

SUMMER 2018

# SAFER TOGETHER

THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE FUTURE  
OF EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE

REPORT



This report is part of Friends of Europe's Peace, Security and Defence programme. Written by Paul Taylor, Senior Fellow at Friends of Europe, it brings together the views of scholars, policymakers and senior defence and security stakeholders, and provides recommendations on how to limit the damage from Brexit to British and European security and defence.

Unless otherwise indicated, this report reflects the writer's understanding of the views expressed by the interviewees and participants of the survey. The author and the participants contributed in their personal capacities, and their views do not necessarily reflect those of the institutions they represent, nor of Friends of Europe and its board of trustees, members or partners. Reproduction in whole or in part is permitted, provided that full credit is given to Friends of Europe and that any such reproduction, whether in whole or in part, is not sold unless incorporated in other works.

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Paul Taylor is a Senior Fellow at Friends of Europe and the author of the reports “Crunch time: France and the future of European defence” (April 2017) and “Jumping over its shadow: Germany and the future of European defence” (October 2017). A Paris-based journalist, he also writes the "Europe at Large" column for POLITICO. He previously spent four decades working for Reuters as a foreign correspondent in Paris, Tehran, Bonn and Brussels, as bureau chief in Israel/Palestine, Berlin and Brussels, as chief correspondent in France, as diplomatic editor in London, and finally as European affairs editor.

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# FOREWORD

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When in December 1998, Europe's two most militarily powerful nations signed the St Malo agreement, they opened the way to the EU's common security and defence policy. Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac were at pains to emphasise that their Anglo-French cooperation pact would be open to all fellow EU members.

Signed aboard the visiting British destroyer HMS Birmingham in the Brittany seaport of St Malo, their agreement was followed a year later in Helsinki by the European Council at which EU leaders displayed new thinking on Europe's security goals.

St Malo set in motion the long process leading towards the EU's 'Security and Defence Union'. But with Brexit, this is also being accompanied by the removal of the UK as a cornerstone of EU defence cooperation.

As one of only two European nations with substantial military clout, the UK's departure from the EU casts a shadow on both Britain's national security and global influence and the EU's internal security and new defence policies.

The implications and possible consequences of Brexit form the core of this Friends of Europe study. Its author is the veteran EU affairs commentator Paul Taylor, a Senior Fellow at Friends of Europe. His report makes a number of recommendations on how Britain and Europe should optimise security and defence relations after Brexit.

This report is a companion to two earlier studies by Paul Taylor last year on the roles of France and Germany in European security and defence cooperation. The three are to be complemented later this year by Taylor's forthcoming report on Poland's defence capabilities and policies.

These reports are part of Friends of Europe's Peace, Security and Defence programme of events and research. First launched some 15 years ago as part of our Security and Defence Agenda, they have enabled Friends of Europe to claim that among the major Brussels-based think tanks it is a leader in the field of security policy analysis.



**Giles Merrit**

Founder and Chairman  
of Friends of Europe



**Geert Cami**

Co-Founder and Managing  
Director of Friends of Europe

# METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Following on from two studies published by Friends of Europe in 2017 on France and Germany and their roles in the future of European defence, this report draws on more than 40 interviews with past and present UK, European, NATO and US officials, military and intelligence chiefs, lawmakers, defence industry executives, diplomats, strategists and policy analysts.

The interviews were conducted between mid-February and mid-April 2018 - a busy period which coincided with the conclusion of a provisional transition agreement between the UK and the EU, as well as a crisis with Russia over the poisoning of former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury, England, and differences with the United States over trade, Israel and Iran. While many of those interviewed were happy to speak on the record and are quoted in the text, several serving officials and policymakers requested anonymity as their roles prevent them from speaking for attribution. I am particularly grateful to people on both sides of the sensitive Brexit negotiations, and to other senior figures in London, Brussels, Paris, Berlin and Washington who cannot be identified, for taking the time to share their knowledge and insights.

I wish to thank Geert Cami, managing director of Friends of Europe, for giving me the opportunity to write this study, Dharmendra Kanani, director of strategy, for making it possible, Giles Merritt, chairman and founder, for his stimulating brainstorming and A-list contacts, Clotilde Sipp, senior programme manager of the peace, security and defence programme, for her helpful suggestions and cheerful support, and Alexandra Gerasimcikova, programme assistant, for her highly efficient research and scheduling assistance.

Many friends in the defence and security community contributed stimulating thoughts. Not all are quoted in the text. My gratitude goes to Sophia Besch, Malcolm Chalmers, Frans van Daele, Aude Fleurant, Bastian Giegerich, Simon Fraser, Lawrence Freedman, Nicole Gnesotto, Camille Grand, Deborah Haynes, Christian Leffler, Robin Niblett, Pauline Massart, Alice Pannier, Michael Ryan, Rupert Smith, Trevor Taylor, Adam Thomson, Nathalie Tocci, Tomas Valasek, Veronika Wand-Danielsson and Nick Witney. My former Reuters colleagues Guy Faulconbridge, Robin Emmott and Tim Hepher were generous with their insights. Thanks to Arshad Mohammed and Lois Quam, William Drozdiak and Renilde Loeckx in Washington for their hospitality and encouragement.

My sister, Carolyn Taylor, and brother-in-law Mark Studdert were most generous hosts during my two weeks in London. Thanks also to Emma Udwin and Christian and Carolyn Leffler-Roth for their kind hospitality in Brussels. And above all to my wife, Catherine Taylor, for putting up with me lovingly while I was engrossed in researching and writing the third Friends of Europe report in 12 months.

Special thanks to Peter Ricketts, Michael Leigh, Jamie Shea and Andre Loeseckrug-Pietri for reviewing the first draft and offering most helpful comments.

Needless to say, the conclusions and recommendations - as well as any errors - are entirely my own.

I consulted a range of documents published by the European Commission, the European Council, the UK government, the Ministry of Defence, the House of Commons select committees on defence and foreign affairs, as well as the 2017 general election manifestos of all the British political parties and expert evidence given to the House of Lords, which are listed in the footnotes as they arise.

In parallel, Friends of Europe conducted a multiple-choice survey of senior security and defence experts in government, business and international organizations, NGOs and the media. The findings are appended to this report. (See Annex B)

Brexit is a crowded field with many researchers working on the implications for foreign policy, security and defence as well as on the economic arrangements and consequences. I am indebted in particular to enlightening studies and articles published by the Royal United Services Institute, the Centre for European Reform, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the German Council on Foreign Relations, the Egmont Institute, the European Policy Centre, Carnegie Europe and the European Council on Foreign Relations. A short reading list is appended in Annex A.

At the time of writing in April 2018, uncertainty shrouded the Brexit negotiations and Britain's future relationship with the European Union. The report is based on the assumption that the UK will indeed leave the EU on March 29, 2019, as notified under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, and that it will remain in the single market and the customs union as a third country until at least December 31, 2020, as provisionally agreed under the transitional arrangements concluded in March 2018. Other outcomes remain possible but less likely.

Based on those assumptions, the conclusions and recommendations in chapter 5 focus on how to limit the damage from Brexit to British and European security and defence, while respecting the decision-making autonomy of the European Union and the wish of a majority of the British electorate, expressed in the June 2016 referendum, to be independent of the EU.

On a personal note, I am a UK citizen but was not entitled under British law to vote in the 2016 UK referendum on European Union membership because I had lived outside Britain though within the European Union for the last 15 years. In Prime Minister Theresa May's words, I am thus "a citizen of nowhere".



**Paul Taylor**

Senior Fellow  
at Friends of Europe



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Britain faces a unique challenge to preserve its national security and global interests after it withdraws from the European Union next year. European security as a whole could be weakened unless the divorce is handled with great care on both sides.

The 2016 referendum vote to leave the EU is bound to reduce British influence in Europe's main political and economic organisation, and hence diminish some of its value as the self-proclaimed closest ally of the United States.

The EU will be losing its joint strongest military power and its best connected intelligence provider; the United Kingdom will be breaking away from its biggest trade partner and from the community of European democracies on which it relies for daily security cooperation.

Senior players in Brussels and London are confident that, in the end, the professionals will find sensible solutions to avoid security damage to both sides of Brexit, but no one is quite sure how. Hubris and factional in-fighting in London combined with legalistic inflexibility and industrial protectionism on the continent could thwart the practical cooperation needed to keep Europe and Britain safe. The battle over Britain's future participation in the EU's Galileo satellite navigation system illustrates how easily relations could turn sour.

This study examines the UK's strategic position after Brexit, its web of defence and security relationships, the political context, the role and current state of the armed forces and security services, as well as the place of its defence industries. It offers recommendations for how to optimise Britain's defence and security role in Europe to mutual advantage despite the rupture of Brexit.

The 'British exceptionalism' which all post-war leaders sought to promote as a special friend and partner to the United States, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and of the EU, with strong post-colonial ties to the Commonwealth of English-speaking nations, a bastion of the rule of law and one of the world's premier financial centres, is in jeopardy.

Prime Minister Theresa May's declared objective of building a "Global Britain" outside the EU has yet to acquire any clarity, let alone substance. Britain's outsized self-image may be unrealistically grandiloquent for a medium-sized power, but it is at least preferable to a retreat into 'little England'.

Above all, the UK must avoid any temptation, having decided to leave the EU, to try to weaken or sideline the Union. The EU will remain its

neighbour, by far its biggest economic partner and a like-minded supporter of a rules-based international order in a dangerous world. By working closely with the Union and in bilateral and multilateral partnerships with its main members - France and Germany - Britain can limit the damage from Brexit to security and defence.

## STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

Britain's strategic environment has deteriorated with increasing military assertiveness by a resurgent Russia and continuous efforts by Islamist terrorists to sow death and panic in the UK and Western Europe.

Britain is no longer, as Labour politician Aneurin Bevan famously said, an "island made mainly of coal and surrounded by fish". It has few natural resources and must trade to feed and heat itself. After 40 years of relative energy autonomy, North Sea hydrocarbons are running down and the country is increasingly reliant on imported gas and electricity, despite a revived nuclear power programme and renewable energy sources.

The rise of populist nationalism, particularly in former communist Central European countries, increases the risk of conflicts that rival powers could exploit to weaken the EU. Conflicts around Europe's fringes, from Ukraine to Syria, the Middle East, Libya and the Sahel, pose threats to the continent's stability, ranging from uncontrolled migration flows to terrorism, arms, drugs and human trafficking, money laundering and disruption of energy supplies.

These challenges will continue to affect Britain's security after Brexit.

With tension rising between Washington and Beijing, China's commercial and strategic assertiveness also presents new challenges for Britain, which has sought to make itself the gateway of choice for Chinese business and finance in Europe. Chinese warships conducted live fire exercises in the Mediterranean and joint manoeuvres with Russia in the Baltic Sea in 2017.

While the UK will remain a nuclear power, a permanent member of the UN Security Council and an active member of NATO - the alliance for the collective defence of the Euro-Atlantic area - many of its security interests, including the fight against terrorism, organised crime and illegal migration, cyber security and efforts to stabilise Europe's fragile neighbourhood, require daily cooperation with the EU.

Full access to EU databases managed by the Europol police agency and the Schengen Information System, and the continuation of the fast-track European Arrest Warrant and European Investigation Warrant that have superseded cumbersome extradition and cross-border evidence-gathering procedures, are crucial to British internal security. The UK has been a major provider of police and security intelligence to these systems as well as big source of extradition to other European countries.

The natural British reflex after Brexit may well be to try to conduct as much business as possible through NATO. The UK has

already taken a leading role in the alliance's enhanced forward military presence in the Baltic states and Poland. It may now reverse plans to withdraw its last forces from Germany, maintaining a logistics and training presence, with pre-positioned equipment stored there to reinforce the eastern flank if required.

However, any British effort to hold wider political consultations through NATO is likely to encounter resistance from France and possibly Germany, which see the EU as Europe's central foreign and security policy forum. It may also elicit little enthusiasm from the United States, especially if it involves out-of-area security challenges in the Balkans, Africa and the Middle East.

## EUROPE OR AMERICA FIRST?

The traditional British instinct to move closer to the United States in times of estrangement from Europe is politically problematic following the election of President Donald Trump in 2016, despite his avowed admiration for Brexit.

The future of what Britain calls its "special relationship" with America has been clouded by Trump's reluctance to reaffirm NATO's Article V mutual defence pledge, his hostility to the 2015 international agreement to curb Iran's nuclear programme, which Britain and its EU partners helped broker, his 'America First' economic nationalism and his suspicion of multilateral trade, climate change and arms control agreements.



## ***How Britain limits the damage of Brexit will depend significantly on closer bilateral strategic cooperation with France***

On all these issues, Britain's position is much closer to that of the EU than to that of the current US administration.

Under President Emmanuel Macron, France seems at least temporarily to have displaced the UK, distracted by Brexit, as America's go-to ally and Trump's preferred interlocutor. However, intelligence and military cooperation between London and Washington remain close.

At a time when the EU is giving new priority to developing its own defence cooperation, London's departure removes a long-standing obstacle but also one of the continent's two serious military powers. That may diminish the Union's weight within NATO and put the spotlight on low defence spending elsewhere in Europe, since Britain has accounted for 25% of EU defence spending.

Brexit comes as the UK defence budget, which has taken a share of public spending cuts since the financial crisis, faces a tight squeeze. Britain needs to spend more on military equipment but will have less revenue to spend due to the economic consequences.

Although Britain is one of the few European states to meet NATO's goal of spending 2% of gross domestic product on defence, with top-notch intelligence services and special forces, a relative decline in its expeditionary warfare capabilities and waning public support for interventionism, have made it a less influential military partner for the Pentagon. France is now more deeply engaged militarily in Africa and the Middle East than the UK is. Since Britain's withdrawal from east of Suez, France is the only EU country with a military presence in the Pacific, where China is increasingly active.

Intervention fatigue after the casualties and indecisive outcomes of the 'Blair wars' over the last 17 years in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the chaos of post-Gaddafi Libya after the Anglo-French-led air campaign in 2011, led parliament to reject a government motion for Britain to join air strikes in Syria in 2013 over the use of chemical weapons against civilians. London did eventually join Washington and Paris in a brief air strike in 2018 after another chemical attack in Damascus. Parliament was not consulted in advance.

Since 2014, the UK has lost only one soldier to hostile action, the lowest casualty rate since the Second World War. However, 36 people were killed in terrorist attacks in Britain in 2017.

UK defence industries risk losing out in European collaboration and contracts because of Brexit while simultaneously facing headwinds in the US market due to Trump's 'America First' philosophy. Barring some improbable concession by Brussels, British companies will

miss out on defence research and development funds from the EU budget, which are set to increase significantly from 2021 to become the third or fourth largest pot of military R&D money in Europe after the British, French and German national R&D outlays.

France and Germany are advancing plans to develop a next generation fighter jet together, while a Franco-British project for an unmanned future combat air system seems to have stalled.

## LIMITING THE DAMAGE

How Britain limits the damage of Brexit will depend significantly on closer bilateral strategic cooperation with France, its fellow nuclear-armed UN Security Council permanent member, which shares a global outlook.

Joining President Macron's proposed European Intervention Initiative - an intergovernmental drive to develop rapidly deployable crisis management capabilities and a common doctrine - should give the UK an active role, given the likelihood that expeditionary operations will be conducted by ad-hoc coalitions of the willing. How far British public opinion will support such interventions, for example in Africa, remains to be seen.

London should also build stronger bilateral defence ties with Germany rather than allowing its continuous military presence on German soil since the Second World War to end in 2019 under previous plans. And the UK should seek to join Franco-German arms cooperation projects, driving consolidation among the main

European national defence industries, rather than becoming totally dependent on the US defence sector.

The government should negotiate a special partnership with the EU and its agencies on matters of foreign policy, defence, security, police and judicial cooperation. It should offer a financial contribution to the EU's nascent European Defence Fund, if member states agree to allow British defence companies to participate fully in cross-border tenders for research and procurement contracts. If they won't, as seems likely, it should seek 'pay to play' arrangements to join individual projects.

The UK should make a similar financial commitment to retain the fullest possible relationship with Europol, the EU police agency, and Eurojust, the judicial cooperation clearing house, both of which help fight serious organised crime and terrorism, as well as the Schengen Information System, the Passenger Name Records database and the European Arrest Warrant. This will mean accepting the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice over these institutions, signing an agreement on handling secure information, and continuing to apply EU data protection standards.

Prime Minister May has proposed that Britain and the EU conclude a treaty on these police, justice and security matters, where the community method of EU governance applies. This makes sense since some member states, notably Germany, will need such a legal basis to extradite their nationals to a non-EU country. Given the legal complexity, it will likely take

longer than the 20-month transition period to negotiate. It is vital to maintain the status quo in the interim.

On foreign policy, Britain cannot expect to have a vote in EU decisions or a seat in its councils. However, the UK and the EU should agree to hold regular consultations at senior diplomatic level ahead of the monthly meetings of the EU's Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), as well as ad-hoc expert-level meetings on topical issues of mutual interest and periodic ministerial meetings of a UK-EU Association Council.

The UK and the EU27 should hold an annual summit at head of government level. This should be structured to encourage a free exchange of views and avoid a pro forma agenda. The High Representative should be able to invite the UK to attend part of meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council as an observer with speaking rights on matters of mutual interest. The invitation would be rescinded if a majority of foreign ministers opposed it.

The justification for such unprecedented arrangements lies in Britain's permanent membership of the UN Security Council, which makes coordination on global issues, crisis management and sanctions policy vital, as well as its military capabilities. Partners such as Norway, Switzerland and Turkey will doubtless complain if Britain secures closer involvement than they enjoy, and the EU would do well to use the opportunity to upgrade its consultations with other third countries.

The UK, the only large EU member state to meet the UN goal of spending 0.7% of its GDP on official development assistance, contributes roughly 15% of the European Development Fund, which is distinct from the general EU budget. London channels £1.5bn a year through the EU fund, roughly 11% of the UK's official development assistance, making it the third largest contributor after Germany and France. That will continue until 2020 under the agreed Brexit financial settlement. Thereafter, the UK and EU should coordinate development spending upstream by consulting on priorities, and on the ground in recipient countries.

It is one of the ironies of Brexit that having frequently obstructed the development of the EU's common security and defence policy (CSDP), even after NATO officials gave it their blessing, the UK is now seeking a special partnership with the EU's emerging defence programme and wants to contribute to EU military operations. That was the message of the future partnership paper on foreign policy, defence and development published by the UK government in October 2017, and of May's speech to the Munich Security Conference in February 2018.<sup>(1) (2)</sup>

The EU's chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, set out Brussels' red lines in a speech in Berlin in November 2017, saying that as a third country, the UK "will no longer be involved in decision-making, nor in planning our defence and security instruments". It may no longer command an EU-led operation or lead EU battlegroups.<sup>(3)</sup>

However, if the EU wishes to engage British forces in joint operations and benefit from the UK's acknowledged competence in operational planning and command, it should offer routine upstream consultations before the Political and Security Committee decides to launch an EU mission. This would go beyond the current arrangements for invitations to third countries to join EU actions and to participate in the conduct of operations through a committee of contributors. But it would preserve the decision-making autonomy of the EU, which is the Union's key principle.

There is a clear trade-off between the UK's ability to shape a mission and its willingness to commit forces with the risk of casualties. This cries out for a pragmatic solution, rather than EU legalism or UK sovereigntist rigidity, in the interests of both sides. The 'enhanced opportunities partnership' which NATO has developed for Finland, Sweden and four other countries that are not members of the alliance, offers a tried and tested flexible model.

It will pose sensitive political choices for the UK's Conservative party, which long opposed EU defence cooperation and demonised the largely imaginary spectre of a "European army". The more restrictive the terms of Britain's future trade relationship with the EU are, the harder it will be to maintain and develop security cooperation.

This is not just because British politicians will be inclined to blame Europe for "punishing" the UK, and public opinion will be minded to pull up the drawbridge, but also because

Europeans will be disinclined to give Britain a special status in defence and foreign policy matters that suggests there have been no consequences from Brexit.

French, German and EU leaders all face difficult decisions to preserve European security after Brexit. France will have to find a way of harmonising its commitment to European integration and its close defence partnership with the UK. Germany will need to finally get real about military operations and defence spending if it wants to be seen as a serious security actor.

But British leaders face a choice between security cooperation on the EU's terms and the obsession with national sovereignty if they wish to limit the damage of Brexit.

## FOOTNOTES

- (1) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/643924/Foreign\\_policy\\_\\_defence\\_and\\_development\\_paper.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643924/Foreign_policy__defence_and_development_paper.pdf)
- (2) <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-at-munich-security-conference-17-february-2018>
- (3) Barnier speech to the Berlin Security Conference, November 29, 2017 ([http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-17-5021\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-17-5021_en.htm))



## CHAPTER 1

# LONELIER ISLANDS

THE UK AFTER BREXIT

## NOT IN THE ROOM

The United Kingdom faces bigger strategic and security challenges on leaving the European Union than at any time since the end of the Cold War.

While the UK will remain a nuclear power, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, a pillar of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the world's sixth biggest economy and a member of the G7 and G20 groups as well as of the Commonwealth of mostly former British colonies, its moorings in Europe's premier political and economic organisation will be severed. Britain will no longer be in the room when the 27 EU nations take decisions on trade, economic regulation, security, foreign policy, sanctions and possibly military action.

"The EU has been Britain's principal circle of influence over its international economic and security priorities," says Robin Niblett, Director of Chatham House, the UK's Royal Institute of International Affairs. "The UK is going to have to work harder after Brexit."<sup>(1)</sup>

Obsessed by arguments over future relations with Europe and the economic fallout from Brexit, Britain's political establishment has yet to measure the strategic consequences or hold a serious debate on its foreign, security and defence policies outside the EU. After decades of being an "onshore balancer" among European nations within the EU, the UK will revert to the more uncomfortable position of "offshore balancer". This centuries-old role has not always been a success for British security, and the UK has less power than it had in the 20th century.

The country will have to work harder to promote its national security interests and preferences at a time when a resurgent Russia, an assertive China, an unpredictable America and unbroken jihadist militancy are fuelling global instability.

The government's 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review put terrorism, extremism and instability top of the list of major challenges, followed by the resurgence of state-based threats, the growth of cyber and technological threats and the erosion of the rules-based international order. All four have become more acute in the last three years, and Brexit poses potential problems in coping with each of them.<sup>(2)</sup>

***"Russia sees Brexit as being stage one of the disintegration of the European Union. The other member states shouldn't be complacent because picking them off will go on"***

**Pauline Neville-Jones**

Former Minister for Security and Counter-Terrorism and Chair of the British Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC)

## RESURGENT RUSSIA

Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea and destabilisation of eastern Ukraine since 2014 along with its use of cyberattacks and information warfare techniques to penetrate Western countries' IT systems, cause economic damage and undermine democracy and its aggressive military probing of European countries' air and sea defences pose a growing threat to Britain and its NATO and EU partners. The chance of major war in Europe may be remote, but the risk of lower level conflicts that could start without official military involvement and escalate is manifest.

In the Cold War, the UK was regarded as an ideological and military enemy of the Soviet Union, second only to the United States. It is increasingly treated as such by Vladimir Putin's Russia. Cyberattacks have targeted UK government agencies, energy infrastructure and, at least indirectly, the National Health Service. Russian submarines have been detected close to vital North Atlantic communications cables, Russian naval vessels have sailed through the North Sea and the English Channel, and Russian combat aircraft have flown close to UK coastlines.

As the prestige destination and financial haven of choice for wealthy Russians - both friends and foes of Putin - Britain has eagerly accepted the investment and consumer spending for two decades without inquiring into the origins of the money. The attempted murder of a former Russian spy who had been a double agent for

Britain, carried out on British soil with a nerve agent ascribed by the British government to Russia, brought tension with Moscow to a head in March 2018, prompting mutual expulsions of diplomats and calls for a crackdown on the fortunes of Kremlin-friendly oligarchs in the UK.

Whether Russia has been singling out Britain because it sees it as weakened by Brexit is a matter of conjecture. A senior NATO source said the UK was now one of the countries on the front line in Moscow's "hybrid warfare" - varied forms of cyberattack, subversion with fake news, military intimidation and covert operations. "Britain is subject to particular pressures because it is seen as more vulnerable and manipulable", he said. While the British government remains tough on Moscow, the opposition Labour party is led by a veteran anti-nuclear campaigner with a soft spot for Russia, and Brexit supporters include as many isolationists as liberal internationalists.<sup>(3)</sup>

Lady Pauline Neville-Jones, a former minister for security and counter-terrorism and chair of the government's joint intelligence committee, said Russia might well be probing for weakness. "You certainly can't exclude that. It would be a natural conclusion for them to draw. There's a bigger game going on. They see Brexit as being stage one of the disintegration of the European Union. The other member states shouldn't be complacent because picking them off will go on".<sup>(4)</sup>

Kori Schake, who served on the US National Security Council and in the State Department under President George W. Bush before becoming Deputy Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, said "Russia has been buzzing all of us, not just the UK." But she added: "There is likely to be more testing by adversaries of the claims of the UK and the continental Europeans to a common defence."<sup>(5)</sup>

UK government officials play down the idea that Russia is targeting Britain particularly, noting that other European countries including Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the Baltic states have also recorded increased intrusions into their airspace and coastal waters, while Moscow has been courting, funding and providing a media platform for far-right nationalists in many EU countries.

"The Russians are doing things in France and Germany too," said Tom Tugendhat, the Conservative Chairman of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee. "They are trying to break the international rules-based system." He cited cyberattacks on French President Emmanuel Macron's election campaign, the use of fake news in Germany to stir up feeling against refugees during the 2015-16 migration crisis, an assassination attempt on the Prime Minister of Montenegro as well as active Russian military support for rebels in Ukraine and Georgia.<sup>(6)</sup>



## UNCERTAIN AMERICA

Brexit comes at a moment of unusual uncertainty in what London calls its “special relationship” with the United States - a term rarely heard in Washington except to flatter British visitors. The election of President Donald Trump on a nationalist ‘America First’ platform six months after the UK voted to leave the EU has strained transatlantic ties and raised doubts about decades-old US commitments to rules-based, multilateral governance and to European security.

A trend towards disengagement began before Brexit or Trump’s election, with President Barack Obama’s military pullback from the

Middle East, backseat role in the Ukraine crisis, ambiguity over the Arab Spring pro-democracy uprisings, and diplomatic pivot towards Asia. Obama’s decision not to intervene in Syria in 2013 after chemical weapons were used came right after the British parliament, for the first time, rejected a government proposal for the UK to join air strikes. Both were taken as an affront by the French government, which was ready to intervene.

Intervention fatigue after grinding, unpopular and inconclusive coalition and NATO military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the chaos that followed the 2011 Anglo-French-led

air campaign in Libya, have taken their toll on both sides of the Atlantic. “The days of Britain and America intervening in sovereign countries in an attempt to remake the world in our own image are over,” Prime Minister Theresa May said in a speech to US Republican leaders in January 2017.<sup>(7)</sup>

However, Britain did join the United States and France in striking Syrian military targets in April 2018 in response to another chemical weapons attack, without recalling parliament to authorise action. By that time, the Syrian army, backed by Russia and Iran, had all but won the war.

Deep military and intelligence cooperation with Washington remains the bedrock of British security policy. Many US strategists expect that Britain’s usefulness to the US will diminish once it is no longer in the room to influence EU decisions and policies.

Some on the American right hope London will be an even closer ally once it is “free” of the unreliable Europeans. But Kori Schake probably reflects mainstream thinking in Washington when she sees Brexit as a net loss for the United States.

“Britain leaving the EU is a real worry because the Brits fought on the front lines of EU recklessness on defence issues. When countries wanted boxes on charts instead of operational capabilities, the US had a strong ally,” she said. “It probably means that Britain will get more strident about doing things in NATO. That will make it harder for the United

***“The days of Britain and America intervening in sovereign countries in an attempt to remake the world in our own image are over”***

**Theresa May**  
UK Prime Minister

States because Britain will try to deliver us on a harder policy towards the EU vis-à-vis NATO.”

The ambition articulated by former prime minister Tony Blair for Britain to act as a bridge between the United States and Europe is no longer credible, if it ever was. London’s ability to sway US policy was always uncertain. As German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder observed in 2001, traffic across Blair’s bridge always seemed to flow in one direction. Washington is more likely now to go directly to Paris and Berlin rather than channel its requests via a British bridge to nowhere.

Former premier Harold Macmillan imagined that Britain could play the elder sage role of Athens counselling a powerful but brash American Rome. The latest Roman emperor seems disinclined to seek or heed such advice.

On a range of issues from multilateral free trade to climate change, the role of the UN, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the international agreement

to curb Iran's nuclear programme and the management of relations with China, the UK finds itself at odds with the Trump administration and in step with Europe. Furthermore, the President's outspoken demeanour and impetuous tweets have made him politically toxic in Britain. Prime Minister May had to publicly distance herself from Trump after he retweeted an anti-Muslim propaganda video by a far-right British white supremacist group.

Tom Tugendhat, an influential Conservative lawmaker who served as a British officer alongside US forces in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, sees the irritations with Trump as a short-term glitch in a deep, enduring security relationship. "In some areas we are more aligned with the United States, in some areas we are

***"In some areas we are more aligned with the United States, in some areas we are aligned with the EU. That's the simple truth about the UK, that it's impossible to choose and therefore we must do both"***

**Tom Tugendhat**

Member of the UK's House of Commons and Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee

aligned with the EU. That's the simple truth about the UK, that it's impossible to choose and therefore we must do both," he said, adding: "The White House is not the administration. The White House is an element of it."<sup>(6)</sup>

Despite Trump's erratic behaviour, the United States has substantially increased the budget of its European Deterrence Initiative, sent more troops and hardware to NATO's eastern flank, joined the UK in expelling Russian diplomats and taken part in the April 2018 air strike in Syria.

More than a million Britons signed an online petition in 2017 urging the government not to host a state visit by Trump, and the speaker of the House of Commons said he would not invite the President to address parliament, as is customary on such visits. The President has had to settle for a lower key visit in July during parliamentary recess, away from London and outside the demonstration season.

While Trump applauded Brexit and predicted that other countries would follow suit and leave the EU, his administration has not rushed to offer Britain preferential trade terms. When Washington decided to impose tariffs on imported steel and aluminium in 2018, the UK was targeted along with the rest of the EU and stood with its European partners in condemning the move and threatening proportionate retaliation.

## CHALLENGING CHINA

London will face a bigger dilemma if a nascent trade war between the United States and China escalates, since the UK has gone to great lengths to court Chinese money and promote the City of London as the Western clearing house of choice for Beijing's yuan currency, leveraging close financial ties with its former Chinese colony of Hong Kong.

Like its major European partners - Germany, France and Italy - Britain long saw China's rise primarily as a business opportunity rather than a strategic challenge. Under prime minister David Cameron and his China-friendly finance minister, George Osborne, the UK was the first Western country to become a founder member of Beijing's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Washington views this institution with suspicion as a rival to the US-led World Bank: it has twice the funds of the European Investment Bank and welcomed major Chinese investments in Britain's sensitive nuclear energy sector.

Since leaving office, Cameron has been hired to promote investment in Belt and Road Initiative. London has become less blue-eyed about Chinese ambitions under May's government, which introduced a national security review for foreign investments before allowing the nuclear plant deal to go ahead. On a visit to Beijing, May resisted pressure to formally sign up to President Xi Jinping's signature Belt and Road Initiative - an infrastructure project across Asia to Europe - which critics say is intended to pull more countries into Beijing's strategic orbit.

She also echoed US criticisms of intellectual property theft and the overcapacity of Chinese steel flooding world markets.

Britain has joined US and Japanese criticism of China's militarisation of disputed islands and the construction of artificial islands in the South China Sea. Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson angered China when he announced plans in early 2018 to send a UK frigate through the waterway "making it clear our navy has a right to do that". Britain and France have discussed the idea of maintaining a coordinated "regular and visible" naval presence in the area, as proposed by then French defence minister Jean-Yves Le Drian in 2016.<sup>(9)</sup>

Such a joint patrol by the two European UN Security Council permanent members to uphold freedom of navigation would be welcomed by Washington, Tokyo and Canberra but could draw London and Paris into a military standoff with Beijing for which neither of them has the resources.

***Britain long saw China's rise primarily as a business opportunity rather than a strategic challenge***

## RING OF FIRE

Britain's security is also shaped by insecurity around Europe's southern neighbourhood, from North Africa and the Sahel across the Middle East to Turkey and the Caucasus. This poses threats of terrorism, uncontrolled migration, people smuggling, and drugs and arms trafficking.

Like France, the UK faces a persistent threat from the nexus of domestic and foreign Islamist militancy. Al-Qaeda, the self-styled 'Islamic State' and other radical jihadi groups see Britain as one of their prime targets, due to its colonial past and military role in Muslim countries, its closeness to the United States and its large Muslim minority of immigrant origin.

The defeat of the Islamic State group's attempt to control territories in Syria and Iraq by a US-led coalition, in which Britain played a part, has neither extinguished the flow of jihadi volunteers traveling back and forth between the UK and the Levant, nor the number of radicalised individuals willing to commit acts of violence on the streets of Britain, security officials warn.

Brexit has also prompted concern about a possible resurgence of violence by republican and unionist extremists in Northern Ireland, if it forces a return to border controls between the British province and the Republic of Ireland. This would come 20 years after the Good Friday Agreement ended three decades of

sectarian strife. The EU played a supportive role in the 1998 peace deal, providing both the single market framework and substantial financial assistance.

Both Britain and the EU have said they are determined to avoid a hard customs border on the island, but at the time of writing, a legal agreement on how to avoid such a barrier had yet to be reached and the issue was stirring political tension within the UK and with Dublin.

A plurality of British and European security practitioners and experts who responded to a Friends of Europe survey accompanying this report (see Annex B) said fighting terrorism at home and abroad and combating cyber threats should be the top priorities for British security policy after Brexit, well ahead of countering Russian or Chinese power.

The 2017 Manchester Arena bombing, which killed 23 people and wounded about 500, and a spate of low-tech attacks using vehicles and knives, showed that Britain is as vulnerable to violence by Islamist radicals as France or Belgium, despite not being a member of the Schengen Area. It also highlighted the importance of continued intensive cooperation among UK and European police and intelligence services after Brexit.

Some of that work takes place outside EU structures through bilateral and multilateral intelligence channels, such as the Five



Eyes intelligence alliance with the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand; cooperation in the field among British, French, US and German special forces; and the intergovernmental Counter Terrorism Group of 30 European countries which meets to exchange intelligence information in The Hague. These will not be affected by Brexit.

However, the EU runs the channels through which European countries transfer suspects rapidly; share information on criminal suspects, money laundering, drugs trade, counterfeiting, slavery and human trafficking and cybercrime; pass on evidence for police investigations expeditiously; and store airline passenger name records, fingerprints and identity details on millions of travellers entering and leaving the Schengen open-border zone.

Brexit could cut Britain off from, or severely inhibit its access to, those vital databases and cooperation procedures unless the UK and the EU agree on arrangements unprecedented for a non-member state. London would have to agree to stick to strict EU data protection rules and accept the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice on overall police and justice cooperation.

No third country is currently allowed to trawl the Europol database of criminal suspects freely. Partners have to submit individual requests for information through a liaison officer. Even Norway and Switzerland, which unlike the UK

are part of the Schengen Area though not of the EU, are denied direct, unrestricted access to the data.

When Britain leaves, “the main risk is that we will have a dislocation of a major partner from what is a very integrated security framework. The extent of that dislocation and the effects depends very much on the outcome of the negotiations,” said Rob Wainwright, the British Director of Europol who left office in May 2018. This is particularly serious at a time of accelerated, more complex security threats due to terrorism and cybercrime, increasingly cross-border in nature.<sup>(10)</sup>

“The first real concern will be cutting off the rather large amount of daily data exchange through the Europol mechanism. If you suddenly turn the tap off, that’s a lot of security benefit that the UK no longer has. It would be very costly and much less efficient,” Wainwright said.

He also acknowledged a risk that British and EU data protection cultures could drift apart, making information sharing more difficult. For historical reasons, Britain and France have tended to favour public safety over individual privacy rights in handling personal data, while Germany, haunted by the Nazi and Stasi past, gives priority to protecting privacy. “After Brexit, the balance in the EU will shift further towards shielding privacy,” said Peter Ricketts, a former UK national security advisor now in the House of Lords.<sup>(11)</sup>

## IN LOVE WITH NATO

The British love NATO because they helped create it as the keystone of Western security at the outbreak of the Cold War. A Briton, Lord Ismay, was NATO's first secretary general and famously said its purpose was "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in and the Germans down". Since then, two other Britons have held NATO's top civilian job, Peter Carrington during the 1980s Euromissile crisis and George Robertson during transatlantic tensions over Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000s.

NATO officials, for their part, say they love the British, because they are robust in military action, among the best performing Europeans on defence spending and investment in equipment, outstanding officers and "thought leaders" on security policy and diplomacy. Britain is a member of the "Quad" of senior allies that act as an informal steering group - along with the United States, Germany and France. Italy is occasionally, but not systematically, included.

A British officer has served as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR) since the creation of the multinational integrated command in 1951. That influential position, at the right-hand of NATO's American military commander, could be one of the casualties of Brexit.

Under the so-called Berlin Plus arrangements concluded between NATO and the EU in 2002, DSACEUR commands EU crisis management

operations using NATO planning and resources in cases when the United States is not participating. Officials in Brussels, Berlin and Paris say that person cannot be British once the UK becomes a "third country".

"The Brits are going to lose DSACEUR," a Brussels official said. The British do not see it that way, however. A senior government official said the UK had always held the role in recognition of its substantial weight in the alliance. "The British identity of DSACEUR has nothing to do with the EU," the official said. "Frankly, this is a red herring." There were other ways to deal with command of EU missions, he said, for example by using another senior NATO officer from an EU member state.<sup>(12)</sup>

***"The Brits are going to lose DSACEUR"***

**EU official, speaking on condition of anonymity**

## EU “THREAT TO PEACE”?

The struggle over Britain’s position in NATO’s Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) is only one skirmish in a likely tug-of-war between Britain and its erstwhile EU partners. Another long-running battle, which the UK has almost certainly lost by leaving, is over the establishment of a separate operational headquarters (OHQ) for EU military missions.

The notion of an ‘EU army’ has long been a bogeyman for the British establishment.

London fought for two decades to prevent a European OHQ, which it sees as an unnecessary duplication of NATO structures and a potential source of transatlantic decoupling. After the Brexit vote, EU ministers took a step closer to establishing an OHQ by creating a modest 30-person “permanent operational and planning capability at the strategic level for non-executive military missions”. Many European officials reckon it is only a matter of time, once Britain goes, before the Union establishes a military headquarters.<sup>(13)</sup>



As it leaves the EU, one of the big questions for Britain will be whether to embrace, ignore or oppose EU defence integration.

In Brussels, there are concerns that the UK is already trying to play NATO off against the EU, though British officials deny this. Some suspected a British hand in NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's warning at the 2018 Munich Security Conference that the EU must avoid three risks: "the risk of weakening the transatlantic bond, the risk of duplicating what NATO is already doing and the risk of discriminating against non-EU members of the NATO Alliance". Stoltenberg riled EU officials by highlighting that, after Brexit, non-EU allies will account for 80% of NATO defence spending.<sup>(14)</sup>

British Eurosceptics fear the EU could waste resources and effort on creating more institutions and box-ticking processes rather than more military capabilities and deployable forces. It might encourage the US to withdraw from Europe in the illusion that the EU could handle its own defence, and suck European forces into conflicts from which Britain and the US would then have to extricate them. The EU's failure to manage the violent breakup of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s is Exhibit A for this argument.

The sceptical view of European ambitions was put most trenchantly by Conservative MP Julian Lewis, Chairman of the House of Commons Select Committee on Defence, and a long-time Brexit supporter.

"The EU having a defence identity can actually be a threat to peace," he said. "A politically unified EU with a unified defence organisation and a common foreign and security policy is large enough to provoke but not strong enough to deter a potential enemy. I worry that in its self-importance and grandiosity, the EU will go about issuing security guarantees to vulnerable third countries that without US underpinning could lead to the EU lumbering into conflict."<sup>(15)</sup>

***"A politically unified EU with a unified defence organisation and a common foreign and security policy is large enough to provoke but not strong enough to deter a potential enemy"***

**Julian Lewis**

Member of the UK's House of Commons  
and Chair of the Select Committee  
on Defence

## BILATERAL EUROPEAN TIES

While NATO and the United States are the UK's main defence partners, London also has a range of bilateral and multilateral security relationships outside the transatlantic and EU institutions. By far the closest and most important bilateral defence partnership is with France - a fellow European nuclear power, UN Security Council permanent member and military peer.

This close relationship survived bitter differences over the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, to which France led international opposition, and has since flourished. In the 2010 Lancaster House Treaties, London and Paris agreed to work together in military operations and training, with the establishment of a Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, on the stewardship of nuclear stockpiles and simulated testing of future nuclear warhead designs, and in armaments cooperation, with an agreement to study a Future Combat Air System.

French President Emmanuel Macron has sought to build on that defence partnership to soften the strategic impact of Brexit. At a bilateral summit held symbolically at the UK's Sandhurst Military Academy in 2018, he invited Britain to join his proposed European Intervention Initiative to develop a joint threat analysis, intervention doctrine and force inventory among like-minded European countries outside the NATO and EU institutions. UK Prime Minister Theresa May accepted in principle.

The 2015 UK strategic review also elevated Germany to the rank of a major partner, although cooperation with Berlin is at a much lower level than with Paris, not least due to Germany's deep reluctance to use military power, feeble defence spending and arms export restrictions.

"Germany is not serious about defence for a whole series of very legitimate reasons," said Tim Tugendhat, the former army officer who heads the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. "Its army is in a woeful state."

Chancellor Angela Merkel has made clear that she regards Britain as a less reliable ally because of the vote to leave the EU, bracketing it with the United States under Trump. "The era in which we could fully rely on others is to some extent over," she said after attending the 2017 NATO and G7 summits with Trump and May. "That's what I experienced over the past several days. We Europeans really have to take our fate into our own hands - naturally in friendship with the United States of America, in friendship with Great Britain."<sup>(16)</sup>

Plans to issue a joint UK-German vision statement on defence, the text of which had been agreed by the two defence ministers, were put on hold by Berlin in summer 2017 to avoid sending a confusing signal amid tense Brexit negotiations between the European Commission and the UK, and probably also to avoid upsetting left-wing voters ahead of the German federal election.

Officials on both sides expect the declaration to be issued in 2018, along with a British decision to maintain a small military presence, stored equipment and training grounds in Germany, reversing a 2010 decision to bring home the last British forces on German soil, where they have been continuously stationed since the end of the Second World War. Britain was also expected to announce a major order to buy hundreds of Boxer armoured vehicles from a consortium led by Germany's Rheinmetall and Krauss-Maffei Wegmann (KMW).<sup>(17)</sup>

These bilateral defence relationships and potential multilateral European armaments cooperation offer one of the crucial ways to limit the damage of Brexit to European security.

***Bilateral defence relationships and potential multilateral European armaments cooperation offer one of the crucial ways to limit the damage of Brexit to European security***





## NOSTALGIA FOR THE COMMONWEALTH

Brexit has also prompted a yearning, particularly among Conservative Leave supporters, for closer ties with the Commonwealth, a 53-nation grouping of mostly former British colonies. Some see deeper trade and security relations with Commonwealth nations and a wider 'Anglosphere' of English-speaking countries as a substitute for EU membership.

May tried to use a 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London to advance that goal, but drew a cool response. The summit was overshadowed by a furore over a Conservative policy of deporting immigrants from former Caribbean colonies who had been

in the UK for decades but could not prove their right to residence because officials had destroyed the records.

Brexiters argue that the Commonwealth will produce a bigger aggregate share of world GDP than the EU-minus-Britain from 2019 would. Yet the Commonwealth accounts for barely 5% of UK trade, compared to 44% with the EU.

Some would like to see Britain's 14 overseas territories, its sovereign bases in Cyprus and Gibraltar, and a string of training and base facilities in the Middle East and Asia-Pacific form the backbone of a global British military presence.<sup>(18)</sup>

The government has already quietly begun to reverse Britain's never total military withdrawal from east of Suez, announced in 1971, with the opening of a naval support facility in Bahrain in 2018 and the establishment of small British defence staffs based in Abu Dhabi for the Gulf, Nigeria for West Africa, and Singapore for the Asia-Pacific region.

Martin Pike, a former naval officer and member of the pro-Brexit Veterans for Britain group, has suggested UK foreign aid should be spent on security for Commonwealth countries. This could lead over time to a security arrangement along the lines of the existing Five Powers Defence Agreement among Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore, he argued, which promotes military cooperation but without committing its members to specific actions, unlike the NATO treaty.<sup>(19)</sup>

Kori Schake suggested one option for Britain to compensate for its loss of influence in Europe might be to play a bigger security role in Asia, leveraging the Five Powers and Five Eyes connections to offer a supporting role alongside the US-led "Quad" of Asian powers - the United States, Japan, India and Australia. Whether the current introspective UK has the political ambition, the public support, the military capacity or the financial resources to underpin such a policy remains to be seen.

"It's a lovely idea but where would our people come from? We struggle to get a ship past southeast Asia once a year," said Simon Fraser, former top civil servant in the UK Foreign Office.<sup>(20)</sup>

Commonwealth countries have shown only limited enthusiasm for closer trade and security ties with Britain after Brexit, pointing to complications with their efforts to reach deals with the EU. India, the biggest member by population with a GDP almost equal to Britain's, has made clear it wants more access for its students to British universities as a price for commercial opening. Canada, Australia and New Zealand have given priority to trade deals with the EU.

For their part, the UK's poorer former African, Caribbean and Pacific colonies stand to lose out in the EU's ACP trade and aid pact once Britain is no longer at the table to fight for resources and market access against France and its former possessions, EU diplomats say.

***Commonwealth countries have shown only limited enthusiasm for closer trade and security ties with Britain after Brexit***

## A UN MAINSTAY

One enduring vector of British influence that has helped London “punch above its weight” in global affairs is the UK’s status as one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. It makes Britain a player in global crises, gives it a bigger voice and confers responsibilities, which the UK takes seriously, notably by meeting the UN goal of allocating 0.7% of its GDP for development assistance.

Britain is not only a member of the Permanent Five (P5) powers, which meet regularly to discuss global crises, but also of a Western P3, with the United States and France, and an informal P2 when France dissents from US policy, as it did over Iraq. More recently, the UK has at times formed a P2 with France to counter some of the Trump administration’s disruptive initiatives, such as its opposition to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

British diplomatic clout at the UN has been amplified by its place at the intersection of three circles of influence - the EU, NATO

and the Commonwealth. EU ambassadors routinely coordinate their positions in New York and Brussels, via the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

It will be in the interests of both the UK and the EU27 to continue this coordination, and wherever possible alignment, to maximise fragile European influence at the UN on a wide range of global issues from climate change to development.

While they can serve as useful magnifiers of British influence, neither the Commonwealth nor the United Nations offers a plausible economic or security alternative to deep engagement with Europe.

We will consider the options for limiting the strategic damage of Brexit in Chapter 5. But first we need to examine the political constraints on both sides, the state and missions of the armed forces and the place of the British defence industries.

## FOOTNOTES

- (1) Telephone interview with the author, March 27, 2018
- (2) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/478933/52309\\_Cm\\_9161\\_NSS\\_SD\\_Review\\_web\\_only.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf)
- (3) Interview with the author, February 20, 2018
- (4) Interview with the author, March 14, 2018
- (5) Interview with the author, February 26, 2018
- (6) Interview with the author, March 15, 2018
- (7) <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-speech-to-the-republican-party-conference-2017>
- (8) Interview with the author, March 15, 2018
- (9) UK and French officials confirmed to the author information published by Shashank Joshi of Britain's Royal United Services Institute and Euan Graham of Australia's Lowy Institute: <https://www.maritime-executive.com/editorials/joint-freedom-of-navigation-patrols-in-the-south-china-sea#gs.a4q=hg4>
- (10) Telephone interview with the author, March 1, 2018
- (11) Interview with the author, February 27, 2018
- (12) Interview with the author, March 15, 2018
- (13) <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/06/08/military-mpcc-planning-conduct-capability/>
- (14) [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_152209.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_152209.htm)
- (15) Interview with the author, February 27, 2018
- (16) <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/28/angela-merkel-says-europe-can-no-longer-rely-us-uk-must-fight/>
- (17) Interviews with British and German officials, March 2018
- (18) For example, see "Global Britain and the Future of the British armed forces", London 2017, a report by James Rogers for the Henry Jackson Society, <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/HJS-Global-Britain-and-the-Future-of-the-British-Armed-Forces-Report-2.0.pdf>
- (19) <https://brexitcentral.com/spend-foreign-aid-commonwealth-security-brexit/>
- (20) Interview with the author, February 26, 2018



## CHAPTER 2

# THIN RED LINES

## THE POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

## POLITICS VERSUS LAW

In British military history, the ‘Thin Red Line’ was the name given to a heroic stand during the Crimean War in which an outnumbered line of Scottish infantrymen repulsed a Russian cavalry charge at the Battle of Balaclava in October 1854.

Nowadays, ‘red lines’ are used by countries to define their imperatives in a negotiation. Both the United Kingdom and the European Union have set out such lines publicly before the start of talks on their future relationship. They constitute the main political constraints on reaching practical arrangements for defence and security cooperation after Brexit.

The British red lines are largely around politics and national sovereignty; the EU’s are mostly legal but also ideological. The Europeans accuse the British of wanting to have their cake and eat it too, by leaving the EU but still expecting the benefits of membership. The British say the EU is being dogmatic and legalistic, but the Union is first and foremost a community of law.

Finding a way through the tangle of red lines is a daunting diplomatic challenge, even if the two sides are at this stage only working towards a political declaration on the framework for future relations. This will take several years to flesh out in binding legal texts.

## THE UK'S RED LINES

On the UK's side, the objectives set out by Prime Minister Theresa May derive from her interpretation of the main demands of the Leave campaign in the 2016 referendum, and from her need to hold the ruling Conservative party together and to preserve her minority government in office. This means avoiding a revolt by hardline Brexiteers and/or Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party.

In a speech at Lancaster House in London in January 2017, May declared that Britain would be a sovereign state pursuing an independent

foreign policy after it leaves the EU. She called for "a new and equal partnership – between an independent, self-governing, Global Britain and our friends and allies in the EU. Not partial membership of the European Union, associate membership of the European Union, or anything that leaves us half-in, half-out". She also rejected any model already enjoyed by other partner countries.

The UK would not be a member of the EU's single market or customs union, would no longer accept the jurisdiction of the European



Court of Justice (ECJ) and would not make “vast contributions” to the EU budget, she said. It would “take back control” of its own borders and regulate immigration from the EU. It would reach its own trade agreements with third countries. Britain would enact the full body of EU law into domestic legislation before leaving the Union, but parliament would have the sovereign right to diverge from it thereafter.<sup>(1)</sup>

In her letter giving formal notice of the UK’s intention to withdraw from the EU treaty under Article 50, May said Britain wanted a bespoke “deep and special” relationship. She also said leaving the Union without a deal would be better than accepting a bad deal, adding that failure to reach an agreement would weaken cooperation in the fight against crime and terrorism.<sup>(2)</sup>

She later clarified that the UK’s commitment to European security was unconditional, removing the implicit threat of a trade-off between commercial terms and cooperation on public safety.

In a speech to the Munich Security Conference in February 2018, the Prime Minister proposed an EU-UK treaty on internal security, covering cooperation on police, justice and intelligence. She blurred one of the most obstructive red lines by saying that “when participating in EU agencies the UK will respect the remit of the European Court of Justice”, but added that a solution would have to respect “our unique status as a third country with our own sovereign legal order”.

May also made clear Britain would be willing to contribute to the budget of EU agencies, such as Europol and Eurojust, to which it sought privileged access after Brexit. Those agencies are funded out of the general EU budget to which partners such as Norway and Switzerland pay for access to the single market.<sup>(3)</sup>

Other British positions that may have an impact on security and defence cooperation have emerged from statements by May and her ministers. One is a priority for NATO as the premier forum for European defence and transatlantic political cooperation. Another is an insistence that there must be no customs border “down the Irish Sea” between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK after Brexit.

In her Munich speech, May held out the prospect of deploying British military capabilities “with and indeed through EU mechanisms” but added “if we are to choose to work together in these ways, the UK must be able to play an appropriate role in shaping our collective actions in these areas.”

Senior British officials say that means the UK would only commit forces and assets to a CSDP operation if it was given a say upstream in defining the mission and assured of full information and oversight in the conduct of operations alongside EU countries. Britain would not expect to be in the room when the EU decides whether to launch a crisis management operation, but it would expect far more prior consultation and access than third country participants are currently given.

## EU RED LINES

On the EU's side, red lines have been set out in the negotiating guidelines adopted by EU27 leaders and in speeches by chief negotiator Michel Barnier.

They reflect a determination to hold the 27-nation Union together, ensure its full autonomy of decision-making and deter any other member state from seeking to leave the bloc, even if the risk of secession has waned in the months since the Brexit vote.

They are based on a set of core principles:

- no third country may enjoy the benefits of EU membership;
- there can be no “cherry picking” of EU policies or advantages;
- there must be a balance of rights and obligations in any agreement;
- to maintain the integrity of the single market, the “four freedoms” of movement for capital, goods, services and people are inseparable;
- ECJ jurisdiction applies to the enforcement of all EU rules as well as to the oversight of all EU policies, institutions and agencies.

Several other EU principles have a bearing on the negotiations, including the goal enunciated in its 2016 Global Security Strategy of “strategic autonomy of the Union”, a French-driven notion that Europe must have the industrial and military capacity to operate on its own and not have to rely on the United States for

technology or strategic assets. This is a political wish rather than a statement of reality.

Another such principle is avoiding discrimination against other third countries, such as Norway, Switzerland or Turkey. For example, Europol has agreements with a dozen non-EU states and hosts liaison officers from several US law enforcement agencies, but none of those partners has direct access to the agency's database. Information can only be exchanged upon individual requests and with a battery of restrictions on the use, storage and transmission of the data.

“A future partnership should respect the autonomy of the Union's decision-making, taking into account that the UK will be a third country, and foresee appropriate dialogue, consultation, coordination, exchange of information, and cooperation mechanisms,” the EU27 said in guidelines for its negotiators on the framework of future relations. “As a pre-requisite for the exchange of information in the framework of such cooperation a Security of Information Agreement would have to be put in place.”

“In the light of the importance of data flows in several components of the future relationship, it should include rules on data. As regards personal data, protection should be governed by Union rules on adequacy with a view to ensuring a level of protection essentially equivalent to that of the Union,” the guidelines said.<sup>(4)</sup>

The negotiating guidelines contained little mention of security and defence. The two areas come under different types of EU governance: Defence remains overwhelmingly intergovernmental and not subject to ECJ jurisdiction, except for the European Defence Fund (EDF) which is funded from the EU budget, run by the Commission and hence under ECJ oversight. By contrast, cooperation in justice and home affairs is fully subject to EU law and institutional procedures.

Barnier's speech to the Berlin Security Conference in November 2017 listed another battery of apparent red lines, which he said

***"Any voluntary participation of the United Kingdom in European defence will confer rights and obligations in proportion to the level of this participation"***

**Michel Barnier**

European Chief Negotiator  
for the UK Exiting the EU



***Both sides have declared their determination that citizens' safety and Europe's geopolitical security should not suffer as a result of Brexit***

derived from the fact that Britain would become a third country in defence and security issues after Brexit. While they sound rigid, some of these may in the end be negotiable.

“The UK defence minister will no longer take part in meetings of EU Defence Ministers; there will be no UK ambassador sitting on the Political and Security Committee. The UK can no longer be a framework nation (for EU operations); it will not be able to take command of EU-led operations or lead EU battlegroups. The UK will no longer be a member of the European Defence Agency (EDA) or Europol. The UK will not be able to benefit from the European Defence Fund the same way Member States will. The UK will no longer be involved in decision-making, nor in planning our defence and security instruments,” he said.<sup>(5)</sup>

Barnier stressed that a third country, however close, may not lay claim to a status equivalent or superior to that of a member state. “The Union’s decision-making autonomy must be respected; the United Kingdom may not decide on the use of certain capacities under the European flag. Any voluntary participation of the United Kingdom in European defence will confer rights and obligations in proportion to the level of this participation”.

He also set out what the EU expects from Britain in a future partnership: voluntary participation in CSDP missions; participation in joint armaments programmes, EDA capability projects and industrial cooperation; intelligence sharing to support EU external action and cooperation in detecting and responding to cyberattacks.

## POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

The good news for the future security and defence relationship is that they have been largely absent so far from the fierce political controversy in the UK over Brexit terms, and from the public exchanges of warnings and red lines between London and Brussels, at least since May clarified her unconditional pledge to Europe's security.

The government's 'future partnership paper' on foreign policy, defence and development in September 2017 struck a resolutely positive tone towards EU policies and institutions, eliciting some incredulity from Brussels officials who recall the UK's role as a spoiler in European defence integration, freezing the European Defence Agency's puny budget for the latest decade, after it helped co-found CSDP in 1999.<sup>(6)</sup>

In the policy paper, London offered to continue contributing to existing EU military missions and operations, including with UK command and control facilities, and to work with the EU on developing mandates and detailed operational planning for future CSDP missions.

It expressed a desire to collaborate in future EDA projects and initiatives and to explore models for participation in the nascent European Defence Fund.

Both sides have declared their determination that citizens' safety and Europe's geopolitical security should not suffer as a result of Brexit.

Yet each is operating under political constraints that may affect the eventual security and defence cooperation.

"It all depends on what sort of divorce settlement we get," said Lawrence Freedman, emeritus professor of war studies at King's College, London and one of Britain's most distinguished strategic thinkers. "The more acrimonious the Brexit, the worse it will be for defence and security."<sup>(7)</sup>

Brexiters in May's party have sought to tie her hands further, notably on the issues of ECJ jurisdiction and of financial payments to the EU for market access, but the government has sidestepped such demands so far.

Even among Conservative lawmakers who supported remaining in the EU, there is a disdain for EU defence efforts that may limit the desire for collaboration. "The EU's ability to conduct military operations so far has been extremely poor. Its attempt to be state-like on military matters runs exactly counter to the nature of the countries it comprises," Tom Tugendhat said.

Another political constraint on the government is the virulence of pro-Brexit media, especially the Daily Mail, the Daily Telegraph, the Daily Express and the Sun, which have a strong influence on Conservative MPs and their electorate. Any headlines that suggest Britain might have to go on funding an "EU army"



after Brexit would cause problems for May and her minority administration. That dog has not barked yet, but its potential bite worries government officials.

A UK position paper on enforcement and dispute resolution distinguished between the ECJ's 'direct jurisdiction', which would end in the UK after Brexit, and its authority in interpreting EU law, which would remain as it is. The position paper also pointed to precedents for dispute resolution panels in EU agreements with third countries.<sup>(6)</sup>

That appears to open a way to accepting ECJ rulings indirectly for example when working with EU internal security agencies with the fig leaf of a dispute resolution mechanism, if such a solution is acceptable to the EU27.

On the EU side, the main unspoken constraints are likely to be around jockeying for political and industrial advantage in a post-Brexit Union. German diplomats are prickly about any suggestion that the UK can "cherry pick" EU benefits by enjoying a special status on internal security. The French are keen to ensure that their powerful defence industries gain a competitive advantage from the European Defence Fund in Britain's absence.

All these considerations are in play in the bitter dispute over whether Britain and its companies will be allowed to continue to participate in the EU's Galileo navigation satellite system, which has military applications. We will discuss this in detail in Chapter 4.

Through its close bilateral cross-Channel ties, France has positioned itself to be the indispensable gateway for the UK's access to European defence cooperation. By building a joint expeditionary task force with Britain and including London in its new intergovernmental European Intervention Initiative, Paris aims to be the docking station for British military involvement in crisis management operations and joint armaments projects.

While that may be preferable to close involvement in CSDP for many decision-makers in London, it raises problems for Berlin and for many smaller member states since it threatens to make the EU's recently launched Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in defence at best a side-show and at worst an irrelevance.

Other EU states have national concerns that may impinge on the negotiations on security and defence. Nordic countries want to ensure that Norway, which has close ties with the EU within the European Economic Area and the Schengen zone, gets at least as good a deal as any enhanced security partnership agreed for the UK. Oslo has said it is watching the Brexit negotiations closely.

Several member states are concerned that EU candidate Turkey, a major troop contributor to the Althea CSDP mission in Bosnia, should not be alienated by special arrangements that might give the UK better consultation than other third country partners. Otherwise, Ankara could revert to blocking EU-NATO cooperation, as it did for more than a decade. However, some are just worried that Turkey should not gain

a closer status with EU defence and security policy as a result of Brexit, given its drift towards authoritarianism.

EU and national officials recognise the need to develop a special partnership with the UK in defence and security, but these red lines - both formal and informal - highlight how difficult it will be to frame such a relationship. One likely outcome is that the EU will have to compensate other third country partners by upgrading their relationships too.

## FOOTNOTES

- (1) <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-governments-negotiating-objectives-for-exiting-the-eu-pm-speech>
- (2) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/604079/Prime\\_Ministers\\_letter\\_to\\_European\\_Council\\_President\\_Donald\\_Tusk.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/604079/Prime_Ministers_letter_to_European_Council_President_Donald_Tusk.pdf)
- (3) <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-at-munich-security-conference-17-february-2018>
- (4) <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/33458/23-euco-art50-guidelines.pdf>
- (5) [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-17-5021\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-17-5021_en.htm)
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- (7) Interview with the author, March 16, 2018
- (8) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/639609/Enforcement\\_and\\_dispute\\_resolution.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/639609/Enforcement_and_dispute_resolution.pdf)



## CHAPTER 3

# SOLDIERING ON

## THE UK ARMED FORCES

## GLOBAL BUT NOT AUTONOMOUS

Britain's combat-hardened armed forces are widely regarded as being the most capable in Europe, along with the French. The United Kingdom has a broad spectrum military capability that enables it to act alongside the United States and other allies in theatres as far afield as Iraq and Afghanistan. However, alone it can only operate to a limited extent.

It has high-calibre special forces, enablers that are scarce among European allies such as air-to-air refuelling, strategic airlift, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance as well as command and control. It is a leader in military doctrine and officer training. But budget attrition has taken a toll.

"We are global but not truly autonomous. We provide a significant add-on to partners but it's not a return to empire. The scale is quite thin. The UK is not going to go to war on its own

with Russia or Iran," said Malcolm Chalmers, Deputy Director-General of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) think-tank.<sup>(1)</sup>

Like other European armies and even the mighty US war machine, the British military has suffered from deep cuts in real defence spending since the end of the Cold War, accentuated by austerity between 2010 and 2015. Critics, including former senior officers, say that has hollowed out some capabilities, although to nowhere near the same extent as Germany's.

Furthermore, Britain has mortgaged its future to two huge equipment programmes - modernising the Trident nuclear deterrent with four new submarines and new nuclear missiles, and procuring two large aircraft carriers and the latest generation F35 fast jets to operate from them.

These capabilities, once in service, will project power and deterrence but are of limited practical use in countering 21st century threats such as cyberattacks, hybrid warfare and Islamist terrorism. In a war, the carriers would be vulnerable to increasingly capable Russian or Chinese missiles and drones which could make deploying them risky around Europe's shores, in the Mediterranean or the South China Sea.

The UK has outstanding intelligence resources, including a state-of-the-art electronic surveillance service -Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) - and affiliated National Cyber Security Agency, as well as the domestic Security Service (MI5)

and the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), for overseas espionage. These key assets have their own funding line, the Single Intelligence Account, which is separate from the defence budget.

A 2018 National Security Capability Review outlined a 'Fusion Doctrine' designed to harness defence, internal security, diplomacy and economic policy capabilities to maximum effect in a whole-of-government approach. There is nevertheless fierce competition for scarce resources between traditional 'heavy metal' defence and the growing needs of homeland and cyber security, resilience and artificial intelligence.<sup>(2)</sup>



## DEFENCE SPENDING

The UK remains the only major European ally to spend more than NATO's target of 2% of GDP on defence, according to official figures. It also meets the Alliance's target of devoting more than 20% of the budget to equipment. And it spends more than other European countries on operations, exercising and maintenance.<sup>(3)</sup>

Yet defence spending has only just turned the corner after a long decline, and as the IISS's Kori Schake puts it: "Objectively, the requirements for UK defence will be bigger outside the EU."

Britain will continue to have the biggest defence budget in Europe after Brexit. However, it may be able to afford less military expenditure due to the economic impact of leaving the EU, and even unchanged outlays may buy it less equipment.

"Brexit is likely to mean less defence spending than if the UK had decided not to leave," said Trevor Taylor, professorial defence management fellow at RUSI.<sup>(4)</sup>

According to its own impact assessments, and to projections by most independent experts, the government will have significantly less revenue from which to fund defence and other priorities due to a Brexit-related fall in potential economic growth and likely lower tax receipts particularly from the financial services sector. How severe that shortfall is will depend on the future trade deal between Britain and the EU.<sup>(5)</sup>

RUSI's Taylor said Britain's three key objectives - force projection, nuclear deterrence and maintaining a conventional defence capability - and the policy of being able to operate alongside US forces from Day One of any crisis, were unaffordable at current spending levels even before the impact of Brexit. He calculates that one percentage point less economic growth per year would mean a cumulative £29bn less defence spending over the next decade if the military budget stayed at 2% of GDP per year.

"There needs to be an uplift but are we going to have the tax take to invest in our defence? If we don't have prosperity, we can't do everything [we] want to do for defence and other public services," said Phil Wilson, an opposition Labour party member of the House of Commons Defence Committee.<sup>(6)</sup>

The defence budget already buys less equipment than it did before the 2016 referendum because in the aftermath of the vote the pound lost up to 15% of its value against the dollar, in which purchases such as the F35 fighter aircraft and Orion P8 maritime patrol aircraft are denominated.<sup>(7)</sup>

So Brexit already means "less bang for the buck", at least in the short term.

A 2018 National Audit Office report estimated there was a "potential affordability gap" of between £4.9bn and £20.8bn in the British Ministry of Defence's 10-year Equipment

Plan to 2027, even after using up a £6bn contingency reserve. The forecast hole is due to a combination of unbudgeted additional equipment orders, currency depreciation, failure to include all costs, a likely shortfall in assumed efficiency savings and other financial risks.<sup>(6)</sup> The House of Commons Select Committee on Defence said “it is extremely doubtful that the MoD can generate efficiencies on the scale required to deliver the equipment plan.”<sup>(9)</sup>

The 2018 National Security Capability Review included a commitment to increase defence

spending by at least 0.5% above inflation each year to 2020/21, which is not enough to plug that gap.

The government is due to announce detailed plans to deal with the equipment budget squeeze in summer 2018. These may include delaying, spreading out and reducing some acquisitions, such as the F35s, as well as some reductions in the overall size and capabilities of the armed forces, which are the subject of fierce leaks and counter-leaks in the media.<sup>(10)</sup>



## OVER THERE

Britain has the widest global military reach of any European country except France, which has a permanent military presence and 1.5 million citizens in Asia-Pacific. In 2017, the UK had 13,000 soldiers serving overseas on missions or at permanent bases.

British forces are in the forefront of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) strategy of protecting and reassuring Central European allies following Russia's military intervention in Ukraine in 2014 by rotating forces in the Baltic states and Poland. Britain's permanent representative to NATO at the time, Adam Thomson, played a central role in shaping the strategy. The UK is leading NATO forces in Estonia with a contingent of 800 soldiers, has troops in Poland and is participating in Black Sea air policing with aircraft stationed in Romania. It also has about 100 military personnel training the Ukrainian armed forces.<sup>(11)</sup>

In the Middle East, the UK is involved in the US-led international coalition against Islamic State, participating in air strikes and with special forces on the ground in Syria and Iraq. It is helping train security forces fighting Islamist militants in Afghanistan and Nigeria.

The UK provides the operational headquarters for the EU's successful anti-piracy naval operation Atalanta off the Horn of Africa and commands a NATO Maritime Task Force in the Mediterranean, as well as participates in the EU naval operation Sophia to counter illegal people

trafficking in the southern Mediterranean. The Royal Navy also conducts patrols in the Caribbean Sea.

Britain created three new regional defence staffs for Africa, the Middle East and Asia-Pacific based in Nigeria, Abu Dhabi and Singapore in 2017. It opened a large naval support facility in Bahrain in 2018, has an air force base in Qatar and a defence relationship with Oman.

The UK has military training grounds in Belize, Brunei, Canada, Kenya and Nepal as well as sovereign bases in Gibraltar, Cyprus, Ascension Island and the Falkland Islands, and use of the US base in Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, which form part of its global signals intelligence network.

This global reach is a valuable asset in joint operations with allies such as the United States and France and contributes to European defence notably through communications surveillance and analysis, and by providing ground stations for the EU's Galileo navigation satellite network.

***Britain has the widest global military reach of any European country except France***

## HOLLOW FORCES?

British forces have rarely stopped fighting for long since the Second World War. They fought in the Korean War; waged a long, grinding campaign against Irish Republican Army fighters in Northern Ireland from the 1970s until the 1990s; were deployed as UN peacekeepers and in NATO military operations in Bosnia and Kosovo; intervened to crush insurgents in Sierra Leone and, after the September 11 attacks on the United States, took part in the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. They were also involved in the 2011 air campaign against Libya.

But fiscal attrition has taken its toll on the military, which is also facing a shortfall in recruitment due in part to record-low unemployment and high demand for workers in the civilian IT sector. The armed forces need tech-savvy geeks rather than grunts in the trenches nowadays, pitting them against Internet start-ups and corporate IT departments in a tight labour market.

The army is at its lowest size since the Napoleonic Wars. Hi-tech capabilities and Special Forces matter more than sheer troop numbers in 21st century warfare. But NATO planners insist that size still has a quality of its own.

Testifying to the House of Commons Defence Select Committee in November 2017, General Sir Richard Barrons, commander of the Joint Armed Forces Command until 2016, said the British army, navy and air force were “not fit

for purpose” due to under-investment and the Ministry of Defence was “in denial”. The army was “broadly 20 years out of date” and could not withstand a Russian missile and drone assault, he told lawmakers.<sup>(12)</sup>

He also said that Britain’s commitment to NATO to deliver a fully equipped armoured division-sized force for the territorial defence of Europe was a “myth”, a “mirage” and a “hologram”. While his dramatic language may reflect special pleading for service budgets to a sympathetic audience, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence to substantiate his judgment.

Service chiefs have been lobbying publicly against reported plans to scrap Britain’s last two amphibious landing ships as part of the forthcoming defence spending review. This exercise was separated from the National Security Capability Review at the last minute after armed forces minister Tobias Ellwood was reported to have threatened to resign if the army was slashed to fewer than 70,000 soldiers. The cut would be a heavy blow to the Royal Marines, which supply many of the recruits for the elite Special Forces.<sup>(13)</sup>

“The Royal Air Force is small and has pockets of excellence but nowhere near the depth and mass you would associate with the requirement,” said Bastian Giegerich, a former German defence planner now at the International Institute of Strategic Studies. The



IISS calculates that Britain lost roughly 25% of its conventional military capability due to the 8% budget cut decided in 2010.<sup>(14)</sup>

The navy lacks the support ships to form a battle group with the new Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers and has suffered persistent maintenance problems. Surface vessels and submarines have been cannibalised to keep a small number at sea. Defence experts say the UK carriers could only operate in a task force with allied vessels, either US or French. “We only have four or five hulls left to accompany an aircraft carrier,” said Nick Witney, a former official at the Ministry of Defence and the first director-general of the European Defence Agency. “We have shot ourselves in the foot so many times on the procurement front.”<sup>(15)</sup>

The army lacks the personnel and functioning equipment to field the division required by NATO. “We would have great difficulty in

deploying a division because there isn’t the support capacity and the engineering to put such a force into the field and sustain it, let alone the field hospitals,” said Rupert Smith, a former DSACEUR and commander of UN Forces in Bosnia, who commanded a British armoured division in the 1991 Gulf War.<sup>(16)</sup>

***“We would have great difficulty in deploying a division because there isn’t the support capacity and the engineering to put such a force into the field and sustain it”***

**Rupert Smith**  
Former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR)

## SPOOKS AND GEEKS

One of Britain's biggest contributions to European defence and security is in the realm of intelligence, communications intercepts and police know-how - something government officials have stressed in the Brexit negotiations. Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), which employs some 10,000 staff in electronic surveillance of communications and cyber security, is often depicted as the jewel in the crown and the envy of the world.

However its former director until 2017, Robert Hannigan, is the first to say the UK is heavily reliant on EU partners too. "The days when we thought we had the only intelligence agencies worth having and all the data that mattered are well gone," he said. "That's at least 30 to 40 years out of date. We rely on very capable agencies in Europe and information they hold on threats, terrorism, cyber and Russia, and we have worked more closely with them than ever before. The idea that it's all gone is ridiculous."<sup>(17)</sup>

While intelligence on military and terrorism threats tends to be shared either bilaterally or outside EU structures through the informal 30-nation Counter Terrorism Group of domestic security agencies which meets in The Hague,

the daily cooperation most likely to be adversely affected by Brexit is the systematic exchange of data. Hannigan said it was not possible to separate data sharing for security purposes from commercial uses.

"We will have to conclude an agreement that allows companies to share data, and the stumbling block is likely to be the way we treat data for national security purposes," he said, pointing to litigation over whether Britain's 2015 Investigative Powers Act is too intrusive and retentive by EU standards.

The potential for serious damage to information sharing on security after Brexit should not be underestimated.

For all the strains and mission overstretch on Britain's armed forces, they remain a vital asset for European security. While NATO will continue to provide the framework for their engagement in the territorial defence of Europe, imaginative solutions will be required to plug them into European crisis management operations after Brexit, whether under an EU, multilateral or bilateral framework.

## FOOTNOTES

- (1) Interview with the author, February 27, 2018
- (2) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/696305/6.4391\\_CO\\_National\\_Security\\_Review\\_web.pdf#page43](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696305/6.4391_CO_National_Security_Review_web.pdf#page43)
- (3) Defence spending figures are subject to a statistical battle. The government says it spent 2.2% of GDP on defence in 2016/17. NATO says the UK spent 2.12% in 2017 according to its method of calculation. The International Institute for Strategic Studies caused a furore in London by putting British defence spending at 1.98% for the second year in a row in its annual Military Balance, in February 2018. The difference is partly over whether pension payments count as defence spending.
- (4) Telephone interview with the author, March 20, 2018
- (5) Independent economic analysis commissioned by the government and publish by the House of Commons Committee on Exiting the EU estimated a loss in potential GDP over 15 years of between 2 and 8%, depending on the Brexit trade terms. A study by the Global Future think-tank based on that data suggested the government would have £32bn a year less revenue per year. That is almost as much as the entire £35.2bn defence budget in 2016/17.
- (6) Interview with the author, February 27, 2018
- (7) Exchange rates fluctuate and sterling has recovered much of its losses against the dollar by mid-April 2018. The 2016 equipment modernisation plan was based on an exchange rate of \$1.54 to the pound. By February 2017, it had fallen as low as \$1.20. In late April 2018, it was trading at \$1.38.
- (8) <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/The-Equipment-Plan-2017-to-2027.pdf>
- (9) <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/201719/cmselect/cmdfence/431/431.pdf>
- (10) See for example: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/06/royalnavy-could-lose-beach-landing-ships-next-round-defence/>; <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/nov/14/british-forces-no-longer-fit-for-purpose-former-uk-service-chiefs-warn>; <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/01/12/pm-warned-tory-revolt-horrific-defence-cuts/>;
- (11) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/652915/UK\\_Defence\\_in\\_Numbers\\_2017\\_-\\_Update\\_17\\_Oct.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652915/UK_Defence_in_Numbers_2017_-_Update_17_Oct.pdf)
- (12) <https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/b8c81008-d7f1-4972-8157-f29cdaa09420>
- (13) <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/revolt-over-defence-cuts-63vrjzsg>
- (14) Telephone interview with the author, March 19, 2018
- (15) Interview with the author, March 15, 2018. See also: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/14/royal-navy-laughing-stock-three-quarters-warships-action-struggling/>
- (16) Interview with the author, February 22, 2018
- (17) Interview with the author, February 26, 2018



## CHAPTER 4

# COLLATERAL DAMAGE

## THE DEFENCE INDUSTRIES

## INDUSTRIAL CASUALTIES

The UK defence, security and aerospace industries could be among the casualties of Brexit, causing collateral damage to European security.

Moves by the European Commission to shut British companies out of the European Union's Galileo satellite navigation system - prompting outrage, threats of retaliation and frantic haggling from London - may only be a foretaste of a more systematic drive to freeze the United Kingdom's defence sector out of EU-funded armaments cooperation, except as occasional sub-contractors on a pay-to-play basis.

That would push Britain and its defence industries deeper into the arms of the United States, the world's biggest defence market. It might also leave continental European manufacturers without the critical mass to compete with the US military-industrial complex.

Brexit is occurring just as European countries, feeling a growing threat from Russia, have finally started to increase military spending after 25 years of steep cuts. More consolidation and collaborative projects are on the cards in the European defence sector.

"The big trend in the last 5-10 years has been for European defence companies to grow closer together, accelerating now as countries spend more," said Robert Hannigan, the former GCHQ chief now a consultant at Flint Global. "That particularly matters because defence inflation is higher than overall inflation. The only way you can afford to do this is collaboratively and we have been moving closer together with Europe, partly as a balance to the massive US sector."<sup>(1)</sup>

"There are lots of people on all sides who would like to see that stopped in its tracks.



That would massively disadvantage the UK, which would be trying to go it alone in a world where you can't really go it alone. The danger is we simply become sucked into the US defence sector," he said.

The campaign to leave the EU was run in the name of taking back control over Britain's laws, borders and destiny, but in defence it could leave the country more dependent on a foreign power. "There's a danger that you could have no sovereign capability at all," Hannigan said.

Three factors may ultimately limit the damage:

- most industrial cooperation on arms systems takes place bilaterally or among small groups of countries and companies

outside EU structures, with a proliferation of intergovernmental bodies such as OCCAR and the Letter of Intent group working to manage cooperation;

- several big European defence companies have units and interests in the UK and don't want to reverse their cross-Channel integration;
- Britain has technological excellence in several areas which European officials and defence contractors are keen to keep in the European market.

British ministers accuse Brussels of seeking to punish the UK economically but EU negotiator Barnier and his team retort that they are merely applying EU law in the light of London's

choice to leave the European single market and customs union. Amid the posturing on both sides, there is little doubt that in the short run it is the British companies that will likely experience loss.

From an EU perspective, the argument for making special arrangements for the UK in the defence R&D and procurement sectors because of its size and importance to European capabilities is strong but it has to be weighed against determination to prevent “cherry-picking” of EU benefits, to preserve the integrity of the single market, and not to discriminate against other third countries.

Even though the UK has implemented the EU's defence directives, which regulate matters such as tenders for defence maintenance, repairs and facilities management, it is loath to commit to accepting future regulation over which it will have no say after it withdraws. Norway too has enacted the EU directives and systematically follows EU rules as a member of the European Economic Area, so it would object if Britain were offered special access.

Brexit comes in the midst of a tug of war between member states, which control national defence spending and traditionally insist on a return in jobs and work share in arms cooperation, and the Commission, which wants to open up the market and insert its own influence with a mixture of EU budget money as the carrot and single market rules as the stick.

***"The big trend in the last 5-10 years has been for European defence companies to grow closer together, accelerating now as countries spend more"***

**Robert Hannigan**

Former Director of the Government  
Communications Headquarters  
(GCHQ)

Not everyone is convinced that applying EU competition rules is a sensible approach to a sector with monopoly state customers and suppliers, many of whom are heavily state-influenced monopolies. In the past, EU antitrust policy has prevented - in the name of the free market - mergers that could have created European defence champions. US competitors have arguably been the main beneficiaries.

The EU's 2016 Global Security Strategy proclaimed the objective of European strategic autonomy, interpreted in Brussels as preserving a technological and industrial defence base that is independent of US-regulated technology. To some continental players, especially France, this means a 'Buy European' policy that excludes third country companies from EU public funding, even if it would deprive the EU of British defence technology and know-how.

## BIG SPENDER

The UK defence, aerospace, security and space sector is the largest in Europe and the region's biggest spender on military research and development. The sector is highly integrated both with the United States and with continental Europe. Some of that R&D spend comes from the EU's civilian research programme, funding clusters of excellence around British universities. The UK has been the biggest recipient of European Research Council grants, and stands to lose a lot, whatever its future third country relationship with the EU research programme will be.

In 2016, the entire sector had a turnover of £72bn and exports of £37bn, and it employed 363,000 people in the UK, according to the ADS industry body. Defence alone accounted for £23bn in turnover, £8.7bn in average annual exports between 2012 and 2015 and 142,000 direct jobs, including 30,000 in R&D and design.<sup>(2)</sup>

Arms trade between Britain and the rest of the EU has been relatively small. Only 11% of British arms exports went to EU countries between 2000 and 2016, and 23% of British



arms imports came from the EU, according to figures compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).<sup>(3)</sup> This is partly because Britain and its main European allies award most defence contracts nationally, but also because of the giant place Saudi Arabia occupies as the UK's main foreign customer, buying half of all British arms exports.

Nevertheless, some of Britain's main weapons systems are the products of sometimes flawed European collaboration, notably the Tornado and Eurofighter/Typhoon warplanes and the A400M military transport aircraft. Brexit could further complicate such long-running programmes by disrupting cross-border supply chains and mobility of skills.

The biggest UK arms manufacturer, BAE Systems, which employs 83,200 people worldwide, is the world's third largest defence corporation after Lockheed Martin and Boeing, and the only non-American company in the global top six. BAE Systems has a big subsidiary incorporated in the United States with a separate management structure and a special security agreement that allows it to supply products and services to the US defence and security establishment and participate in highly classified programmes. The US government regulates its exports and technology transfers.

An attempted merger between European aerospace giant Airbus, the main contractor for the A400M, and BAE Systems, the British partner in Eurofighter/Typhoon, fell apart in 2012 because of opposition from the German

***The UK defence, aerospace, security and space sector is the largest in Europe and the region's biggest spender on military research and development***

government, which feared a loss of production sites and control. It would have created an EU defence champion of global scale.

"The problem with BAE Systems being so linked to America is that if it has a foot in European defence cooperation, it's basically seen as an American Trojan horse," said Alice Pannier, an expert on Franco-British defence cooperation at Johns Hopkins University in Washington.<sup>(4)</sup>

BAE Systems has been involved since 2015 in a joint project with France's Dassault Aviation and British and French engine makers Rolls-Royce and SNECMA to develop an unmanned Future Air Combat System (FCAS). But the project has stalled because of "political and budget uncertainty" over Brexit, according to Dassault's Chief Executive, Eric Trappier. The UK did not sign off on a full-scale demonstrator programme as the French had hoped at a January 2018 summit and the project is now "treading water" while a Franco-German plan to develop a fifth generation fighter jet for the 2040s is moving ahead.<sup>(5)</sup>

## CROSS BORDER COMPANIES

Four major players in the UK sector are cross-border European companies - plane and helicopter maker Airbus, defence electronics maker Thales, missile manufacturer MBDA and Italian-British defence and aerospace firm Leonardo. All have voiced concern to the government about the impact of Brexit on their business, and some have warned they may have to relocate research, production and other activities if the UK leaves the single market and customs union.

Among UK-based companies, BAE Systems will keep a foothold inside the EU after Brexit through its subsidiaries in Sweden. Rolls-Royce, the world's second largest aircraft engine maker, has 12,000 employees at 24 locations in Germany, where many of its components are machined. The company is concerned about the risk of border hold-ups.

On the European side, Airbus, which makes the wings for all its civilian airliners at Broughton in Wales, says it could be more seriously impacted by Brexit than any other company. Its tightly

integrated cross-border supply chain provides work for 4,500 sub-contractors in the UK. So it would be particularly vulnerable to non-tariff barriers such as rules of origin inspections and paperwork. Moreover, Airbus needs to be able to move staff rapidly across borders to and from its locations around the continent.

To avoid complications due to Brexit, the company has already begun to transfer a backup satellite ground control station for the Galileo satellite navigation system from Southampton in England to Spain.

Industry sources said Airbus has told the government it needs rapid clarity before mid-2018 on future trade relations with the EU and a transition of at least two - preferably five - years before a new trade agreement comes into force. Airbus has a team of 30 staff working full-time on the consequences of Brexit on procurement, logistics, sourcing, customs, human resources, R&D, intellectual property management, legal, political affairs and communications. Altogether more than 100 employees were involved in

***Political uncertainty around Brexit has put Franco-British projects to develop an unmanned combat air system and a successor missile to Storm Shadow/SCALP on hold***

contingency planning. By comparison, fewer than ten Airbus staff were diverted full time to deal with the ‘Millennium Bug’ IT scare at the turn of the century.

The company made four specific requests to the British government: that the UK remain a member of the European Aviation Safety Agency to ensure certification of wings and other components manufactured in Wales; that there be no customs barriers between the UK and the continent; that the flow of employees to and from plants in Britain be easy and unimpeded by red tape; that Britain maintain its R&D budget and access to the EU’s science and innovation programme funding.

“Airbus passionately believes we are stronger together. We are a big company, which employs 14,000 people at 25 sites in the UK and 110,000 in our supply chain. At the moment, Brexit is a significant potential threat to our long-term presence in the UK,” said Jeremy Greaves, Vice-President for Corporate Affairs and Strategy at Airbus UK.<sup>(6)</sup>

MBDA, which has an integrated management structure with technical centres of excellence in the UK, France, Germany and Italy, has been held up by the European Commission and defence experts as a model of successful cross-border integration. Yet it may no longer be considered an EU company in post-Brexit tenders, since BAE Systems owns 37.5% of its capital. That would deny it access to the European Defence Fund (EDF) under current Commission proposals.

The company, which makes the Storm Shadow/SCALP air-to-ground cruise missile carried by British and French fighters and used in the Syria strikes, employs 4,900 staff in France and 3,500 in the UK. Political uncertainty around Brexit has put Franco-British projects to develop an unmanned combat air system and a successor missile to Storm Shadow/SCALP on hold.

“We don’t want to unravel MBDA, there’s no question of that,” said Olivier Martin, the Paris-based general-secretary of MBDA. “We want to be able to submit projects for EDF funding including the British and ensure that the UK pays its way. We want to be able to use their competences. The problem is that both sides, especially the EU, are asking us not to explore that issue until they have the clauses of an agreement.”<sup>(7)</sup>

Among the issues that could cause problems for all the cross-border defence companies are staff mobility, data transfers, disruption to complex supply chains and intellectual property rights.

***Four major players in the UK sector are cross-border European companies***

## GALILEO PRECEDENT

The story of British participation in the EU's Galileo satellite navigation system, a rival to the US Global Positioning System, highlights the risks to the wider defence and security sector as well as the political toxicity of security-related commercial issues.

Britain long opposed EU ambitions to develop its own satnav network, arguing it was an unnecessary duplication of the US system. A British diplomat recalled being instructed to vote against it in EU Council working groups in the late 1990s. Conservative Eurosceptics derided it as "the Common Agricultural policy"

in space. However, London came around to the project in 2003 on condition that it be run as a public-private partnership (PPP).

When the PPP collapsed amid cost overruns and the venture was on the brink of failure, the UK agreed in 2007 to allow unspent EU budget funds to be repurposed to rescue Galileo, partly because the British space industry had become a big supplier to the programme.

By the time Galileo became operational in 2016, the UK had contributed 12% of the budget and British companies had won about



15% of the work, including making some of the most sensitive features such as the satellite payloads and the encryption system.

After the Brexit vote, the Commission wrote to the UK companies, telling them they would no longer be able to work on Galileo after Brexit or tender for new contracts. Furthermore, it told the British government that it would not be allowed to access the Public Regulated Service, the encrypted channel of Galileo for military applications, because letting a third country use it would “irretrievably compromise” the security of the system. Britain protested and blocked the next phase of awards of Galileo contracts by the European Space Agency, a non-EU body.

The UK is now talking - somewhat implausibly in light of its budget strains - of building its own satellite navigation system in the 2020s. This may be a negotiating tactic, or just a way for the government to throw some red meat to the pro-Brexit media, which are wallowing in headlines about the UK-EU “star wars”.

Ironically, the EU is negotiating with Norway and the United States on their request for access to the Public Regulated Service in return for payment. British officials suspect French protectionism is driving the Commission’s approach and have threatened to shut down Galileo’s access to British ground relay stations in the Falkland Islands, Ascension Island and Diego Garcia in retaliation.<sup>(6)</sup>

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier has since clarified that the UK could be permitted to

access the Public Regulated Service provided it reached an appropriate agreement on handling classified information. But he said that London had voted for the unanimously adopted rules that bar companies from non-member states from working on the most sensitive features and had to live by those rules because of its sovereign decision to leave 750 international agreements, including on Galileo, when it leaves the Union. EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Federica Mogherini added: “The question is not whether this would make Galileo ... stronger or weaker. The point is that a decision has consequences.”<sup>(9)</sup>

The Galileo affair - unresolved and escalating at the time of writing - shows the potential for industrial collaboration in the defence and security sector to go sour after Brexit to the detriment of both sides and ultimately of Europe’s collective security.

***The story of British participation in the EU’s Galileo satellite navigation system highlights the risks to the wider defence and security sector***

## WHAT THE UK WANTS

In its ‘future partnership paper’ on foreign policy, defence and development, the government played up what it called world-leading British R&D facilities and said it wanted to explore how to ensure that the UK and European defence and security industries could continue to work together, including in security applications of Galileo.

“We could also consider options and models for participation in the Commission’s European Defence Fund including both the European Defence Research Programme and the European Defence Industrial Development Programme,” the document said, offering continued access to facilities such as the UK Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in return.

Government officials said London was open to full participation in the EDF, with an appropriate financial contribution, or to negotiating arrangements that gave British companies the right to tender for cross-border EDF contracts as partners with firms from EU member states on a pay-to-play basis. The Commission has ruled out third country membership of the EDF and is opposed to any systematic pay-to-play option, where a non-member could choose à la carte which projects it wished to join.

The EDF regulation proposed by the Commission stipulates that only defence firms that are established on EU territory and controlled by member states or their nationals would be eligible for support. The rules

governing the Fund are still being negotiated among member states, the Commission and the European Parliament, with fierce lobbying by the US defence industry as well as Britain not to shut out third countries from access.

EU sources say that at most, the EU is likely to offer a possibility for third country companies to participate as sub-contractors in individual projects by invitation only. This would be in case these third countries have unique capabilities unavailable in the Union.

In a recent report titled “The United Kingdom’s Contribution to Europe’s Security and Defence”, the IISS’s Bastian Giegerich and Christian Mölling of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) suggested that EU member states and the UK should aim for a common understanding on the shared strategic interest of the defence industries.

“Based on such an understanding, London and the other EU capitals could embark on a common political project: the forging of a truly European defence-industrial base,” they said.<sup>(10)</sup>

The trouble is that the UK defence sector cannot easily be carved out from the rest of the economy and would have to abide by regulations and standards increasingly governed by EU single market rules, including free movement of labour. The decision to leave the single market and the customs union makes that hard to imagine.

## BEST CHANCE

The best chance to avoid or limit a damaging Brexit schism between the UK and European defence industries appears to lie in major multilateral arms cooperation projects established outside EU and NATO structures. Such projects could tie countries and companies together for decades. The biggest is the Franco-German initiative to develop a future combat aircraft for the 2040s to replace the Rafale and the Eurofighter/Typhoon.

The French and German defence ministers signed a letter of intent at the Berlin Air Show in April 2018 outlining high-level common requirements for a new fighter jet. They also agreed to explore joint development of a maritime warfare aircraft for use from 2035.

France said it would continue parallel work on future combat air systems with Britain and see how to integrate the projects later.

If Britain and BAE Systems were invited to join the next generation fighter programme, it could drive industrial integration and offer the prospect of sufficient investment and orders for a plane that the Europeans will struggle to finance on their own. Sweden and Spain could be invited to participate, bringing their industrial expertise into a common European fighter family.

A senior UK government official confirmed that joining a European fighter project was one of the options being considered in the ongoing



***"Joint defence programmes are good for cementing relationships but they are not good at fixing marriages"***

**Tim Hepher**

Global Aerospace Industry Editor  
at Reuters

combat air review by the Ministry of Defence. The possibility of buying more F35s, since the UK is already acquiring some for its aircraft carriers, was also being considered.<sup>(11)</sup>

This would require goodwill not just among governments but among companies such as the French Dassault Aviation and Airbus which, despite an equity link, have been historic rivals. But the alternative could be Europe abandoning the cutting-edge fighter business and ordering US F35s, with Dassault soldiering on with the Rafale for France and a few export markets, and Sweden's Saab selling Gripen fighters dependent on US technology to poorer European NATO allies who can't afford the F35.

Such mega-projects are highly political and would require sustained commitment by heads of government in London, Paris and Berlin. A nasty Brexit breakup would make such a joint venture almost unthinkable. A more benign divorce settlement might just create the conditions for a defence industry romance.

"Joint defence programmes are good for cementing relationships but they are not good at fixing marriages," said Tim Hepher, Global Aerospace Industry Editor at Reuters.<sup>(12)</sup>

Britain has an inconstant record on European defence cooperation. Over the years, it has pulled out of joint projects to build helicopters, frigates and infantry fighting vehicles with continental partners, and rowed back on plans to make French and British aircraft carriers inter-operable for each other's planes. London would have to make big gestures to restore trust.

One could be a big order for armoured vehicles from a German-led consortium of Rheinmetall and KMW. Another might be a willingness to join a Franco-German main battle tank programme to build a successor to Germany's Leopard II, France's Leclerc and Britain's Challenger.

So while the short-term outlook for British defence industries in the EU is very uncertain, the horizon for working together in the interests of European security is not completely dark. While the British defence sector is largely in private hands, the government has a crucial say in which direction it takes.

It would be undesirable strategically and economically for Brussels to try to shut the UK out of the European defence market, or for London to increase its dependency on the United States. In Chapter 5, we will consider how such outcomes can be avoided.

## FOOTNOTES

- (1) Interview with the author, February 26, 2018
- (2) <https://www.adsgroup.org.uk/>
- (3) [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-03/fssipri\\_at2017\\_0.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-03/fssipri_at2017_0.pdf)
- (4) Telephone interview with the author, March 15, 2018
- (5) <https://www.flightglobal.com/news/articles/brexit-throws-anglo-french-fcas-programme-into-doubt-446592/> BAE Systems declined a request to participate in this study.
- (6) Interview with the author, March 15, 2018
- (7) Interview with the author, March 29, 2018
- (8) <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/5906949/britain-galileo-satellite-european-union-threat/>
- (9) Remarks by Barnier and Mogherini at a European Union Institute for Security Conference event on “The future of EU foreign, security and defence policy post Brexit” in Brussels, May 14, 2018
- (10) <https://www.iiss.org/-/media/documents/publications/the%20united%20kingdoms%20contribution%20to%20european%20security%20and%20defence.pdf?la=en>
- (11) Interview with the author, March 15, 2018
- (12) Conversation with the author, April 18, 2018



## CHAPTER 5

# MAKING THE BEST OF IT

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## HOW TO MANAGE A FAILURE

Brexit is not the end of the world. The strategic situation of Europe does not fundamentally change because the United Kingdom has voted to leave the European Union. Nor will the main threats to European security suddenly stop at the English Channel.

But political and economic friction over trade and regulation generated by an acrimonious Brexit could weaken both sides and poison the atmosphere for security cooperation. It will take years to weave a new relationship into legal agreements, so it is essential to minimise short-term damage.

Internal security is the area where both parties have most to lose immediately, if the screens were to go blank after Brexit. Defence is

the sector where EU institutions so far play the least role and where NATO provides a common roof. The reality is that most European defence cooperation, whether on capability development or operations, will continue to take place outside the EU framework among small groups of willing and able countries.

Properly managed, Brexit could cause minimal disruption to collaboration on internal security and crime fighting, while freeing up the EU to pursue its own defence capability building with Britain as a strong external partner instead of an eternal foot on the brakes. As one EU official observed, Brexit might even have done Europe a favour if it pushes the Union to look at the world more strategically.

Such a benign outcome is by no means guaranteed. It will require Britain to recognise that its leverage is weaker outside the EU than as a member state, and to grasp every opportunity to cooperate strategically rather than turn its back on Europe and pursue chimeras such as the 'Anglosphere' or retreat into isolation.

And it will require EU governments to go beyond the legalistic approach outlined by chief negotiator Barnier and devise imaginative ways to engage the UK in a special partnership in security, foreign policy and defence that goes well beyond current third country arrangements.

Behind the sound and fury of the domestic debate on the nature of Brexit, there are encouraging signs that policy professionals in London are looking for practical solutions. These include the Prime Minister's proposal of a security treaty with the EU, British agreement to participate in France's European Intervention Initiative - whatever that project turns out to be - and a renewed UK interest in armaments cooperation with European partners.

All key government policy documents recognise that Britain's security will remain inextricably intertwined with that of Europe, and that the EU will remain the UK's biggest economic partner.



## POLITICAL RISKS

However, political change in Britain once it leaves the Union could call that pragmatic approach into question.

If hardline Brexiteers such as Boris Johnson, Michael Gove, Liam Fox or Jacob Rees-Mogg were to take control of the Conservative party after May goes, they might well strike a more confrontational attitude towards the EU, egged on by jingoist right-wing newspapers.

Such leaders would instinctively turn more towards the United States and could reignite turf wars between NATO and the EU. But a pivot to Washington might not be received with great enthusiasm, given the relative weight of Britain and the EU27, leaving the UK as a demandeur adrift in heavy seas.

The Conservative Brexiteers would probably go along with an EU-UK security treaty that entailed indirectly accepting the jurisprudence of the ECJ for the sake of retaining access to the vital Europol, Eurojust, Schengen Information Service and Passenger Name Records databases. But they would not favour British participation in CSDP missions.

However, even they would face pressure from the defence industry to participate in European arms cooperation projects. Perhaps with that in mind, Johnson backed the EU's launch of PESCO on defence as foreign secretary in 2017, saying Britain would be "like a flying buttress to support the cathedral".<sup>(1)</sup>

If the Labour party under left-winger Jeremy Corbyn were to win a post-Brexit election, the UK would likely become more inwardly focused on radical economic and social reforms, and instinctively more reticent about external military action.

Labour has historically been pro-defence when in government. A Labour government ordered the two aircraft carriers due in service by 2020, and the party's 2017 manifesto, adopted under Corbyn, supported renewing the Trident nuclear deterrent and meeting the NATO defence spending target of at least 2% of GDP.

"As the security threats and challenges we face are not bound by geographic borders, it is vital that as Britain leaves the EU, we maintain our close relationship with our European partners," the party platform said. "Alongside our commitment to NATO, we will continue to work with the EU on a range of operational missions to promote and support global and regional security."

But Corbyn is a lifelong nuclear disarmament campaigner who has voted against every UK military action in his 35 years in parliament. In a 2017 speech, he said he was not a pacifist but the best defence for Britain was a government "actively engaged in seeking political solutions to the world's problems".<sup>(2)</sup> He might be willing to engage in UN peacekeeping missions or EU-led humanitarian operations, but probably not in combat.

Some distinguished defence experts think the UK is unlikely to take part in EU military operations after Brexit, whoever is in government.

“There will be a relatively clean break with CSDP as soon as the transition period begins. I’m rather sceptical that we will be involved in EU operations. It’s hard to believe the UK will want to take part,” said RUSI’s Malcolm Chalmers, who has advised the British government and parliament on security policy. “It’s more likely that serious operations will be put together outside EU structures.”<sup>(3)</sup>

On the EU side, the biggest political risk to a cooperative security and defence relationship lies in a toxic combination of Brussels legalism, French-inspired industrial protectionism and German passivity.

***Most European defence cooperation, whether on capability development or operations, will continue to take place outside the EU framework among small groups of willing and able countries***

The best illustration has been the Commission’s effort to force Britain and its space industry out of the Galileo satellite navigation system and deny it access to the encrypted Public Regulated Service with military applications on the grounds that sharing the information with a third country would “irretrievably compromise” security.

If the Commission and member states treat post-Brexit Britain as a security risk and discriminate against UK companies in public tenders on those grounds, the chances of limiting the damage from Brexit to European security and defence are close to zero.

Likewise, if the EU were to shut Britain out of access to Europol and other databases from the day it leaves the Union or from the end of the transition period, the EU would harm itself and undermine long-term cooperation.

It is not too late to hope that wiser counsels will prevail.

“Between 25 and 30% of overall EU military capabilities fly the Union Jack: it is too little for the UK to stand alone; it is too much for the EU to do without it,” two elder statesmen of European security - Wolfgang Ischinger, Chairman of the Munich Security Conference, and Stefano Stefanini, a former Italian ambassador to NATO - wrote in an article highlighting the interdependence. “In times of shifting geopolitics, growing and multiple threats, and budget constraints, London should not delude itself and Brussels should not be in denial.”<sup>(4)</sup>

## BIGGER COMMITMENTS?

One possible consequence of Brexit is that the UK will increase defence spending, make a bigger commitment to NATO and cultivate bilateral defence relations with European allies more assiduously. That would be driven by a desire to lend substance to the government's 'Global Britain' ambition, demonstrate its continued relevance in international security and try to protect influential positions such as the British DSACEUR.

Early signs of such a trend include the deployment of British helicopters to Estonia in addition to the ground contingent in NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence, a bigger presence in Black Sea air patrols, the agreement to contribute three heavy lift helicopters to France's anti-jihadist operations in the Sahel, and the expected announcement of a big armoured vehicle purchase from Germany.

While they dispute that this is compensation for Brexit, British officials acknowledge that there is a strong desire to "show the flag" to counter any impression that the country is withdrawing from international responsibility by leaving the EU.

Perhaps the most surprising new commitment was Prime Minister May's agreement to participate in France's embryonic European Intervention Initiative, even though the content is still vague. British officials said the move was a goodwill gesture "precisely because it is not an EU institutional thing".<sup>(5)</sup>

Even before the Brexit vote, Britain had created a Joint Expeditionary Force with NATO allies Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as well as non-NATO Sweden and Finland. The Force is intended to provide a high readiness framework for military interventions and provide reassurance for allies in the Baltic region, the Middle East and the Gulf.

Under the far-reaching 2010 Lancaster House treaties that included cooperation on their most critical nuclear capabilities, Britain and France have developed a Combined Joint Expeditionary Force intended for rapid interventions in a wide range of scenarios including high intensity combat.

Neither of these is a standing force but either could theoretically participate in a CSDP mission.

In armaments cooperation too, Brexit may paradoxically stimulate the UK's political and commercial interest in joining promising European collaborative projects, such as a next generation air combat system or a Franco-German tank. The main programmes are likely to be intergovernmental and conducted in small groups benefiting financially from but not governed by PESCO institutions.

Given cost pressures, the alternative for Britain would be to become ever more dependent on buying US equipment off-the-shelf and seeing its national defence base erode.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The EU and Britain should conclude an overarching mutual security and defence partnership that sets a framework for separate arrangements required in areas covered by different EU policy instruments and procedures.

While a political declaration on such a partnership can be achieved before Brexit day on 29 March 2019, it will take much longer to conclude the legal terms. The Commission says work on the terms can only begin once the UK is a third country and they will take years to finalise.

As an interim measure, British participation in Europol, Eurojust, the Schengen Information System, the European Arrest Warrant and the European Investigation Warrant should be extended for the duration of the transition period. Of course this means the UK should continue to accept the jurisdiction of the ECJ in all matters concerning these agencies and instruments.



## FOREIGN POLICY

Britain will no longer be a member of any decision-making European Union institution, ministerial council, committee of ambassadors or summit from the day of Brexit.

On all foreign and security policy issues, the two sides should aim for an intensive dialogue that would allow UK support for and participation in EU policies while preserving the decision-making autonomy of the Union and that of the UK to the fullest possible extent.

While no EU template exists for this depth of relationship, one model worth emulating is NATO's 'Enhanced Opportunities Partnership' as it applies to Sweden and Finland. The two Nordic EU member states are not NATO members and do not benefit from its Article V mutual security guarantee. However, they are valued partners for foreign policy as well as defence reasons. They both contributed troops to NATO-led missions in the Balkans and Afghanistan, and both signed bilateral defence pacts with the United States in 2016.

According to Nordic diplomats, they are frequently invited to participate in North Atlantic Council meetings as well as in discussions of new threats and challenges, such as cybersecurity and hybrid warfare, and of cooperative security with external partners. When Sweden and Finland participate in NATO operations, they are fully integrated into the committees that manage the mission and have access to the classified Battlefield Information Collection and Exploitation System (BICES).<sup>(6)</sup>

To sustain military interoperability with NATO forces and to stay close to US high-end combat readiness standards following the end of the Afghanistan mission, Sweden and Finland were given an exclusive right to participate in NATO exercises and training for Article V missions. Other enhanced opportunities partners such as Australia, Georgia and Jordan do not have the same level of access.

To maximise foreign policy cooperation between the UK and the EU27, the two should create a permanent consultation forum on international affairs, the UN agenda and development policy. This forum, which would not have decision-making powers, could meet monthly at ambassador level in Brussels and, where appropriate, at the UN headquarters in New York. It would discuss issues such as sanctions, diplomatic crisis management and EU-NATO relations. Either side could request an ad-hoc meeting, which would be held if both sides agreed. EU officials acknowledge that Britain's permanent UN Security Council membership provides a legitimate reason for creating a more intensive dialogue than the EU has with other third countries, allowing differentiation without discrimination.

A regular minister-level EU-UK Association Council to review the overall relationship should meet once per semester. Additionally, the EU should invite the UK to attend parts of Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) meetings, when the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy considers it useful. The UK minister would be an observer with speaking rights but would not take part in decisions. The

invitation would not be issued if a majority of member states opposed it.

The UK should also have the right to request an emergency discussion with EU ministers or ambassadors, for example if a British overseas territory or a Commonwealth country faced a threat. The EU High Representative would have to agree after consulting member states.

The UK should maintain close cooperation with the EU to coordinate development assistance and, if possible, continue to channel a slice of its official development assistance through the European Development Fund, which sits outside the EU budget.

Such an agreement could be concluded under Article 218 of the Lisbon Treaty.<sup>(7)</sup>

Some commentators, such as Sven Biscop of Belgium's Egmont Institute, have suggested that the EU should go further and allow the UK to maintain a seat in the FAC and all preparatory bodies without voting rights. In return, Britain would pay into the Common Foreign and Security Policy budget, abide by all treaty stipulations on the CFSP and subscribe to all CFSP positions.<sup>(8)</sup>

Such an ambitious trade-off between rights and obligations seems unlikely to be acceptable to either side. The EU will want to involve the UK by invitation only rather than as of right, and the UK will want to reserve the right not to align itself with all EU foreign policy positions, even though in practice it will usually do so.

## INTERNAL SECURITY

The EU should embrace May's proposal for a security treaty to provide a legal basis for the fullest possible cooperation with the UK on internal security, while respecting the decision-making autonomy of the Union and the jurisdiction of the ECJ over this policy area.

Britain should continue to contribute and have access to the Europol and Eurojust databases, the Schengen Information Service, Passenger Name Records and to be part of the European Arrest Warrant and the European Investigation Warrant. The treaty should also cover the growing field of cooperation on cyber security. Existing arrangements should be extended until a treaty has been negotiated and implemented.

This will require the UK to sign an agreement on handling confidential information and to commit itself to implement EU data protection regulations and standards for the duration of the treaty. Britain has moved fast to implement the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). But an obligation to abide by rules made after it leaves may be unpalatable to Brexiteers in an area where EU regulation is bound to evolve to adapt to technological change.

One way to finesse such concerns would be to set a review date at which either side could withdraw. A future British government and parliament could then decide in a few years' time whether being a rule-taker is preferable to losing vital cooperation to keep the public safe.

The UK has a chequered political history on the areas of EU police and judicial cooperation, having opted out of treaty provisions only to opt back in to the most important ones case-by-case in the name of national security. But it is in neither side's interest to risk citizens' safety now or weaken the fight against terrorism, organised crime, money laundering, drugs, arms and people trafficking.

## DEFENCE

Britain's contribution to CSDP missions so far has been small - just 4% of all civilian and military personnel - but it has provided the operational headquarters for the successful Atalanta anti-piracy operation off the Horn of Africa.

If the EU wishes to continue to engage British forces in joint operations and benefit from the UK's acknowledged competence in operational planning and command, it should offer upstream consultations on the mandate before the Political and Security Committee decides to launch a CSDP mission. This would go beyond current arrangements for inviting third countries to join once an EU action has been decided and giving them a limited say in the conduct of operations via a committee of contributors. But it would preserve the decision-making autonomy of the EU.

There is a clear trade-off between the UK's ability to shape a mission and its willingness to commit forces with the risk of casualties. The 'Enhanced Opportunities Partnership' which NATO has developed for Finland, Sweden and

four other countries which are not members of the alliance, offers a possible template.

The EU should take the opportunity to upgrade its procedures for consultation and sharing information with other third countries, such as Turkey, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Ukraine, and offer them a bigger say than at present in the conduct of operations to which they contribute forces and resources.

While the UK would like to be systematically invited to join CSDP missions, the EU will resist any automaticity which would inhibit its autonomy. There will have to be a balance between rights and obligations, with some agreed dispute settlement mechanism. The ECJ does not have oversight over CSDP.

Sophia Besch of the Centre for European Reform has suggested a deeper partnership in which the UK would make a substantial commitment of troops or assets to guarantee close consultation as well as information sharing in the early stages of CSDP operational planning, and would continue to contribute financially to the EU's Athena mechanism for funding common operations.<sup>(9)</sup>

While desirable, this seems unlikely to be acceptable to either side. The EU would fear British attempts to be a backseat driver, while Brexiteers would claim that London was being forced to go on funding an 'EU army' even after Brexit.

After starving it of funds, Britain is seeking the closest possible association with the European



Defence Agency with regular consultations on defence capability priorities. The EDA already has administrative agreements with Norway, Switzerland, Ukraine and Serbia, enabling them to participate in the agency's projects and programmes. Britain should conclude such an agreement and participate in projects on a pay-to-play basis.

If, as is likely, the EU decides that membership of the European Defence Fund is impossible for a third country because it is a community institution disbursing EU budget funds, the Union should devise rules that allow UK companies to join cross-border tenders for R&D and joint equipment procurement contracts.

The UK would have to participate financially in the projects in which its companies were engaged and would have to offer reciprocal

access to its own defence tenders and regulatory alignment. Norway has such a pay-to-play arrangement because it is a member of the European Economic Area, has implemented the directives of the EU defence package and accepts ECJ jurisprudence.

This will require the EU to change the regulation now working its way through the legislative process, which severely restricts the involvement of third country companies, allowing them to participate as sub-contractors only in exceptional circumstances.

The UK should also seek to participate as fully as possible in the next civilian EU research programme after 2020 in return for payment and abiding by the EU's rules, as external partners like Israel do.

On most of these issues, the EU and Britain have clearly convergent interests, and it should be possible to reach practical solutions unless extraneous factors intervene. The one exception, sadly, may be industrial cooperation in defence and space, on which, as an EU official noted: “It’s each man for himself.”<sup>(10)</sup>

### BILATERAL/MULTILATERAL DEFENCE COOPERATION

The UK has already begun to invest more political capital in bilateral defence cooperation with France and Germany. The relationship with Paris will be decisive, especially for operations outside Europe, because the two have a similar strategic culture and global vision.

The French-led European Intervention Initiative offers a useful framework to bring together willing and able EU, non-EU, NATO and non-NATO countries to share foresight and threat analysis, scenario planning and capability development. Britain should use this opportunity to stay engaged with European partners.

Better defence ties with Germany can be helpful particularly for the territorial defence of Europe and if they give Berlin extra political cover for increasing its military spending and readiness. The UK should maintain and develop its training and logistics presence in Germany as part of NATO’s rapid reinforcement strategy for the eastern flank.

Britain should seize opportunities for armaments cooperation with France and Germany on major ground and air systems before it is too late. Neither EU nor British interests would be served by forcing the UK defence sector deeper into the arms of the US military-industrial complex.

### NO BACKSEAT DRIVING, PLEASE

If it is to achieve and sustain a pragmatic and constructive security and defence relationship after Brexit, Britain will need to show in practice that its declarations of support for a strong EU are sincere, and that it is not trying to undermine, circumvent or pull the strings behind the Union.

Both sides should aim for the diplomatic equivalent of a non-aggression pact, or the kind of non-competition clause that executives sign on leaving a corporation, committing them not to disclose confidential information or put their knowledge of a company to work for rivals.

The government must make European foreign and security policy cooperation a consistent priority and avoid trying to be a backseat driver in EU policies, avoid venue shopping or pitting NATO, the United States or the Commonwealth against the EU. A little humility would go a long way.

## SAFER TOGETHER

Twice in the 20th century, after its efforts to be an offshore balancer failed, the UK became entangled in major wars on the European mainland that killed hundreds of thousands of its young men and inflicted untold human and economic damage on Britain and its European neighbours.

Wise statesmen drew the lesson that the Old Continent should be unified under US protection through a process of economic, military and, yes, political interdependence. Despite its founding role in NATO and the Council of Europe, Britain was a latecomer to European integration and never a wholehearted member of the EU.

As it takes the fateful step of withdrawing from the Union, its leaders carry a heavy responsibility not to repeat the errors of the past but to remain fully engaged in the security and defence of Europe, and to work with the European Union to that end. Close bilateral partnerships with France and Germany and practical cooperation with the EU can limit, but not erase, the damage of Brexit.

## FOOTNOTES

- (1) <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-defence/eu-signs-defense-pact-in-decades-long-quest-idUSKBN1DD0PX>
- (2) <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-43737547>
- (3) Interview with the author, February 27, 2018
- (4) <https://www.securityconference.de/en/news/article/monthly-mind-december-2017-there-is-more-at-stake-in-brexite-than-just-trade/>
- (5) Interviews with the author, February 27, March 15, 2018
- (6) Interview with the author, March 21, 2018
- (7) <http://www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty/treaty-on-the-functioning-of-the-european-union-and-comments/part-5-external-action-by-the-union/title-5-international-agreement/506-article-218.html>
- (8) "Brexit, Strategy and the EU: Britain takes leave," Egmont Paper 100, Brussels, 2018
- (9) Interview with the author, February 26, 2018. See also her policy brief "Plugging in the British: EU defence policy". [http://www.cer.eu/sites/default/files/pbrief\\_plugin\\_def\\_25.4.18.pdf](http://www.cer.eu/sites/default/files/pbrief_plugin_def_25.4.18.pdf)
- (10) Interview with the author, March 1, 2018

# BRITAIN AND EUROPE'S STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT



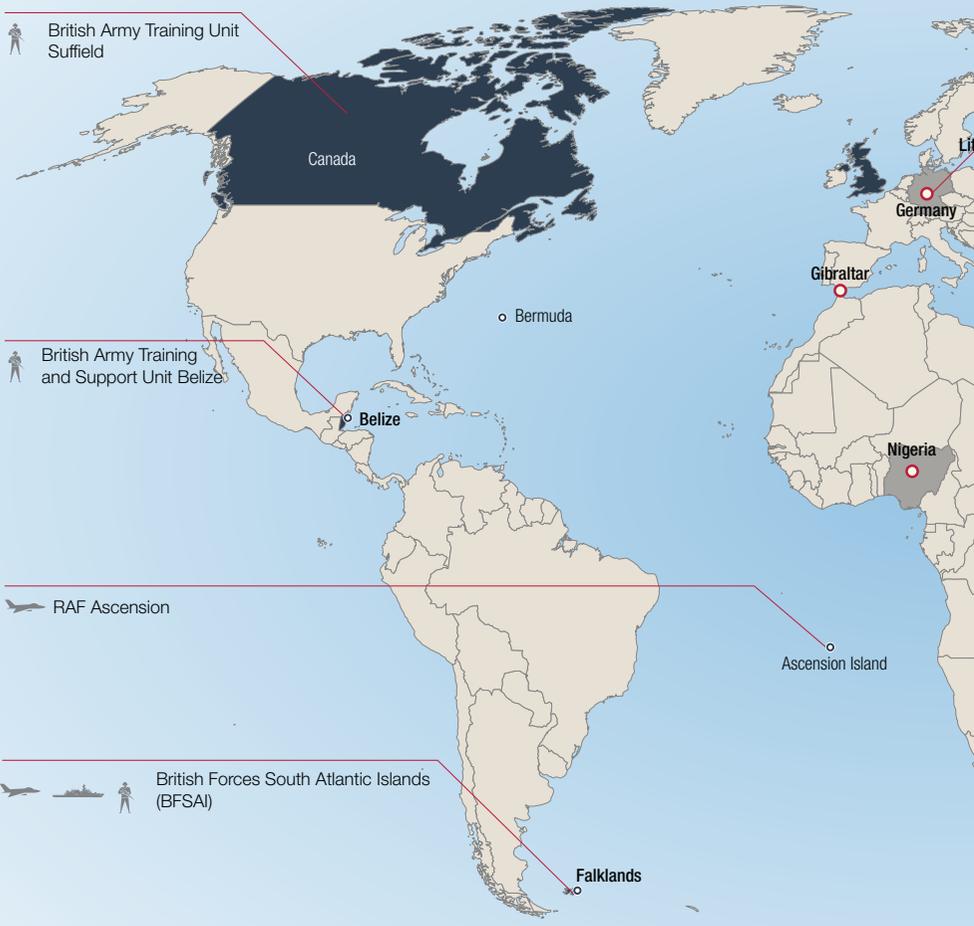
Migration Routes  
Terrorist Attacks

European Union  
UK Air Defence Region

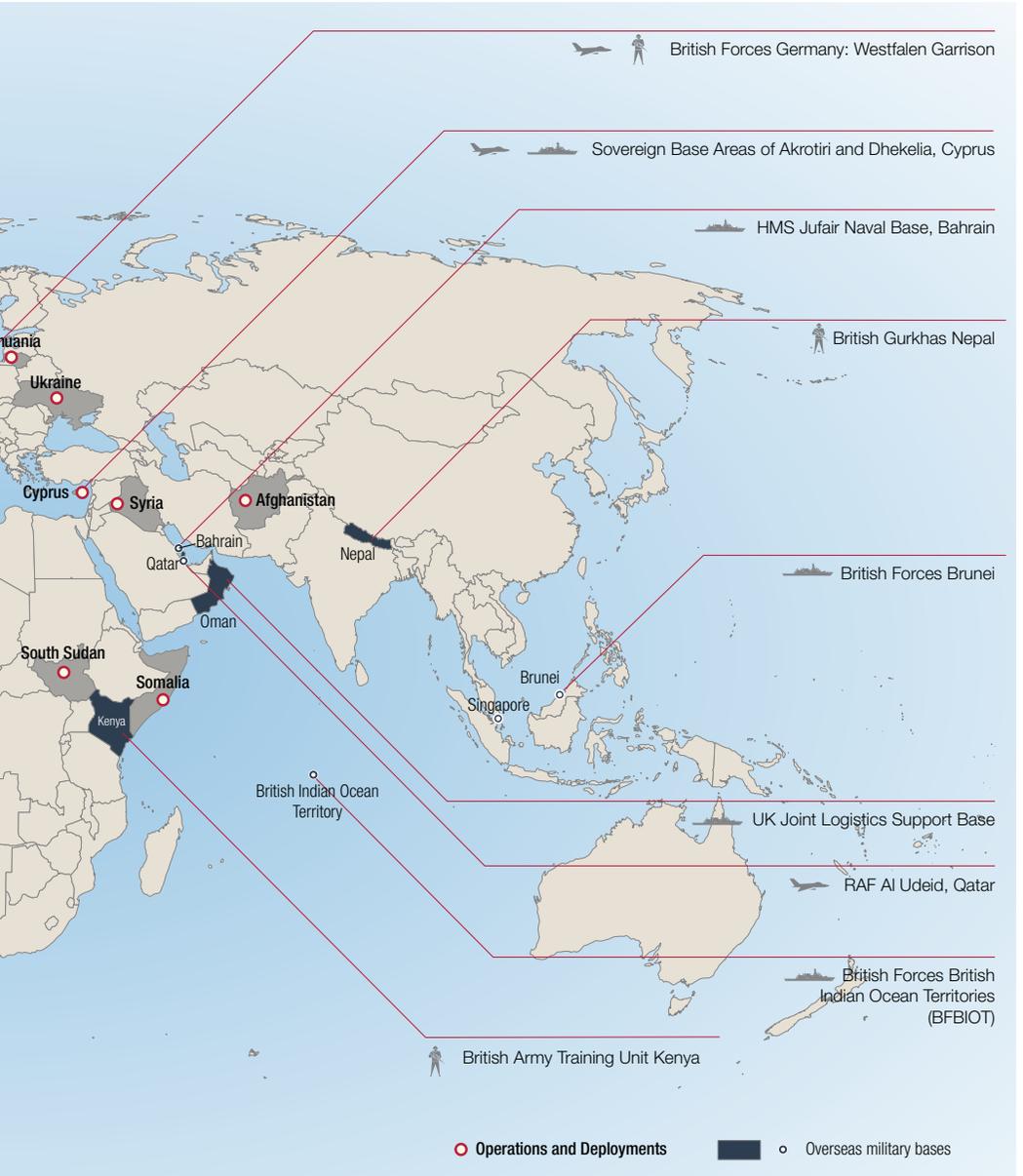
Frozen conflicts with Russian proxies  
ISIS/AQ in Europe's neighbourhood

Russian bases  
Nuclear capable missiles  
Russian air routes

# UK'S OVERSEAS PRESENCE



Source: British Ministry of Defence  
Map by Free Vector Maps. Icons by Juan Garces, Salaidinovich, Vectors Market from the Noun Project



# ANNEX A

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## FURTHER READING

*Keeping Europe safe after Brexit*, European Council on Foreign Relations report of a study led by Marta Dassu, Wolfgang Ischinger, Pierre Vimont and Robert Cooper. Edited by Susie Denison

*The United Kingdom's Contribution to European Security and Defence*, by Bastian Giegerich and Christian Moelling, IISS and DGAP

*The ambiguities of Anglo-French defence cooperation*, by Daniel Keohane, Carnegie Europe

*National security relations with France after Brexit*, by Peter Ricketts, RUSI

*Plugging in the British: EU defence policy*, by Sophia Besch, Centre for European Reform

*Plugging in the British: EU foreign policy*, by Ian Bond, Centre for European Reform

*Brexit and European security*, by Malcolm Chalmers, RUSI Briefing Paper

*The consequences of Brexit for European defence and security*, by Sarah Lain and Veerle Nouwens, RUSI and Friedrich Ebert Foundation

*Brexit, strategy and the EU: Britain takes leave*, by Sven Biscop, Egmont Institute

*After Brexit: prospects for UK-EU cooperation on foreign and security policy*, by Fraser Cameron, European Policy Centre

*EU defence cooperation after Brexit*, by Jolyon Howorth, European View

# ANNEX B

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WHAT OTHERS THINK

## **SURVEY ON THE UK'S ROLE AS A REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY ACTOR**

## OVERVIEW

As part of this report on the UK and the future of European defence, Friends of Europe conducted a survey exploring how security and defence stakeholders in the UK, Europe and beyond perceive Britain's position in regional and global security. The results of the survey complement findings from in-depth interviews, providing analysis and concrete recommendations for UK and EU leadership after 29 March 2019.

This survey consists of 12 questions on topics including major priorities for a post-Brexit UK government for defence cooperation frameworks; procurement and arms export policies; UK's policy towards Russia, Africa and the Middle East; and military spending. The survey was anonymous, requiring participants to indicate the sector they work in (government, business, non-governmental organisation, international institution, media, business or other), country of origin and country of residence. A group of around 300 high-level security and defence stakeholders took part in the survey.

# ANALYSIS

## Which sector do you work in?

Over a third of participants to the survey work for a think-tank or in academia (43.06%), whilst almost a fifth work in government: 15.28% in civilian functions, and 4.17% in the military. 13.89% work in international institutions, and 14.93% in the private sector. The remainder work for NGOs (5.21%), the media (1.74%), or elsewhere (1.74%) (see Figure 1).

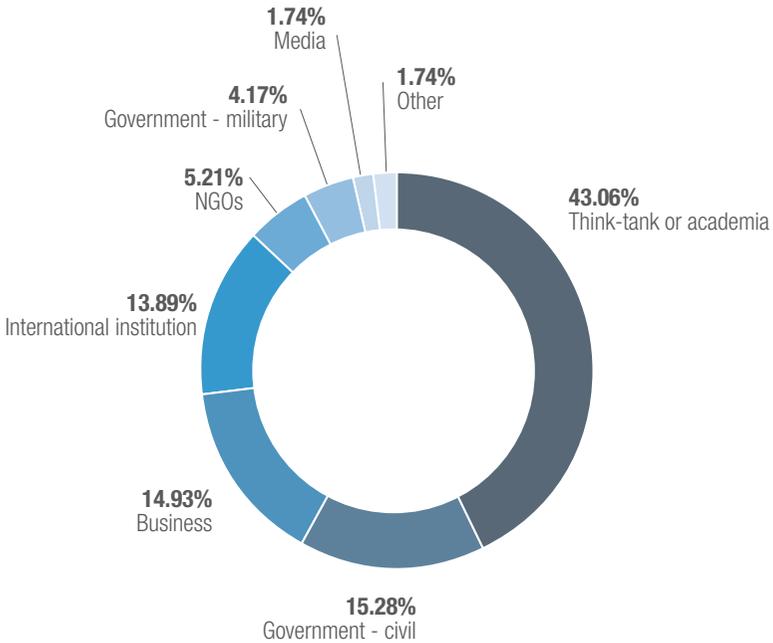


Figure 1 Which sector do you work in?

## What is your country of origin?

Respondents come from 30 countries, which can be put into the following 4 categories (see Figure 2):

- 31.36% from the UK
- 57.84% from the European Union (excluding the UK)
- 4.18% from North America (Canada and the US)
- 6.62% from elsewhere (New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, Kyrgyzstan, and non-EU European countries including Switzerland, Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia, Moldova and Macedonia)

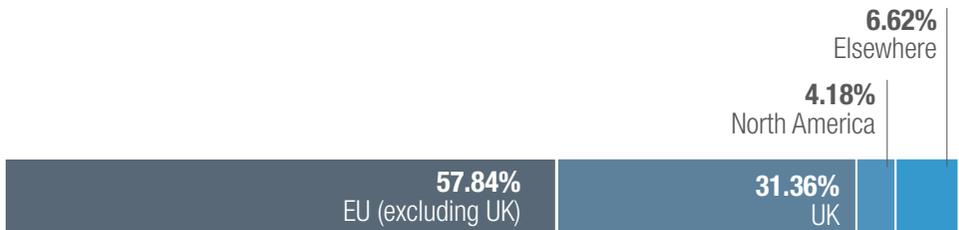


Figure 2 What is your country of origin?

## What is your country of residence?

Respondents live in 23 countries, with the largest chunk (31.67%) residing in Belgium. We put the respondents into the same four categories as for the previous question (see Figure 3):

- 27.78% in the UK
- 68.40% in the European Union (excluding the UK)
- 0.69% in North America (Canada and the US)
- 3.13% elsewhere (New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, Kyrgyzstan, and non-EU European countries such as Switzerland, Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia, Moldova and Macedonia)



Figure 3 What is your country of residence?

## Which defence cooperation framework should a post-Brexit government give priority to?

Two fifths of overall responses (41.90%) give priority to NATO as a defence cooperation framework. In contrast, less than a fifth of responses (19.04%) think the UK should favour European defence cooperation, whilst 16.82% say the UK should pursue a strictly national defence policy. The same number of responses (5.71%) give priority to defence cooperation on the basis of bilateral frameworks, namely with the US and with France, and the same would give preference to cooperation within the Commonwealth. 5.08% of responses are in favour of other multilateral partnerships (see Figure 4).

Among **British responses**, more than half (53.33%) identified NATO defence cooperation as the priority. British respondents would rather pursue a strictly national defence framework (17.78%) than cooperate with Europe on defence (14.44%). Only 2.22% of British responses prioritise Commonwealth cooperation on defence, and – perhaps surprisingly – slightly more support bilateral cooperation with France (5.56%) than the US (4.44%). The rest prefer other types of multinational cooperation on defence (2.22%).

Among **non-British responses**, fewer than two fifths think the UK should favour defence cooperation through NATO (37.50%). About one fifth prioritise pursuing defence cooperation with Europe (20.98%). 7.14% believe the UK should prioritise defence cooperation within the Commonwealth, while 16.07% would rather see a strictly national British defence policy. The same number of responses (6.25%) gives priority to bilateral cooperation with the US and to other multilateral partnerships, while slightly fewer (5.80%) prioritise bilateral cooperation with France (see Figure 5).

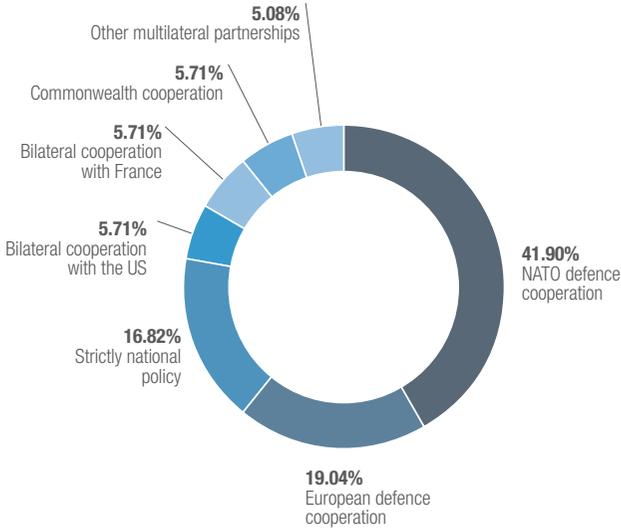


Figure 4 Which defence cooperation framework should a post-Brexit government give priority to?

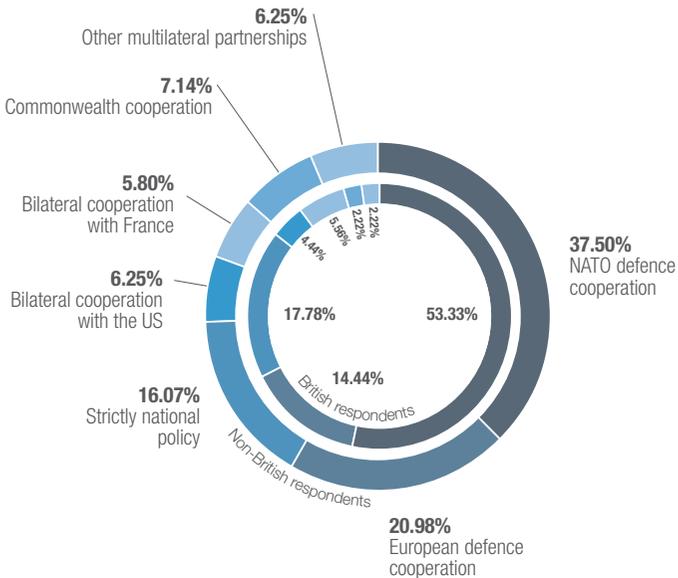


Figure 5 Which defence cooperation framework should a post-Brexit government give priority to? (British vs non-British responses)

## Which country/countries should be post-Brexit UK's primary strategic partner in defence matters?

Slightly more respondents say the US should be the UK's primary strategic partner after Brexit (36.62%) than those who favour France (33.10%).

Only 10.92% favour Germany, and 11.62% would opt for the EU as a whole. The rest of respondents think the primary strategic partner should be NATO (3.52%), the Commonwealth (1.06%) or another country/countries (3.17%) (see Figure 6).

It is important to note that neither the EU nor NATO were offered as possible answers to this question, but some participants wrote them in.

Among **British respondents**, the majority favour the United States (39.77%), just ahead of France (36.36%), and 11.36% would like to see Germany as the UK's main strategic partner. While 6.82% of respondents favour the EU and 3.41% give preference to NATO, none of respondents saw the Commonwealth as the UK's primary strategic partner.

Among **non-British respondents**, the US (35.20%) and France (31.63%) are also the top two choices for Britain's primary strategic partner. More respondents would prefer to see the EU (13.78%) rather than Germany alone (10.71%) as the UK's key strategic partner. 3.57% would prioritise NATO, whilst only 1.53% believe the Commonwealth should be the UK's core strategic partner (see Figure 7).

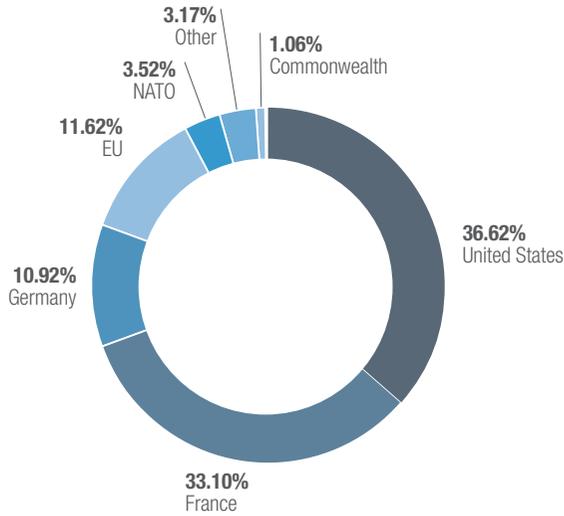


Figure 6 Which country/countries should be post-Brexit UK's primary strategic partner in defence matters?

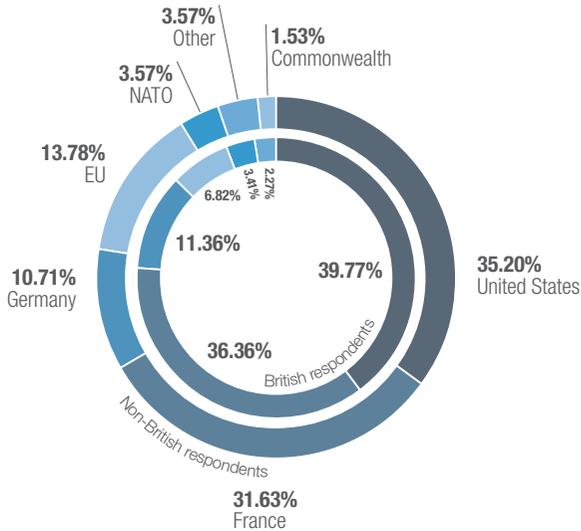


Figure 7 Which country/countries should be post-Brexit UK's primary strategic partner in defence matters? (British vs non-British respondents)

## What should be London's priority in defence procurement?

On defence equipment, two fifths of respondents (40%) think a post-Brexit UK government should prioritise joint European armaments procurement, and a slightly smaller number (37.19%) are in favour of joint NATO procurement. Bilateral or multilateral armaments cooperation receives the support of 13.68% of respondents while 1.40% support buying off-the-shelf US equipment where it is cheaper and most efficient. Stepping up national production of defence equipment is prioritised by 5.26% of respondents. Additionally, 1.05% of respondents believe the UK should reduce armaments procurement (see Figure 8).

Among **British respondents**, over one third (34.83%) favour joint European armaments procurement while 28.09% would give priority to joint NATO armaments procurement. 22.47% of respondents want bilateral or multilateral armaments cooperation, and stepping up national production of defence equipment is supported by 8.99%. 3.37% of British respondents believe that the UK should reduce its armaments procurement, but 1.12% are in favour of buying US off-the-shelf equipment where it is cheaper and most efficient.

Responses among **non-British respondents** vary significantly from British ones. Unsurprisingly, 42.35% think that a post-Brexit UK should give priority to joint European armaments procurement, and a similar number (41.33%) favour joint NATO procurement. Only 9.69% think Britain should prioritise bilateral or multilateral armaments cooperation. 3.57% believe that stepping up national production of defence equipment should be a priority for the UK, and 1.53% that the UK should buy US off-the-shelf equipment where it is cheaper and most efficient. None of the non-British respondents think the UK should reduce its armaments procurement (see Figure 9).

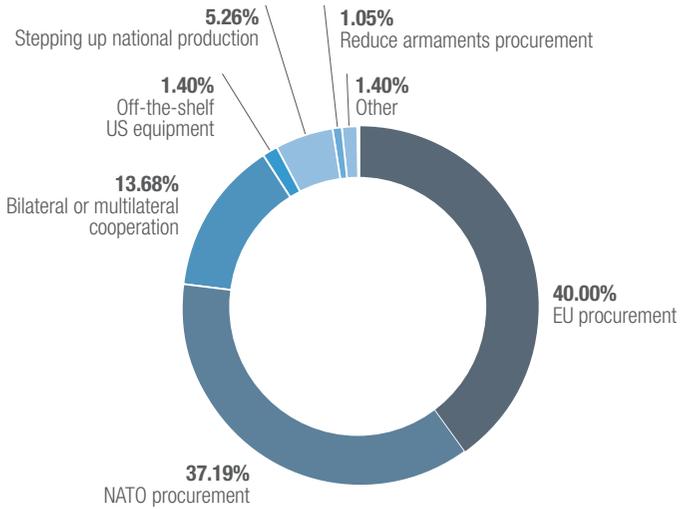


Figure 8 What should be London's priority in defence procurement?

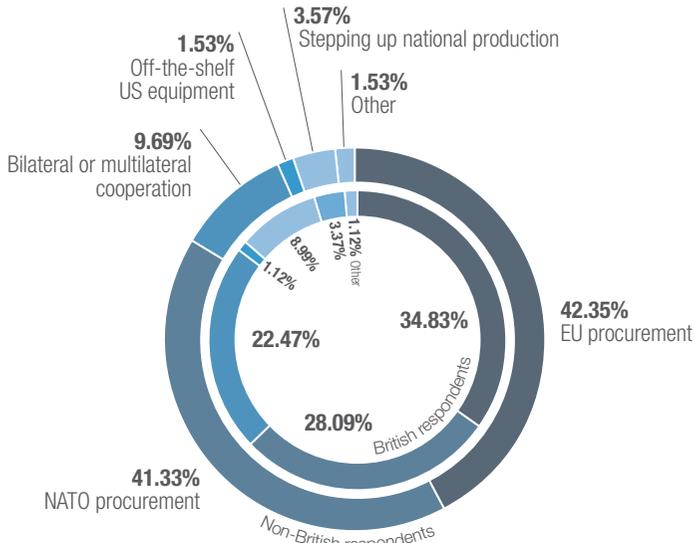


Figure 9 What should be London's priority in defence procurement? (British vs non-British respondents)

## What should a post-Brexit UK government do on defence spending?

The UK is one of the few European allies to meet NATO's target of spending 2% of GDP on defence, yet it faces an estimated £20m shortfall in the defence equipment budget over the next decade, mostly because of the cost of modernising its nuclear deterrent and building and equipping two aircraft carriers. Thus, the next question asked participants what they think the UK should do on defence spending.

Almost two fifths (38.60%) of respondents believe that the post-Brexit government should modestly increase military spending without cutting expenditure on other items, while 14.39% think that the government should increase defence spending, even if that means cutting back on other domestic expenditure. Some 19.30% favour maintaining defence spending at current levels, even if that means cutting back the size and conventional capabilities of the armed forces, while the remaining 27.72% say the UK government should reduce defence spending and concentrate available resources on home defence, counter-terrorism, intelligence and special forces (see Figure 10).

Among **British respondents**, over one third (37.08%) also favour a modest increase in military spending without cutting expenditure on other items while 29.21% would like to see reduced defence spending and focus available resources on home defence, counter-terrorism, intelligence and special forces. 21.35% of British respondents want to maintain defence spending at current levels, even if that means conventional force cutbacks, and 12.36% back a significant increase in defence spending, even if that means cuts in social spending.

Among **non-British respondents**, 39.29% agree the UK government should modestly increase military spending without cuts on other items. 18.37% think defence spending should be maintained at current levels, and 15.31% would prefer an increase in defence spending, even if that means reducing social expenditure. The remainder (27.04%) are in favour of reducing defence spending to concentrate on other security aspects (see Figure 11).

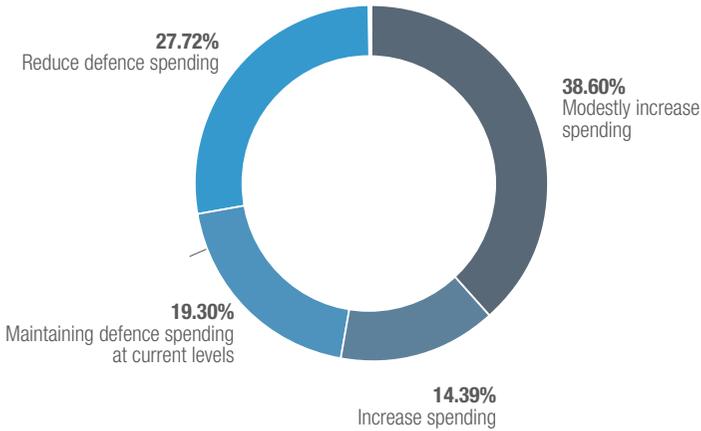


Figure 10 What should a post-Brexit UK government do on defence spending?

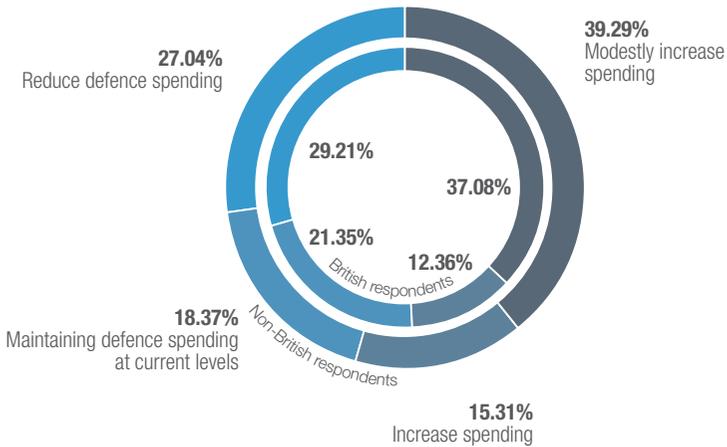


Figure 11 What should a post-Brexit UK government do on defence spending? (British vs non-British respondents)

## UK AND EUROPEAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY COOPERATION

### Current CSDP missions

On the UK's position towards current CSDP missions post-Brexit, the vast majority of respondents (80.99%) agree that the UK should maintain current levels of contributions as an external partner of the EU while 13.38% would prefer to cut contributions to existing CSDP operation unless the UK is granted an equal say to EU member states in decision-making. Other answers include the opinion that the UK should increase current level of contributions as an external partner of the EU (1.41%), and an equal number of respondents (1.41%) think the UK should approach its involvement in CSDP missions on a case-by-case basis (see Figure 12).

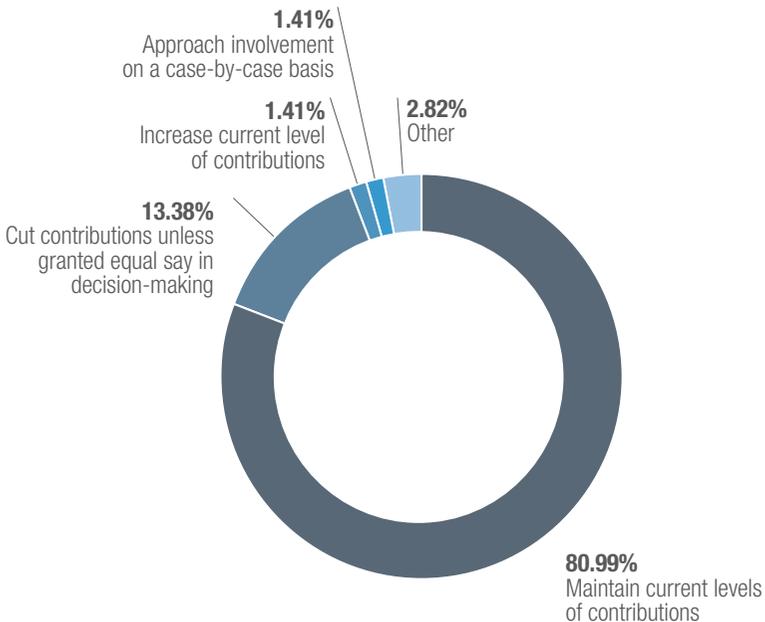


Figure 12 How should the UK position itself towards current CSDP missions post-Brexit?

Among **British respondents**, 77.27% think the UK should maintain current levels of contributions, whilst 19.32% argue that the UK should cut contributions to existing CSDP operation unless it is granted an equal say to EU member states in decision-making. 1.14% of British respondents would prefer to approach this on a case-by-case basis but none of the British respondents would opt for increased levels of contributions as an external partner of the EU.

Among **non-British respondents**, 82.65% believe the UK should maintain current level of contributions as an external partner of the EU while only 10.71% would prefer to see Britain cutting contributions to existing CSDP operations unless it is granted an equal say to EU member states in decision-making. An increase in current level of contributions as an external partner of the EU is a preferred option for 2.04% of respondents, and 1.53% say the UK should approach CSDP missions on a case-by-case basis (see Figure 13).

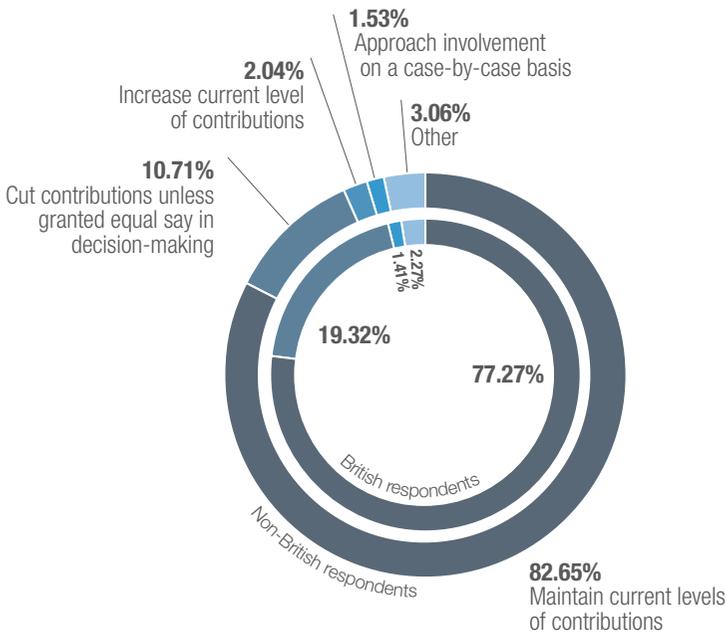


Figure 13 How should the UK position itself towards current CSDP missions post-Brexit? (British vs non-British respondents)

## Future CSDP missions

On Britain's position towards future CSDP missions, the majority of respondents (78.67%) support joining future CSDP operations as an external partner when it serves the UK's interests, and 13.99% agree that it should only join future CSDP operations if the UK is granted an equal say to EU member states in decision-making. 4.55% of respondents think the UK should refrain from joining future CSDP operations whatsoever (see Figure 14).

Among **British respondents**, 76.40% are in favour of the UK joining future CSDP operations when it serves the UK's interests, and 17.98% think it should make its participation dependent on an equal say in decision-making. 4.49% of British respondents would refrain from joining future CSDP operations in any circumstances.

Among **non-British respondents**, 79.70% think that Britain should join future operations as an external partner when it serves the UK's interests, and 12.18% believe that the UK should only join future CSDP operations if it is granted an equal say to EU member states in decision-making. 4.57% of respondents are in favour of the UK refraining from joining future CSDP operations (see Figure 15).

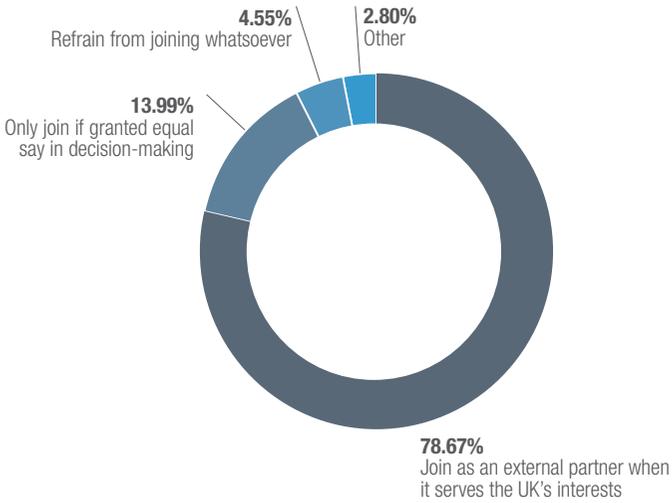


Figure 14 How should the UK position itself towards future CSDP missions post-Brexit?

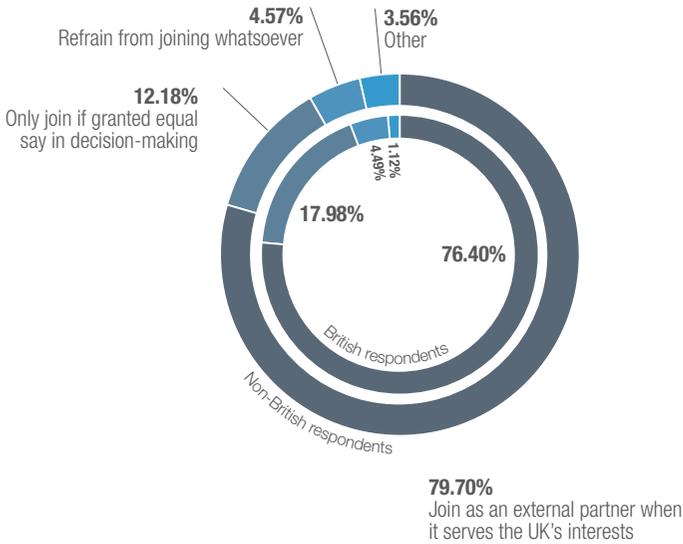


Figure 15 How should the UK position itself towards future CSDP missions post-Brexit? (British vs non-British respondents)

## What should a post-Brexit UK government do with regard to European collective defence efforts?

An overall majority (76.22%) agree that the UK should seek a structured partnership with European collective defence efforts, with involvement in selected PESCO projects, and request to join and contribute to the European Defence Fund for joint military research and procurement projects. 8.74% of respondents think the UK should limit its cooperation to ad-hoc projects where it serves the UK's interests, and a similar number (8.04%) suggest that the UK should distance itself but let the EU pursue collective defence. 4.20% would actively oppose closer EU defence integration and lobby the US to insist that NATO must be the sole framework for European defence cooperation (see Figure 16).

Among **British respondents**, 77.78% would like to seek a structured partnership with European collective defence efforts, while 8.89% would favour limiting cooperation to ad-hoc projects where it serves the UK's interests. Only 4.44% would like to see Britain distancing itself from but not opposing EU efforts, and 5.56% of respondents favour actively opposing closer EU defence integration.

Among **non-British respondents**, 75.51% want the UK to seek a structured partnership with involvement in selected PESCO projects, and request to join and contribute to the European Defence Fund. 8.67% of respondents think the UK should limit cooperation to ad-hoc projects where it serves its interests. In contrast to British respondents, 9.69% of non-British respondents think the UK should distance itself but let the EU pursue collective defence, and 3.57% believe it should be actively opposing EU defence cooperation efforts (see Figure 17).

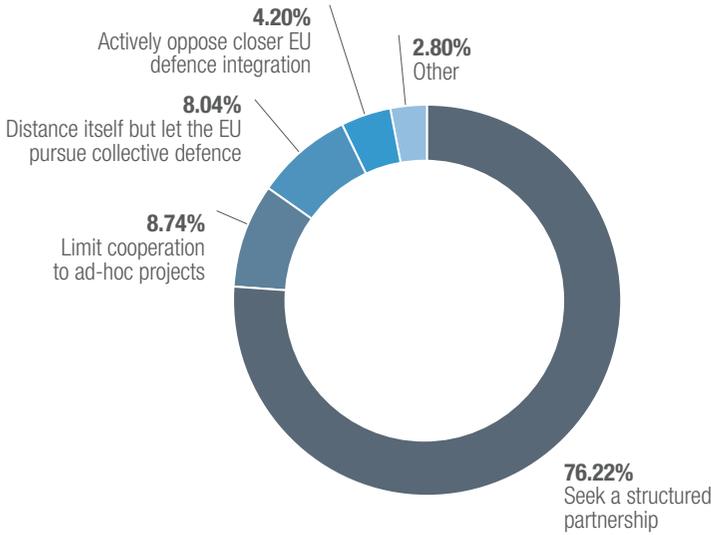


Figure 16 What should a post-Brexit UK government do with regard to European collective defence efforts?

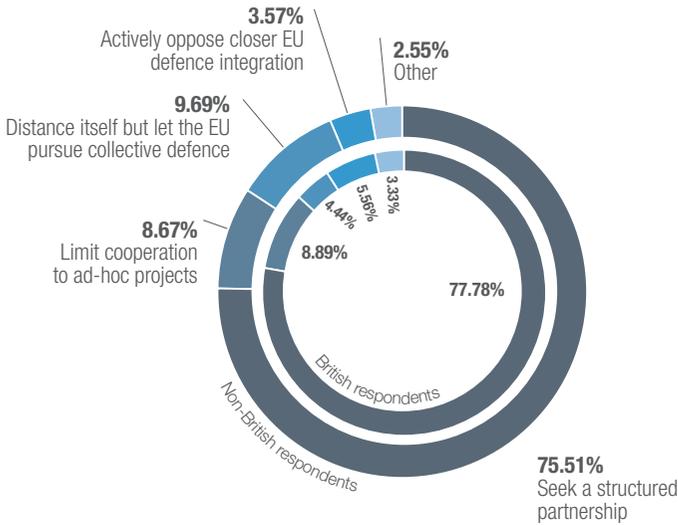


Figure 17 What should a post-Brexit UK government do with regard to European collective defence efforts? (British vs non-British respondents)

## Which security issues should a post-Brexit UK government primarily focus on?

The next question asked participants to rate the following security issues according to their importance for a post-Brexit UK government (where 1 means ‘the most important’ and 7 means ‘the least important’): fight against ‘ISIS’ abroad; domestic terrorism; cyber threats; risks linked to migration; countering growing Russian power; countering growing Chinese power; and risks linked to climate change (see Figure 18).

The greatest number of respondents (25.27%) concluded that cyber threats should be the UK’s top priority. It is however important to note that a slightly higher number (28.81%) of responses identify fighting terrorism at home and abroad as the priority, when aggregating answers for ‘fight against ISIS abroad’ and ‘domestic terrorism’. A somewhat smaller percentage of respondents think that risks linked to climate change (14.75%) and countering growing Russian power (14.13%) should be the UK’s key security focus. Domestic terrorism was ranked as the second biggest security threat (21.99%) overall while countering growing Russian power was ranked as the third (15.22%).

Risks linked to migration are considered to be the least important security threat to the UK (23.62%), and risks linked to climate change are rated as the second least important (20.14%). However, British respondents believe that the second least important security threat is growing Chinese power (16.28%) while risks linked to climate change were deemed as third most important (22.73%).

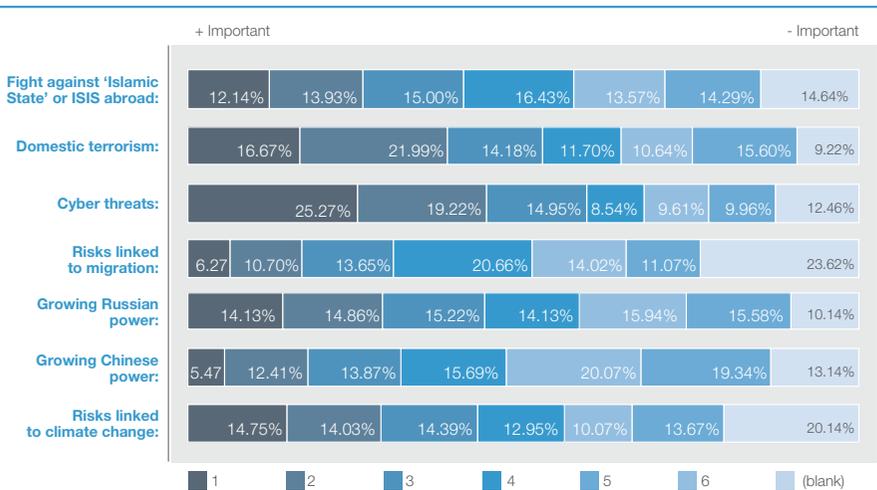


Figure 18 Which security issues should a post-Brexit UK government primarily focus on?

## Which region should be post-Brexit Britain’s key area of strategic interest?

Participants were asked to rank in order of importance (where 1 means ‘the most important’ and 7 means ‘the least important’) the following areas as the UK’s key areas of strategic interest: the Mediterranean; Africa; the Middle East; Nordic, Baltic states and Eastern Europe; the Atlantic; and the Asia-Pacific (see Figure 19).

Nordic, Baltic states and Eastern Europe were ranked as the UK’s main areas of strategic interest, receiving overall support of nearly one third of all respondents (28.57%) and of over two fifths of British respondents (41.38%). Overall, the Atlantic region is viewed as the key area of the UK’s strategic interest by almost twice as many respondents (21.53%) as the Middle East (10.43%), which has received the highest support (21.94%) as the second most important region for the UK’s strategic interests. The Asia-Pacific is the region that is perceived as the least important geographic priority area to the UK by 25.93% of all respondents, and by 38.10% of British respondents.

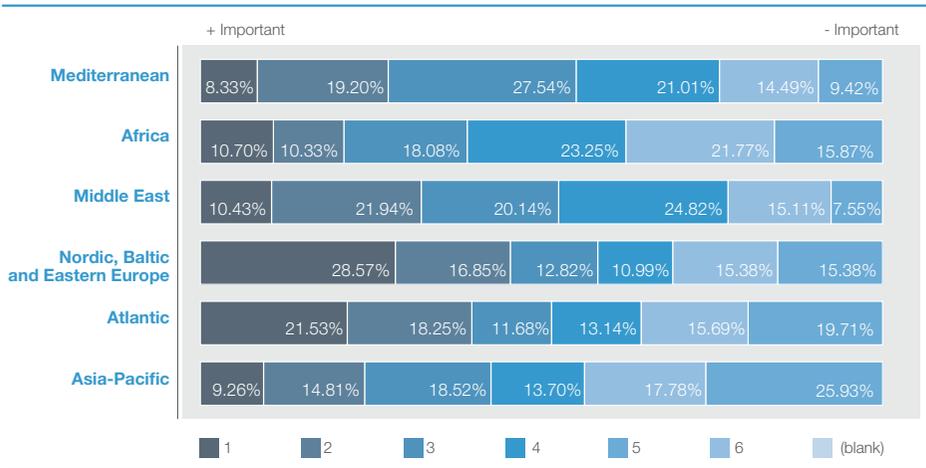


Figure 19 Which region should be post-Brexit Britain’s key area of strategic interest?

## How should a post-Brexit UK government respond to security crises in Africa and the Middle East?

Participants were asked to rank UK’s policy tools in order of importance, where 1 means ‘the most important’ and 5 means ‘the least important’; these range from civilian capacity-building and development aid to direct military intervention as means of responding to security crises in Africa and the Middle East (see Figure 20).

The data suggests that the UK’s priority should be a response to security crises through development aid (27.40% of all respondents, and 34.83% of British respondents); a slightly smaller percentage (22.34%) of all respondents agree that the UK should primarily respond through civilian capacity-building, an approach which received the highest overall support as the second most important policy tool in responding to security crises in Africa and the Middle East (25.53%). The approach rated as the least important policy tool by all respondents is direct military intervention alongside other allies (30.94%).

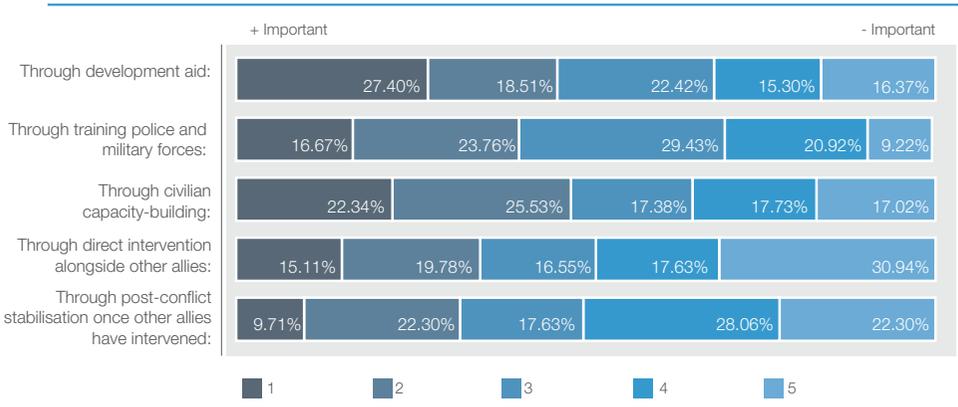


Figure 20 How should a post-Brexit UK government respond to security crises in Africa and the Middle East?

## THE UK AND RUSSIA

### a) How much of a threat is Russia?

Approximately two thirds of respondents (64.69%) think that Russia is a regional power with legitimate security concerns which must be managed by a mixture of deterrence and calibrated incentives for cooperative behaviour. 29.37% of respondents believe that Russia poses the biggest military threat to the UK since the Cold War, and Britain must ensure it has the military and cyber capabilities to respond to any attack. Only 5.94% of respondents think that Russia is a declining power which has grounds to feel encircled and threatened by the West (see Figure 21).

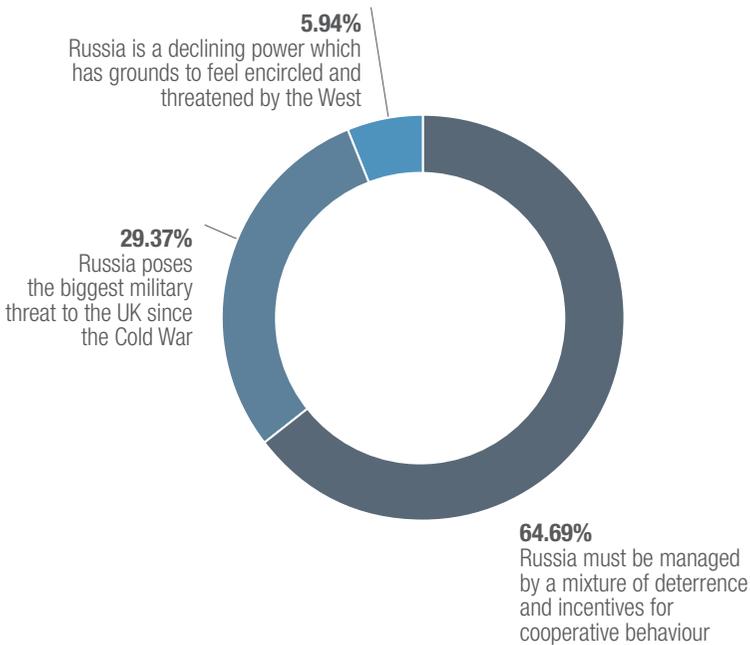


Figure 21 How much of a threat is Russia?

Among **British respondents**, the majority (66.67%) see Russia as a regional power with legitimate security concerns which must be managed by a mixture of deterrence and calibrated incentives for cooperative behavior; 27.78% think Russia poses the biggest military threat to the UK since the Cold War; and 5.56% believe Russia is a declining power which has grounds to feel encircled and threatened by the West.

Among **non-British respondents**, a slightly smaller number (63.78%) think Russia must be managed by a mixture of deterrence and calibrated incentives for cooperative behaviour; 30.10% hold the opinion that Russia poses the biggest military threat to the UK since the Cold War and that Britain must ensure it has the military and cyber capabilities to respond to any attack. 6.12% think that Russia is a declining power with grounds to feel encircled and threatened by the West (see Figure 22).

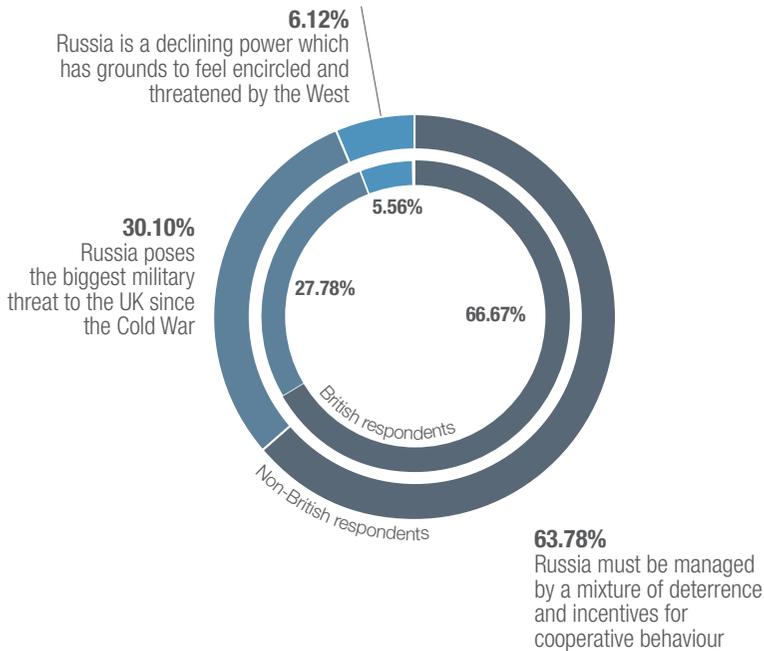


Figure 22 How much of a threat is Russia?  
(British vs non-British respondents)

## b) How should the UK manage relations with Russia?

Given Russia's use of hybrid warfare in Ukraine, cyberattacks and increased involvement in the Middle East, almost half of respondents (48.08%) think that the UK should maintain military deterrence but seek selective cooperation, notably in the Middle East and counter-terrorism. 18.12% are in favour of introducing tougher national sanctions (e.g. towards oligarchs with money/property in the UK) to increase pressure on Russia to change behaviour in Ukraine, and 17.77% of respondents think the UK should maintain current sanctions until Russia changes behaviour in Ukraine. 9.06% of respondents would seek tougher Western sanctions until Russia changes behaviour in Ukraine while 6.97% are in favour of fully normalising relations and seeking economic and military cooperation (see Figure 23).

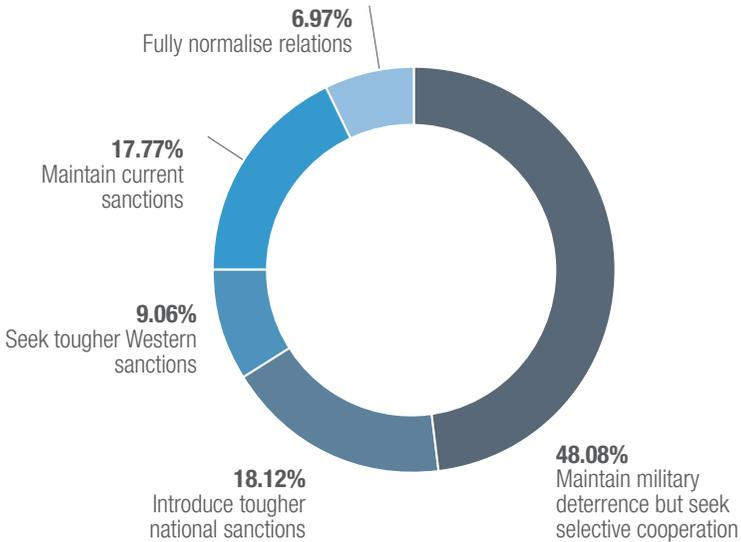


Figure 23 How should the UK manage relations with Russia?

Among **British respondents**, 45.56% are in favour of maintaining military deterrence but seeking selective cooperation, notably in the Middle East and counter-terrorism, and 22.22% prioritise introducing tougher national sanctions. Maintaining current sanctions is a preferred option for 12.22% of British respondents, and an equal number (12.22%) would seek tougher Western sanctions. 7.78% favour fully normalising relations and seeking economic and military cooperation.

Among **non-British respondents**, almost half (49.24%) think the UK should maintain military deterrence but seek selective cooperation. In contrast to British respondents, a smaller number (16.24%) think that the UK should introduce tougher national sanctions, and a greater number (20.30%) think the UK should maintain current sanctions until Russia changes behaviour in Ukraine. 7.61% favour seeking tougher Western sanctions, and 6.60% think the UK should fully normalise relations and seek economic and military cooperation (see Figure 24).

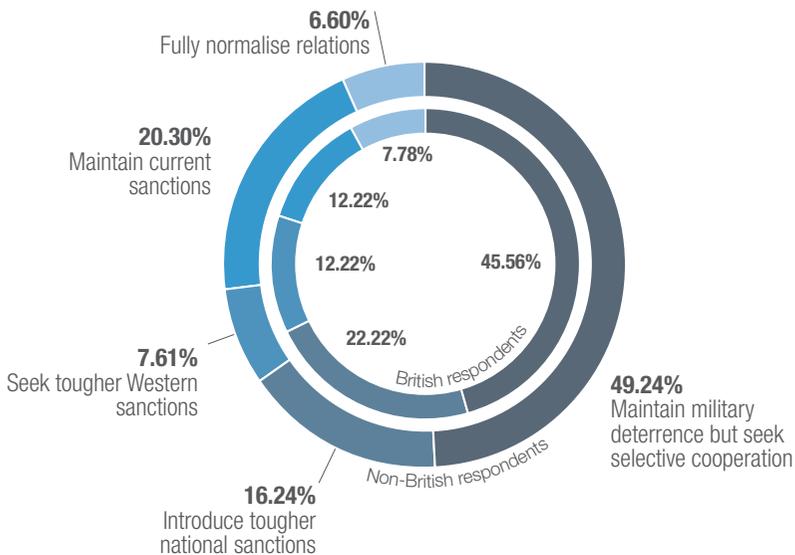


Figure 24 How should the UK manage relations with Russia?  
(British vs non-British respondents)

## RELATIONS WITH THE US

### What should the UK do in light of the Trump administration's policies on a range of issues?

The following question asked participants their opinion on the future of UK-US relations in the light of the Trump administration's policies on a range of issues (Middle East, Iran, trade, climate change, human rights).

The majority of respondents (73.50%) suggest the UK should distance itself more from the US and maintain close foreign policy alignment with the EU while almost a fifth (19.08%) think that the UK should pursue a less interventionist foreign policy and focus more on limited national interests. The rest of respondents (7.42%) think the UK should align itself more closely with US global policies in order to preserve and build the "special relationship" with Washington, seeking closer military integration with US armed forces even if that means breaking ranks with European partners (see Figure 25).

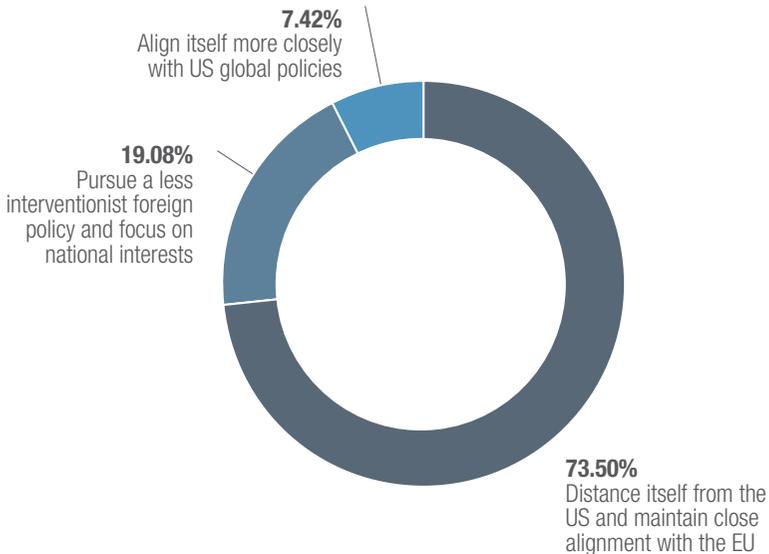


Figure 25 What should the UK do in light of the Trump administration's policies on a range of issues?

Among **British respondents**, 75.00% are in favour of the UK distancing itself more from the US and maintaining close foreign policy alignment with the EU, while 18.18% believe the UK should pursue a less interventionist foreign policy to focus on limited national interests. 6.82% of British respondents would favour the UK aligning itself more closely with the US.

Among **non-British respondents**, 72.82% think the UK should distance itself from the US and maintain close foreign policy alignment with the EU, while 19.49% believe the UK should pursue a less interventionist foreign policy and focus more on limited national interests. 7.69% think that the UK should preserve and build the “special relationship” with Washington (see Figure 26).

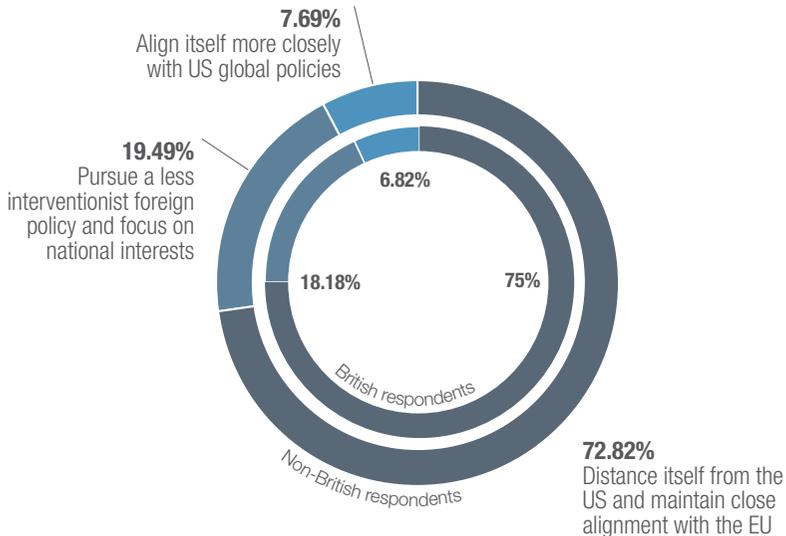


Figure 26 What should the UK do in light of the Trump administration's policies on a range of issues? (British vs non-British respondents)

# NUCLEAR DETERRENT

## What should Britain do on the nuclear deterrent

Given the pressures on the UK defence budget and public opposition to nuclear weapons, particularly in Scotland where they are based, the last question asked participants what Britain should do regarding its nuclear deterrent.

Nearly two fifths of respondents (38.38%) are in favour of modernising the UK's nuclear deterrent to uphold its status as a nuclear power, while approximately the same number (38.03%) think the UK should make its nuclear arsenal a bargaining chip in east-west arms control negotiations. In contrast, 23.59% think the UK should renounce nuclear weapons unilaterally and focus its resources on conventional defence capabilities (see Figure 27).

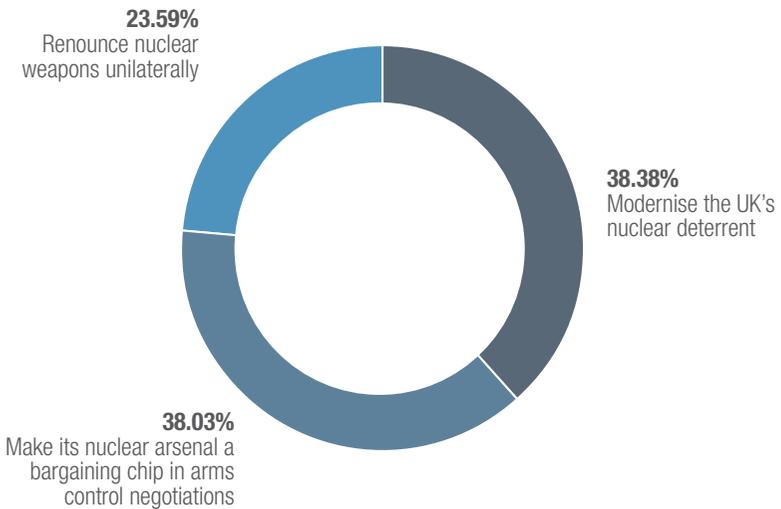


Figure 27 What should Britain do on the nuclear deterrent?

Over two fifths of **British respondents** (42.22%) think that the UK should make its nuclear arsenal a bargaining chip in east-west arms control negotiations, while fewer than one third (31.11%) believe that the UK should modernise the nuclear deterrent to uphold its status as a nuclear power. More than one quarter, 26.67%, are in favour of renouncing nuclear weapons unilaterally to focus on other defence capabilities.

Among **non-British respondents**, over two fifths of respondents (41.75%) think the UK should go ahead with modernising its nuclear deterrent, and a slightly smaller number (36.08%) believe the UK should use its nuclear arsenal as a bargaining tool in east-west arms control negotiations. The remaining 22.16% are in favour of the UK renouncing nuclear weapons unilaterally (see Figure 28).

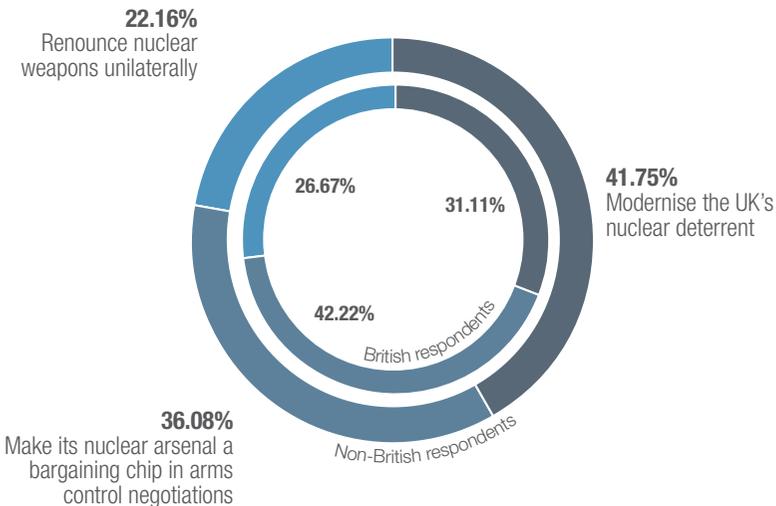


Figure 28 What should Britain do on the nuclear deterrent?  
(British vs non-British respondents)



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