowhere are the stakes of Brexit higher, we argued, than in the realm of European security, given the UK's sizeable capabilities in this area and the insecurity of the present international environment. Recent theoretical discussion has framed the effects of Brexit

within two competing dynamics: integration versus disintegration, and harmonisation versus differentiation, but these dynamics have not been examined in the context of foreign, security, and defence policy. This article set out to address the evolution of European security by asking three key questions, namely: (1) whether the UK's commitment to European security will diminish after Brexit, (2) whether the EU will move towards further integration, and (3) whether it will be prepared to offer the UK a strong role in its post-Brexit security policy. By examining the interests of the UK and the EU in this regard, as well as the competing processes and mechanisms at play in this domain, we argued that EU security policy is set upon a post-Brexit path of further integration and diminishing differentiation. Member state interests are converging on a host of new institutional initiatives and the EU is demonstrably keen to keep (most) member states in and non-members out. We reach this conclusion based on our findings from the three questions, which are as follows:

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 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 and make up for lost institutional ties.

Second, the EU is unlikely to afford the UK a strong role in the formulation of its security 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.

Third, Brexit will result in further integration in EU 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, the Brexit vote led to a rare and efficacious sense of solidarity, one consequence of which was unprecedented advances in security and defence. Developments such as PESCO can be potentially revolutionary, though they must be furnished with the necessary resources by member states. Perhaps most important, the renewed Franco-German relationship offers a unique opportunity in this respect.

In terms of specific options for the future architecture of EU-UK security collaboration, we argue it is most likely that the EU and UK will work primarily through NATO and bilateral relationships (or smaller multilateral formats). 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 CSDP. A bilateral approach, such as strengthening Anglo-French security cooperation, offers another avenue for future coordination, 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.

To conclude, it is a paradox of Brexit that the political barriers to close security collaboration between the UK and the EU have become more significant as the strategic and

economic incentives for indigenous security collaboration within Europe have increased. Decreasing trust, leadership rivalries, constraining public opinion, and the risk of moral hazard make British participation in EU security and defence initiatives complex and problematic. Both sides are unlikely to agree upon more than a few shared principles in the months ahead, given the intractability of some of these problems. In the long term, it is likely that the domestic and global pressures for collaboration will increase, and the political blockages will subside, making closer collaboration a more achievable prospect. In the meantime, collaboration through NATO and on a bilateral basis with European partners – especially France – looks like the most realistic options and may provide an initial basis from which greater collaboration through EU structures can eventually be pursued.

Acknowledgements

For their helpful comments, we would like to thank our two anonymous reviewers, as well as Iain Begg, Kevin Featherstone, Helmut Anheier, Spyros Economides, Hallie Detrick, An Jacobs, Annegret Bendiek, Clemens Kohnen, Nicola Chelotti, Julia Himmrich, Lisa ten Brinke, Marcel Hadeed, Eleonore Heimsoeth, Karolina Augustova, and the participants of the BISA European Security workshop at Aston University on 15 December 2017.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The research for this project was funded by Stiftung Mercator through the Dahrendorf Forum, a joint initiative of the London School of Economics and the Hertie School of Governance. The views contained herein are those of the authors alone.

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