PEACE AND SECURITY

EUROPEAN SECURITY AFTER BREXIT

A British, French and German Perspective

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Brexit poses a risk for European Security as the highly institutionalised relations based on EU membership change, and prevailing certainties seem to disappear.

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As maintaining strong links and a close relationship on foreign and security policy is in the interest of all three countries, smaller and more informal alliances like the E3, a setting of trilateral relations between the UK, France and Germany, will gain importance.

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Careful considerations, regarding the institutional framework and governance, but also possible fields of cooperation, need to be taken to make this triangle a functional and effective setting. Differences in threat perception and strategic culture and interests can be seen as a blessing in disguise.

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Preface

In the last few decades, we have become accustomed to the fact that foreign and security policy are very much in flux and that there is no discernible status quo any more. The series of supposed watershed moments, from 9/11 through to the Arab Spring, the Crimea Annexation all the way to the more recent tendency of the US to turn their back on international agreements and institutions, is commonly acknowledged. In spite of all this, there may still be a certain logic in talking about a status quo, at least in the security and defence policy triangle between France, Germany and the UK. A similar set of threats and challenges, a deep and highly institutionalised set of relations based not only in the common membership in the European Union, but also NATO, OSCE and UN as well as common initiatives like the E3 in Iran form a stable web of trust and cooperative reflexes between these states. At least, this was the case before Brexit happened and old certainties seemed to vanish and trust has been lost. The question that is now looming is, how do we proceed from here?

Both sides will lose in this process. While the EU will lose some of its military and diplomatic influence, the UK will miss the benefits of concertation and joint action with its European neighbours. It is therefore in the interest of both parties to maintain strong links and to set up a special relationship on foreign and security policy. This is important for the EU and NATO level, but especially so for the workings of smaller and more informal alliances like the E3, a setting of trilateral relations between the UK, France and Germany.

But to get a clearer picture of how and in which areas the three key actors of European security might be able to cooperate in the future, there is a need to look more closely at the strategic settings in Berlin, London and Paris. This publication contains three chapters from experts on British, French, and German foreign and security policy, who shed light on the institutional frameworks their countries act in, the security culture that is determining their actions as well as the relations between them. The aim is to find common ground and identify potential obstacles or opportunities for joint initiatives.

Despite the deeply interconnected nature of the relationship between the three countries, when it comes to the fundamentals of European Security, the practice of security policy relations varies. In that way the triangle was a mixture of di-

versity representative of the rest of the member states, but divided enough to put the brakes on the rapid development of the EU as a strategic actor. While the French-German engine of the European Union is lauded for driving much of the progress within the Union, there has always been tension in the field of security policy. One has only to look at the politics of military intervention to spot the differences. On the other hand, the close cooperation between London and Paris in the field of security policy has to be regarded as a core of the evolving Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU. As the biggest military powers in the EU, two of the permanent five members of the UN Security Council and nuclear weapon states, both countries were supporting the EU's credibility in its aim to become a security actor. But this remained an intergovernmental approach. Berlin and London have also strengthened the European profile, albeit in a different manner. Their bilateral relationship and their commonalities in questions of crisis prevention and peacebuilding as well as a shared belief in nuclear disarmament have been influential for the comprehensive institutional and strategic setting of the EU. But since the UK has left the EU, there needs to be a debate about how the three key actors can make best use of their different strengths, abilities and international networks, for more European security.

The paper provides us with a few ideas that could inform the political debate in all three countries in the coming years: Jean-Pierre Maulny looks closely at the differences in threat perception, strategic culture and interest, and regards them as a blessing in disguise. Underpinned with a solid governance structure, the three countries could stay away from a new institutional framework, but nonetheless engage in a continuous strategic dialogue. This dialogue could help map foreign and security policy issues in an order of decreasing commonalty. This would enable the E3 to decide where joint action is feasible, where the individual actions are compatible or where interests diverge too greatly.

For the United Kingdom, the interesting aspect of the cooperation in the triangle is flexibility and a pragmatic approach. Malcolm Chalmers and Neil Melvin make clear that post-Brexit Britain will stay open for substantial foreign policy cooperation, but might shy away from new all-encompassing institutional frameworks. The main pillar for its security policy will remain NATO, but apart from that, and given that there is no undermining of NATO, London is likely to

be institutionally promiscuous, provided that the cooperation delivers on its national interests. Apart from the E3, the UK will remain interested in formats like the European Intervention Initiative, as it regards it as a useful and again flexible supplement of European security. As long as there is no duplication with NATO, London is keen to remain involved.

For Germany, the cooperation in the E3 format has vital importance as it can provide a useful framework especially towards the future of NATO. In light of the current developments in Washington, a common vision of NATO in London, Paris, and Berlin seems vital for the alliance and the three countries should join forces in strengthening NATO and reassuring the Eastern Allies. Apart from that, Marius Müller-Hennig warns that one should not overburden the E3 with heavy expectations. He explores obstacles and chances for further collaboration in Berlin and suggests two paths. As the three countries will remain fairly divided on military interventions, arms export and defence integration, these seem rather problematic avenues to follow. But closer cooperation in the UN Security Council and Peacekeeping might be more promising as well as the discussion of a new arms control agenda.

Regarded together, the three chapters highlight the careful considerations that need to be taken to make this triangle a functioning and effective setting for European Security. This has not been an easy field of cooperation before, but Brexit has brought into the equation an additional element of doubt on the one hand, as well as the need to maintain sovereignty on the other. But the common agenda of peace and security in Europe demands that Berlin, London and Paris continue in their efforts to maintain formats of cooperative security.

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FRANCE AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY

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In terms of security policy, France pursues its strategy within a national but also multilateral framework, consisting primarily of the European Union and NATO.

For many years, France gave precedence to its national policy framework so as to retain a degree of foreign policy autonomy and bolster its security with its own nuclear deterrent force. Although France withdrew from NATO's integrated military command structure in 1966, it remained a member of the Atlantic Alliance of which it was one of the founding members in 1949.

Even before the Cold War had come to an end, France, like Germany, advocated that defence should fall within the remit of the European Union as part of the political union. France was instrumental in revamping the Western European Union in 1984 and creating the Common Security and Foreign Policy with Germany in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. France has had the creation of a fully-fledged common foreign policy and common defence policy in its sights since the beginning of the eighties. This is one of the justifications behind France's full reintegration into NATO's military command structure in 2009, the purpose being to prove that the *Defence Europe* project was not meant as a snub to NATO.

Although Emmanuel Macron warned of NATO becoming »brain-dead« in November 2019[1], France remains perfectly aware that NATO is the framework within which the collective security of the vast majority of EU countries is organised[2]. Indeed, the French government would like France and EU countries to have a greater say in NATO and play a more dominant role in Europe-wide security issues resulting in greater European sovereignty while guaranteeing that the principle of solidarity between the member states of NATO remains robust.

Thus, France can be seen to prioritise a stronger Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) over NATO for political reasons – affirming the role of the political union – which means that it will put the European Union first as a framework for initiatives to bolster European security.

As an advocate of multilateral international relations, France also supports United Nations actions for universal peace and security as well as the more regionally based initiatives of the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe).

However, the United Nations has proved something of a disappointment to France. Even if the UN is hamstrung by the failure of the five permanent members of the Security Council to reach a consensus on certain key issues, France feels that it could be more efficient and forceful when it comes to imposing its peace and security agenda.

As for the OSCE, France sees this pan-European security structure as weak and hampered by the attitude of Russia, which stunts its development. At the beginning of the nineties, France had high hopes for this institution, which was supposed to oversee pan-European security from the Atlantic to the Urals,and this was France's position in the aftermath of the cold war during François Mitterrand's presidency. From the 2000s, French political leaders gradually lost interest in the OSCE as relations with Russia deteriorated. The OSCE could potentially regain power thanks to President Macron's initiative which intends to rebuild bridges with Russia.

The European Intervention Initiative (EI2) first proposed by President Macron in his Sorbonne keynote speech in September 2017 has multiple aims. The first one is to forge a European strategic culture, and particularly, at reinforcing the ability Europeans have to act together in military operations. The objective is to create »the pre-conditions for coordinated and jointly prepared future engagements in various scenarios of military operations among the whole spectrum of crises that could affect the security of Europe. Concretely EI2 is based on a nucleus of European countries that have proved their political willingness and their military capabilities to shoulder a commitment in operations.«[3]

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1 Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead, *The Economist*, 7 November 2019, https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming- brain-dead (this – and all other URLs – were accessed on 30 September 2020).

2 Speech by President Emmanuel Macron on the defence and deterrence strategy in front of trainees of the 27th promotion of the war school, 7 February 2020, https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/07/discours-du-president-emmanuel-macron-sur-la-strategie-de-defense-et-de-dissuasion-devant-les-stagiaires-de-la-27eme-promotion-de-lecole-de-guerre.

3 European Intervention Initiative, french ministry of defence, 17th April 2020, https://www.defense.gouv.fr/english/dgris/international-action/ei2/ei2.

The second aim is to open up the E2I to non-EU member states. The first on the list would of course be the United Kingdom in order to keep the UK in European security circles after Brexit. But the E2I is also open to other NATO members which do not belong to the EU such as Norway, as well as Denmark, an EU member which opted out of the CSDP.

The E2I has a less formal decision-making structure than the European Union. The initiative relies on a minimum and flexible comitology, coordinated by a permanent secretariat implemented by France with the liaison officers of the participating countries. France is emphasizing that there is no duplication within PESCO on the one side and NATO on the other. Within the E2I, cooperation is implemented in four domains: 1/ strategic foresight, 2/ scenarios of employment, 3/ doctrine and lessons learned, and 4/ support to operations. Five working groups have been created under the auspices of E2I, three on potential areas of crisis: Sahel, Caribbean, Baltic, and two on transversal topics: power projection and the military dimension of terrorism.

The bilateral relations between France and the UK on the one hand, and Germany on the other, are inherently linked to the strategic cultures of the three countries.

The France and UK share a similar military culture with experienced armies which have cut their teeth on Peacemaking or Peacekeeping missions or operations in situations where it was necessary to use military forces smoothly but if necessary to also conduct high intensity military operations. In the case of the UK, this culture was forged in Northern Ireland whereas for France it was honed during military operations in Africa. These two cultures found themselves side by side in the Balkans and it is hardly surprising that it was France and the UK which jointly proposed that the European Union should acquire an independent defence arm during the St Malo summit in December 1998.

This common strategic culture was reflected in the Lancaster House Treaty which provided for the creation of an Anglo-French Combined Joint Expeditionary Force. This quick-action force, which should become fully operational in the summer of 2020, is capable of launching high-intensity missions on the ground. In terms of capacity-building, Franco-British cooperation logically focussed on areas of mutual economic interest – e.g. the missile systems sector with the armaments manufacturer MBDA or the MCM UUV (Unmanned Underwater Vehicle) underwater drone project-if there was a joint operational need. Lastly, there is cooperation in nuclear military capabilities with the pooling of nuclear warhead safety testing equipment.

Cooperation with Germany was historically linked to the development of the CSDP and more widely to the creation of a European defence union. Industrial defence cooperation was realised in the creation of the world's largest transnational civil and military aerospace company in 1999: Airbus. This cooperation was fuelled by joint capacity-building projects such as the Future Combat Air System and the Main Ground Combat System. There was less operational cooperation with Germany than with the UK for reasons of strategic culture, but France enjoys stronger political cooperation with Germany.

On paper, these bilateral relations are complementary, reflecting the particularities of the three countries in terms of strategic culture. This does not rule out occasional discord or differing interpretations of the type and exact purpose of this bilateral cooperation which became apparent in Berlin when the Lancaster House Treaty was signed in 2010.

As far as future threats are concerned, over and above strategic threats, France is increasingly aware of the peril of new technology.

Regarding strategic threats, France is wary of developments in Russia with its sabre-rattling on the EU's doorstep and believes that terrorism remains an active threat in particular in Africa and most likely in the Middle East.

France has witnessed the gradual dismantling of the international security apparatus with the phasing out of disarmament or arms control measures featured in the Cold War treaties. It is also perfectly aware that the development of new technology for offensive purposes continues unchecked: cyber warfare, the risk of certain technologies used for defence applications such as artificial intelligence getting out of hand, the militarisation of outer space, and digital disinformation campaigns as part of hybrid warfare tactics.[4] In this increasingly aggressive environment, France can see that the US is slowly disengaging, in particular from NATO and that the measures taken in Washington without consulting its European allies are, in some cases, detrimental to European security interests.

In the current landscape, the positives of the E3 format – which came into being at the start of the 2000s in response to the need for coordinated action taken by the three countries to curb Iran's military nuclear programme – have emerged over the years as there was also the alignment with the EU policy regarding Tehran. The future role of E3 once the UK has exited the European Union therefore merits consideration.

WHAT MIGHT THE FUTURE HOLD FOR THE E3?

To avoid any unrealistic expectations as to the future role the E3 could play, two points need to be borne in mind.

THE COMPETENCES AND INSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF THE E3 SHOULD NOT BE OVERESTIMATED

First of all, it is illusory to imagine that strategic cultures and threat perceptions could be aligned at the drop of a

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4   See strategic review of defence and national security, October 2017, https://www.defense.gouv.fr/dgris/presentation/evenements-archives/ revue-strategique-de- defense-et-de-securite-nationale-2017.

hat just because it has been decided that it is a good idea for the three countries to cooperate. States only cooperate when it is in their mutual interest and not because they would ideally like to be better aligned on security issues. If we take the example of the Israel-Palestine conflict, France, Germany and the UK, while condemning the situation, have never shared the same vision of a solution and have different relationships with the opposing sides. This has stymied all attempts by the EU to put an end to the conflict, particularly as the situation has progressively deteriorated since the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. Conversely, the only reason that the E3 emerged as the best option for the European Union to act on Iran in the early 2000s was that countering the nuclear programme was of mutual benefit to France, the UK and Germany and that they were in agreement as to the best way to go about it – a combination of talks and carefully measured sanctions.

Secondly, in organisational terms, it would certainly be an error to confer too strong an institutional framework on the E3 at the risk of giving the impression of creating a rival to the EU, a sort of antechamber to the European Union where all key security decisions are made. Yet, it cannot be denied that efficient collaboration between these three states leading to joint positions could be a powerful driver at EU level. It could also be a means of bypassing the unwieldy 27-state diploma-
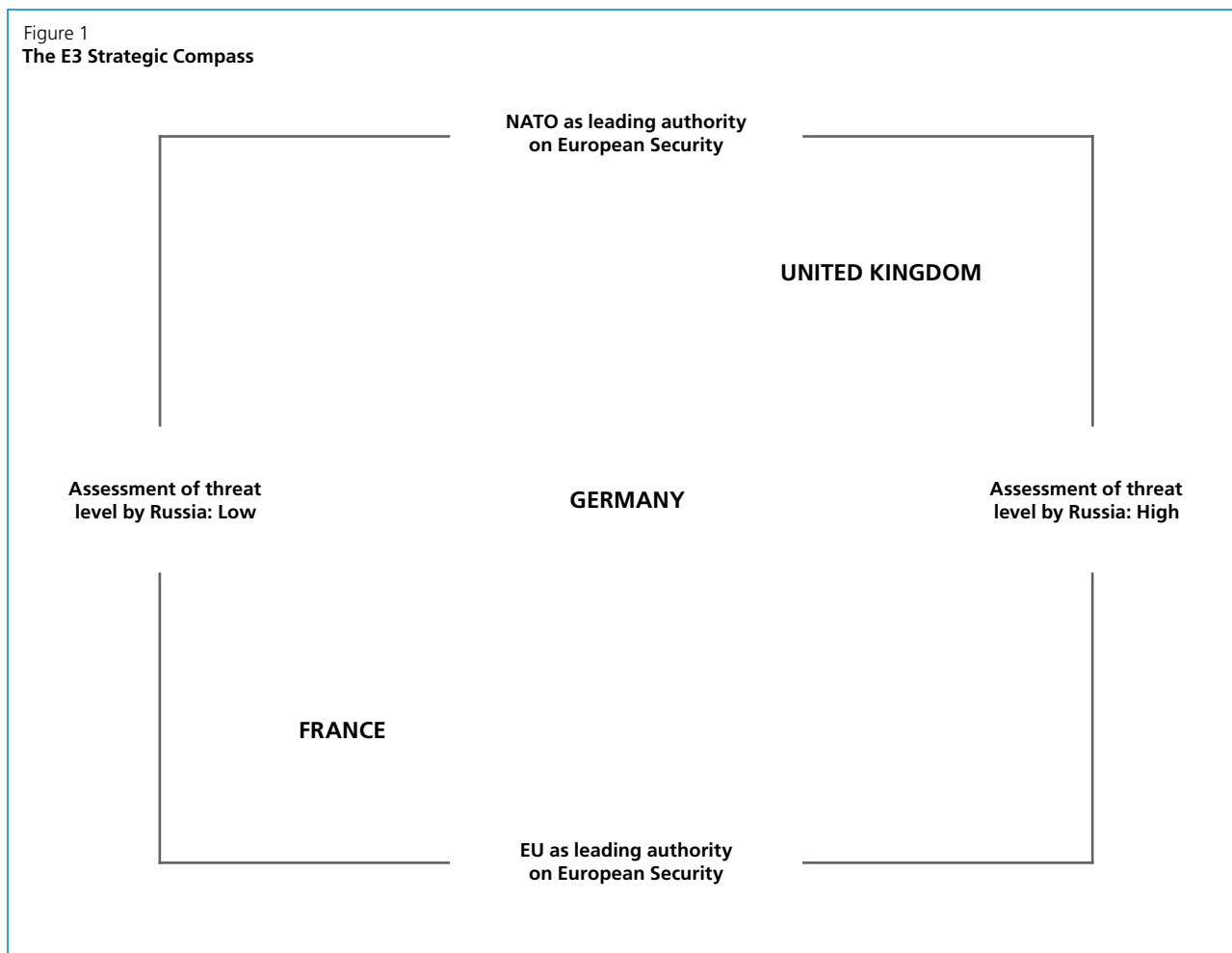
cy conducted by the EU. But the E3 needs to remain a pragmatic framework for cooperation with a three-pronged function:

– Identify the points upon which the countries converge with regard to security and foreign policy;

– negotiate to help find common ground when the views of the three countries diverge on security issues;

– and conduct joint actions when this could prove worthwhile for security reasons.

Such actions would need to be carried out transparently, in consultation with or even on behalf of the European Union.

DIFFERING VISIONS OF THE THREAT MAY BE A BLESSING IN DISGUISE

Divergent interests, stances and strategic culture may appear to be an obstacle to cooperation between the E3 countries but might actually prove to be an asset in relation to the European Union and NATO. If we evaluate the stance taken by the three countries on NATO and the CSDP on the one hand and Russia on the other, we can schematise as follows (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
The E3 Strategic Compass

NATO as leading authority on European Security

UNITED KINGDOM

Assessment of threat level by Russia: Low

GERMANY

Assessment of threat level by Russia: High

FRANCE

EU as leading authority on European Security

At first sight, it appears that the three countries are not on the same page, neither regarding the perception of a Russian threat nor regarding the appropriate framework for countering it. But in fact, this needs to be looked at from a different angle, for two reasons:

– Although the positions of the three countries reflect different perceptions, they are not inherently incompatible: France's desire to build bridges with Russia does not mean that Paris looks kindly upon Russian's military, cyber and spatial actions nor its weaponization of the internet by spreading fake news. In fact, France believes in a tough stance. France participates in NATO's air policing initiative in the Balkans and was involved in the reinforcement of deterrence and defence posture in Central Europe. When the UK belonged to the EU, London never challenged the CSDP even if it kept a close watch on its development and the UK worked closely with France on counterterrorism;

– The threat analysis of the E3 countries reflects the wide palette of viewpoints which can be found within the European Union. At the risk of oversimplification, when it comes to security, the British are closer to the Northern European countries, Germany looks to Central Europe and France shares common ground with Southern Europe. In other words, the strategic trends of thinking which cohabit within the European Union all converge in the E3 countries.

This means that an agreement within the E3 on security issues has every likelihood of being taken on board by the European Union as such an agreement would inevitably reflect different currents of thinking in its midst. In this case, these differences become an asset rather than a liability.

In addition to this, as Sir Simon Fraser, Deputy Chairman of Chatham House and a former diplomat, pointed out, the UK could be in a position to build a bridge between the European Union and the USA.[5]

This form of »division of labour« simply takes into account the geopolitical and historical culture of each country in order to maximise the efficiency of their common diplomacy when they decide to act together. For example, France historically has close links with west African countries, even if everyone, including French foreign policymakers are aware that the history of French colonization can sometimes be more of an obstacle than an advantage. The UK on the other side has close relationships with Commonwealth countries, the USA and Five Eyes countries. Germany's lack of strong historical geopolitical links can also be an advantage in some cases, as it enables a more neutral diplomacy backed by the pre-eminent economic power of Germany. This concept of division of labour has also been developed

by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, during his hearing with the European Parliament.[6]

THE LIMITS OF DELEGATION OF COMPETENCE TO A STATE BASED ON ITS EXPERTISE IN A GIVEN GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

The idea of delegating the power to one of the three states to act on behalf of the two others or the European Union due to its specific sphere of influence needs to be weighed up carefully for two reasons.

– A state's influence in a particular region of the world serves to further its economic interests. This is particularly true in France, Germany or the UK. Yet, in terms of realpolitik, nation states inevitably remain economic rivals.

– There may be an element of mistrust when delegating power to one state in a given region. In some cases, the state on the receiving end may be reticent. For example, France has been trying to give its policy in Africa a more European dimension since the Rwandan genocide in 1994. However, its European partners, in particularly Germany, remain sceptical of France's true intentions in this area or at least of the methods used to achieve them.

It is therefore important to carefully analyse the interests of each E3 country in the area in question before empowering them. This is perfectly feasible, but on a case-by-case basis, and the three countries would at least need to agree upon a clear mandate for the country acting on behalf of the two others.

IN SUM, WHAT WOULD THE SPHERE OF COMPETENCE OF THE E3 BE?

The E3 states need to map out all the international foreign policy and security issues based on the following three criteria:

– the issues where joint action would be feasible;
– the issues where their approach is complementary;
– and the issues where their points of view diverge too greatly.

All the broader security-related issues belong in the first category: disarmament, non-proliferation, emerging or growing threats: cyber, spatial or hybrid warfare.

5 Sir Simon Fraser, Britain does the splits between the EU and America, Chatham House, 2020, https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/twt/britain-does-splits-between-eu-and-america.

6 Hearing of Josep BORRELL FONTELLES, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Policy and Security Policy/Vice-President-designate of the European Commission, 7th October 2019. https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/hearing-of-josep-borrell-fontelles-high-representative-of-union-for-foreign-policy-and-security-poli_13228_pk?p_p_state=pop_up.

The second category would certainly incorporate the drivers behind these actual threats: global powers such as Russia or China and terrorists.

The last category would contain the trouble spots where the three states may or may not be aligned.

Lastly, the means and methods of action are subjects which need to be discussed by the E3 members because of their differing strategic cultures. It can be seen that in some cases, the approaches are complementary between the two countries which are less reluctant to envisage a military solution – France and the UK – and Germany on the other hand which tends to advocate civilian action. The possibility of conflictual disagreement on the best way to tackle a crisis should not be excluded from the picture. This was the case of Iraq in 2003 and Libya in 2011.

FREE FROM AN INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK BUT WITH A SOLID GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Even if we should shy away from giving the E3 an institutional format – at least ostensibly – it will be necessary to instil as strong a governance as possible between the three countries. Starting at the top, heads of state would meet at annual summits. The ministers of defence and foreign affairs and the political leaders of the three countries would also be involved. Working groups on particular topics could be set up between the two ministries of each of the countries. This solid governance would have a dual purpose:

– Decide upon the areas of cooperation on both a bottom-up and top-down basis;

– and implement shared policy directions; shared policies should be aligned with those of the European Union and be backed up by a strong political commitment.

THE LINK BETWEEN THE E3 AND THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE FUTURE EU/UK RELATIONSHIP POST BREXIT

Although the foundations of the future relationship between the EU and the UK were laid in the revised political declaration adopted on October 19, 2019,[7] the form this relationship could take remains yet to be decided. The European Union may have outlined this potential future relationship with regard to foreign policy and security in the negotiating mandate adopted by the Council of the European Union on February 25, 2020[8], but the British approach to the negotiations published on February 27, 2020 skirted round the subject[9].

This means that the UK deliberately left foreign policy, security and defence off the negotiating table. The British government indicated that there was no point in signing a security treaty with the European Union because it already had a stake in European security through its membership of NATO[10]. The stance taken by the UK is that they are ready and willing to cooperate closely with their allies – including the European Union – but do not require a treaty to achieve this.

It can be seen that the UK has diverged from its position between the start of negotiations in 2017 and today.

At the outset, the UK announced that it wanted to participate as closely as possible in EU defence and security decision-making[11]. Although the European Union did not rule this out completely, it was quick to point out that any such concertation must respect the principle of sovereignty of the European Union in decision-making, i. e. no country may interfere in this process. Yet the British – in any case the hard Brexiteers who won the day when Boris Johnson was elected – wanted to have a free hand over the UK's relationships in all areas, in particular foreign policy and security, under the Global Britain banner. What the European Union was putting on the table could in no way tempt a UK government determined to preserve British sovereignty.

To solve what could be known as the dilemma of dual sovereignty, France issued a proposal which could be seen as an alternative or complementary option – the creation of a European Security Council to which the UK would belong.[12] Emmanuel Macron's proposal followed on from the Franco-German Meseberg declaration dating from June 2018 evoking the creation of a European Security Council[13] but without alluding to the UK. This proposal has remained a

7 Political Declaration setting out the framework for the future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom, HM Government, 19 October 2019, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840656/Political_Declaration_setting_out_the_framework_for_the_future_relationship_between_the_European_Union_and_the_United_Kingdom.pdf.

8 Council of the European Union, ANNEX to COUNCIL DECISION authorising the opening of negotiations with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for a new partnership agreement, 25 February 2020, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/42736/st05870-ad01re03-en20.pdf.

9 The future relationship with the EU, the UK's approach to negotiations, HM Government, February 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/868874/The_Future_Relationship_with_the_EU.pdf.

10 Britain refuses EU push for security treaty after Brexit, Reuters, 27 February 2020.

11 Foreign policy, defence and development, a future partnership paper, 12 September 2017, Deex, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foreign-policy-defence-and-development-a-future-partnership-paper.

12 Emmanuel Macron, Pour une renaissance européenne, 4 March 2019, https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2019/03/04/pour-une-renaissance-europeenne.

13 Déclaration de Meseburg – Renouveler les promesses de l'Europe en matière de sécurité et de prospérité, 19 June 2018, https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2018/06/19/declaration-de-meseberg-renouveler-les-promesses-de-l-europe-en-matiere-de-securite-et-de-prosperite.

dead letter. However, only three solutions appear possible: two within the framework of the European Union and one outside of it.

In the first scenario, the European Security Council – of which the UK would be a member – would be an official EU institution. This would imply revising the treaty on the European Union, with the CSDP becoming a policy of the EU28, unless the European Union is no longer deemed to be sovereign in terms of its decision-making. Yet, it is hard to imagine the UK re-joining a European Union in order to share a common policy nor, for that matter, the Union revising a plethora of community documents from the Treaty on the European Union down in order to let the British into the CSDP.

The other possibility within the EU institutional framework would be to confer upon this security council the status of consultative body including the UK. But it is hard to see the appeal of such a proposal to the UK which would challenge its sovereignty as the European Union retains decision-making freedom.

The final possibility would be to create this Security Council including the UK outside the institutional architecture of the European Union along the same lines as the E2I. This Security Council could be covered by a security treaty signed between the European Union and the UK. But this runs the risk of it being too weak or, on the contrary, of it undermining the sovereignty of the European Union in foreign and security policy areas.

Irrespective of the option chosen, the creation of a Security Council including the UK does not seem feasible.

This is where the E3 comes into play, not simply as an alternative to a European Security Council including the UK but as a pragmatic structure giving the UK a say in the future of the security of the European Union while respecting the sovereignty of both the European Union and the UK.

The E3 would have the advantage of not having a formal link with the EU which would mean that EU or UK sovereignty would simply not be an issue. The question would rather be the influence exerted by the UK on the one hand and EU-members France and Germany on the other. We would be dealing with an instrument of soft power based on soft law.

In practical terms, the E3 and European Union could have reciprocal and pragmatic discussions by continuing to apply the methods used to negotiate the Iranian nuclear deal.

France and Germany could defend the joint positions drawn up with the UK as part of the E3 at EU level. As we have seen, the agreement between the three countries would in all likelihood obtain buy-in from all EU countries as they represent different perceptions of security within the European Union. At the end of the day, EU sovereignty would remain intact, the UK would have genuine influence and would keep close ties to the EU foreign and security policy.

In the same way, there is nothing stopping the EU delegating certain diplomatic actions to one or more countries. This could mean France and Germany handling a particular diplomatic matter in conjunction with the UK.

This can only function if the E3 remains a pragmatic institution with no formal existence under international law as it is vital for the other 25 EU members not to feel ostracised by the E3. The E3 must be a low-footprint high-efficiency organization which explains why it needs strong governance if it is to be efficient and influential.

The E3 could therefore be a format for the future; a pragmatic solution to include the UK in matters of European security while respecting the sovereignty of both the United Kingdom and the European Union.

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GERMANY AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY

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STATUS QUO

Security policy in Europe has been significantly shaped by France, Germany and the United Kingdom. This will not change after Brexit. Yet the relationship between the three of them (and the European Union) obviously will. To realistically assess the possibilities and obstacles for cooperation, however, it is important to consider national specificities. Regarding Germany, analysts and decision-makers in France and the UK should keep in mind the following four aspects:

i)   the often-discussed **reluctance to use military force abroad is deeply rooted in German strategic culture** and the public. It is a result of a political system that strongly favours such restraint, and which had been deliberately designed this way. Whereas there is a readiness to take over more responsibility for peace and security in the world this does not mean that Germany will embrace a more militarily interventionist posture.

ii) One important factor for this restraint is the structure of German parliamentary democracy: Governments are usually formed through a **coalition of political parties**. Especially the left and centre left parties have a strong base in the peace movement. Therefore, a more militarily interventionist security policy is rather unlikely to emerge as long as any of these parties is part of the government.

iii) Where military contributions to robust operations have been mandated, the **question of international legality and legitimacy** played a strong role in the political process. In this regard, Kosovo remained the only true exception to the rule, that Germany would not mandate its troops to use force without a UN Security Council mandate or a comparable legal basis. The commitment to a rules-based international order entails a strong commitment to also play by those rules.

iv) Whereas Germany supports European defence integration in the EU and NATO alike, one should not underestimate the **specific role of NATO for the German Armed Forces**: The setup of the Bundeswehr more or less coincided with Germany joining NATO and it is fair to say that NATO is in the DNA of the Bundeswehr. Accordingly, the interest and the stakes in maintaining a functional transatlantic alliance are very high; both politically and militarily.

PROTECTING AND ENHANCING EUROPEAN SECURITY POST BREXIT?

Moving from the status quo of the relations between France, Germany and the United Kingdom to the question of how to cooperate in European Security after Brexit, we first have to factor in the current security environment.

There are obvious points of convergence in assessing the current security environment:

– a renewed territorial threat perception of European Allies in Central and Eastern Europe;
– the more recent question marks around the commitment of major allies to solidarity and political coordination within NATO;
– hybrid threats to European security including cyber operations, propaganda schemes and aggressive intelligence activities;
– the instability, crises and violent conflicts in Europe's neighbourhood;
– the cracks in the international rules-based order and the return of multidomain great power rivalries (geopolitics);
– the risks and potentials associated with technological developments (cyber and information space, artificial intelligence).

Whereas there should be more or less agreement on these challenges, the main question is how to address them. In the following paragraphs I will discuss three aspects of potential trilateral security policy cooperation in which we may expect significant obstacles and low chances for ambitious initiatives to succeed in the near future. Thereafter, I will explore three fields for cooperation that might hold more immediate promise for security policy cooperation of the E3. I will conclude with a more general reflection on European strategy in a changing global order.

Limits & frictions – need for dialogue, but do not expect too much, too soon

A EUROPEAN SECURITY COUNCIL?

In the current debate about the future relationship between the EU and the UK, some have called for the estab-

lishment of a new forum for foreign and security policy co-ordination, a sort of European Security Council (ESC)[1]. Irrespective of the concrete form and design of such an institution (e.g. a stand alone body or an additional format of the EU Foreign Affairs Council), this does not look like a very promising project for the E3. After all, the impression is, that the UK's desire to leave the EU did not the least stem from a lack of enthusiasm about a supposedly overly bureaucratic EU. Therefore, it seems fair to assume there will not be too much inclination to embark on setting up a new sophisticated institutional scheme together with European partners. Furthermore, the scope for such scheme would be fairly limited anyway since EU member states will probably be wary of keeping the Union together and may fear an ESC »(…) could sideline or replace the EU's Foreign Affairs Council and undermine ambitions to establish the EU as a foreign and security policy player«[2]. A new ambitious European institution-building endeavour may in the end be a rather fruitless effort. A more modest and less formal effort aiming to merely increase »informal consultation and co-ordination between groups of member-states and the UK«[3] may face less scepticism, but would probably disappoint the expectations associated with the term European Security Council. The most important challenge will not be to negotiate and proclaim new institutions but to continue and improve practical coordination and cooperation.

MILITARY INTERVENTIONS AND OUT-OF-AREA DEPLOYMENTS

The most striking divergence still is the question of military interventions out of area. Whereas France and the United Kingdom both have a long tradition, proven capabilities and vast experience with expeditionary military operations and global force projection, Germany is markedly different in this regard. Most likely it will stay this way. Its culture of military restraint may have changed slightly since the end of the Cold War, but the assumption that Germany will sooner or later converge towards the more interventionist strategic cultures of France and the UK is bound to disappoint; despite the invocation of the so called »Munich consensus« by German and international security policy experts alike. A recent analysis of a variety of survey data by the Global Public Policy Institute found that support for general international involvement of Germany in younger generations may in fact be increasing. Yet, it also concluded that »(…) Military action is unpopular across all age groups: only 14% favoured

stronger military ›involvement in conflict resolution in the world‹ compared to the current level. In this regard, there was no difference between 18-to 29-year-olds and the 30-plus group«[4].

Also, from an analytical point of view, the experiences with military interventions over the last two and a half decades should rather give us pause. They call for a sober assessment of the approaches as well as the results of such policy. On the occasion of the Afghan peace agreement from February 2020, Michael von der Schulenburg made four points with regard to the engagement in Afghanistan - three of which hold true for a number of other Western-lead interventions of the recent past, too. He argued that (i) modern Western armies have been defeated by a poorly armed non-state organization, (ii) that the strategy to lead and win such wars by means of training and equipping local security actors has failed and that (iii) it is a defeat of our ambition to facilitate the emergence of democracy and the rule of law after military regime change.[5]

One may contest individual or all of these assessments in detail, but the overall argument is quite compelling. While remarkable short-term military victories were achieved by robust western military intervention, in hindsight, they seem to have often proven short-lived. And this is despite the fact that very different approaches had been taken:

– In Afghanistan the level of engagement and ambition grew over the years after rather modest beginnings;
– In Iraq we saw an all-out massive invasion and occupation right from the start;
– In Libya, supposedly applying the lessons from the previous two interventions, international actors opted for a minimal footprint after the military operations ended.

All of this is not encouraging at all. While this is not a call for isolation and a pacifist hands-off approach, an in-depth reflection and evaluation about when and why military intervention might still be necessary should be urgently pursued among the E3. Where intervention might still be necessary the question will be how it might be pursued in a way that is also strategically successful. Looking back, at least the interventions in the Western Balkans – their own specific shortcomings notwithstanding – illustrate that military interventions and Peace- and Statebuilding efforts can in fact work. At the same time, they show the massive scope and the long-term commitment that is necessary to achieve sustainable progress.

1 See for example Coelmont, Jo (2020): EUSC? OK!, in Berlin Policy Journal, published Online 26 February 2020, available at: https://berlinpolicyjournal.com/eusc-ok/ (last accessed September 20, 2020).

2 Whineray, David (2020): The Pros and Cons of a European Security Council, Published online on January 23, 2020 available at: https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/80869 (last accessed September 20, 2020).

3 Scazzieri, Luigi (2019): Is a European Security Council a good idea?, Published online on December 2, 2019 at: https://www.cer.eu/in-the-press/european-security-council-good-idea (last accessed September 20, 2020).

4 Bressan, Brockmeier, Rotmann (2020): New Expectations: Generation Z and Changing Attitudes on German Foreign Policy, published online May 2020, available at: https://www.gppi.net/media/Rotmann_Bressan_Brockmeier_2020_New-Expectations_20GenZ.pdf (last accessed September 20, 2020).

5 von der Schulenburg, Michael (2020): Ende mit Schrecken, IPG Journal, published online March 25, 2020, available at: https://www.ipg-journal.de/regionen/global/artikel/detail/ende-mit-schrecken-4190/ (last accessed September 20, 2020).

ARMS EXPORTS AND TRAIN AND EQUIP PROGRAMS

The third field of divergence, at least at first sight, is the question of arms exports. Not long ago, these exports became a major point of contention among the E3. The German decision on halting arms exports to Saudi Arabia in October 2018 resulted in an angry letter from the UK foreign minister addressed to his German counterpart[6] and a working paper of the French ambassador to Berlin published by the German Federal Academy for Security Policy.[7] And while we may have moved on from the specific case of European arms exports to Saudi Arabia, similar discussions are bound to re-emerge. Comparable to the issue of military interventions, there is currently no likely government constellation in Berlin which would not be under strong pressure to pursue a more restrictive practice of arms exports. Often, German and international critics call these aspirations naïve or idealistic. They ignore, however, that in addition to the normative concerns, there are serious reasons to doubt the wisdom of an expansive arms exports policy.

One reason to be sceptical about the strategic benefit of arms sales relates to the idea that it would come with a strong security policy influence on recipient states. The Cato Institute analysed that claim and stressed that »Arms sales, whether used as carrots or sticks, are in effect a fairly weak version of economic sanctions, which research has shown have limited effects, even when approved by the United Nations, and tend to spawn a host of unintended consequences«.[8] Looking at the case of Turkey and the apparent lack of leverage the threat of exclusion of the F-35 programme provided to the US may be one of the more prominent recent illustrations. What is more, especially for the Middle East, Shimon Arad identified a trend of a »deliberate policy of client states to diversify their arms purchases«.[9] And diversification obviously is a strategy to reduce dependence. The arms market – especially for strategically important states – appears to become sort of a buyer's market.

We need to be careful about train and equip programs for structurally similar reasons. Due to the lack of understanding of local political dynamics and the underestimation of local actor's agency and long-term unintended consequenc-

es[10], train and equip is no panacea for stabilization either. Again, this argument is not meant to discredit train and equip approaches as such completely. It is meant to caution against too easily resorting to an instrument which only at first sight looks uncomplicated.

Potentials – three avenues for living a special security relationship

In contrast to those potential obstacles for cooperation, we can also identify issues where a strong convergence is either possible or already visible: the interest in above all safeguarding and Europeanizing NATO, the cooperation at the United Nations and the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) in matters of Peacebuilding and Peacekeeping as well as pushing a new arms control and disarmament agenda.

COOPERATION IN THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL AND PEACEKEEPING

The most obvious field for intensified security policy cooperation between France, Germany and the United Kingdom is within inclusive multilateral organisations such as the United Nations and the OSCE. Emerging from a UN-setting (P5+1) the E3-constellation already became an established format with the Iran negotiations of the JCPOA[11]. In the last one and a half years, German non-permanent membership of the Security Council also showed on various occasions, that the E3 actually work together quite well at Turtle Bay. Richard Gowan however also cautioned that »The current E3 will not necessarily remain a united front at the UN. Many European diplomats suspect that Britain will drift away from France and Germany if and when Brexit eventually happens. And Berlin's voice in New York will shrink once its Council term ends«.[12] Obviously, the end of the German term on the UN Security Council may reduce the need for France and the UK to coordinate closely with Germany on the complete range of UN-SC agenda topics. The experience with the Iranian nuclear deal negotiations, however, shows, that for selected portfolios there is a significant benefit of keeping the cooperation up and close even when Germany no longer is a member of the council.

One such portfolio definitely will be UN Peacekeeping operations. Whereas the topic of military interventions writ large

6 See Press coverage by Patrick Wintour in the Guardian. Wintour, Patrick (2020): Jeremy Hunt urges Germany to rethink Saudi arms sales ban, published online on February 20, 2019, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/20/jeremy-hunt-urges-germany-to-rethink-saudi-arms-sales-ban (last accessed September 20, 2020).

7 Descôtes, Anne-Marie (2020): Vom »German-free« zumgegenseitigen Vertrauen, published online 2019 at: https://www.baks.bund.de/de/arbeitspapiere/2019/vom-german-free-zum-gegenseitigen-vertrauen (last accessed September 20, 2020).

8 Dorminey, Caroline and Thrall, Trevor A. (2018): Risky Business: The Role of Arms Sales in U.S. Foreign Policy, Policy Analysis No. 836, March 13, 2018, published online at: https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa-836.pdf (last accessed September 20, 2020).

9 Arad, Shimon (2018): Trump's arms exports policy: debunking key assumptions, published online September 28, 2018, available at: https://warontherocks.com/2018/09/trumps-arms-exports-policy-debunking-key-assumptions/ (last accessed September 20, 2020).

10 See for example Bärwaldt, Konstantin; Montanaro, Lucia; Räty, Tuui (2020): The Americanisation of European Foreign Policy, Published online 10th June 2020, available at: https://www.ips-journal.eu/regions/europe/article/show/the-americanisation-of-european-foreign-policy-4422/ (last accessed September 20, 2020).

11 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, commonly known as Iran nuclear deal. An agreement that was reached between Iran and China, France, Russia, UK, USA, Germany and the EU in 2015.

12 Gowan, Richard (2019): Three Troubling Trends at the UN Security Council, published online November 6, 2019, available at: https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/three-troubling-trends-un-security-council (last accessed September 20, 2020).

has been listed as one of the more challenging areas of co-operation in the previous chapter, the UN framework may be an exception here. While the appetite for deploying troops in UN operations may have declined markedly in Paris and London, the overall commitment to UN Peacekeeping is shared in Berlin, London and Paris. Therefore, the triangle should coordinate closely in order to support UN Peacekeeping and its reform efforts by various means. The long experience of France and the UK in this field, combined with the German preference for engaging in and supporting inclusive multilateral formats for crisis management, make this an ideal field for E3 cooperation.

THE E3 AT THE FOREFRONT FOR A NEW ARMS CONTROL AGENDA

As has been stressed before, the negotiations on Iran's nuclear program were one of the signature achievements of E3 cooperation in the more recent past. Accordingly, there are good reasons to expand this cooperation to other portfolios of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. The common interests of all three states are quite compelling: Neither of them has an interest, or for that matter, could afford new arms races developing in Europe. And this applies for conventional weapons, weapons of mass destruction as well as for new weapon technologies in domains, such as cyberspace or outer space.

With regard to nuclear weapons, the situation may look less promising at first sight due to the fact that France and the UK are recognized nuclear powers whereas Germany is not. Yet, among the nuclear powers, in the 2016-2019 Arms Control Association Scorecard, »France and the United Kingdom each earned a B, the highest overall grades (…)«[13] indicating a high credibility regarding the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Still there are important differences between the two as well. The most important perhaps being that a substantial debate about the future of the nuclear deterrent is actually taking place in the UK for quite some time already, but not in France. As Bruno Tertrais recently acknowledged for the French case, »(…) the weakness of the role of non-governmental organizations in these debates distinguishes us from our major partners and allies«.[14] This notwithstanding, president Macron made a crucial point in February 2020 referring to the prospect of new arms races: »In that context, Europeans must also propose together an international arms control agenda. The end of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the uncertainties about the future of the New START Treaty and the

crisis of the conventional arms control regime in Europe has led to the possibility of a return of pure unhindered military and nuclear competition by 2021, which has not been seen since the end of the 1960s«.[15] For both Germany and the UK, it should not be difficult to subscribe to this call and embark on a joint effort in this regard.

EUROPEANIZING NATO

In the current environment the future of NATO clearly is at risk. While we may hope that under a new administration or with more defence efforts of European NATO members like Germany transatlantic tensions might ease again, few doubt that the USA will recalibrate its military posture away from Europe and its neighbourhood. Therefore, it is up to the major European Allies to take the lead and – in particular – to reassure Eastern Allies. This means two things: a) strengthening the European pillar of NATO, so that a reduced US-presence does not undermine its core task of assuring deterrence and defence of its most exposed allies and b) that NATO will maintain the infrastructure and interoperability with the USA to such a degree, that it allows a seamless return and reinforcement by the USA should a crisis render this necessary.

Without such inner-European reassurance, any idea for more strategic autonomy of Europe is likely illusionary, as Central and Eastern European Allies will rely even more on bilateral relations with the US rather than supporting European defence integration. The most straightforward way to provide the necessary reassurance is an explicit recalibration of the Alliance to its core task, namely alliance defence. And actually, we already saw a marked practical refocusing since 2014 towards Article 5 (and Article 6) of the North Atlantic Treaty: »The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all«. This already is a big call and should not be seen as a given. However, when we take a hard look at the scope and form of threats to the Alliance, the military balance in the strict sense of the word may no longer be the only relevant equation. Indeed, whereas using violence in peer-state conflict may be seen by powers such as China and Russia as »a little passé«, as Rod Thornton argued[16], using intelligence, cyber and psyops capabilities obviously is not. A military alliance plays a crucial role in deterring and defending against such threats and shoring up resilience, but it is hardly sufficient. Cooperation in policing, counter-intelligence and civilian defence needs to comple-

13 Davenport, Kelsey and Sanders-Zakre, Alicia (2019): Assessing Progress on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament. Updated Report Card 2016–2019, published online in July 2019, available at: https://www.armscontrol.org/sites/default/files/files/Reports/Report_2019July_ReportCard_1.pdf (last accessed September 20, 2020).

14 Tertrais, Bruno (2020): French Nuclear Deterrence Policy, Forces, And Future: A Handbook, published online February 2020, p. 23 available at: https://www.frstrategie.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/recherches-et-documents/2020/202004.pdf (last accessed September 20, 2020).

15 Macron, Emmanuel (2020): Speech of the President of the Republic on the Defense and Deterrence Strategy, transcript published online, February 7, 2020 at: https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/07/speech-of-the-president-of-the-republic-on-the-defense-and-deterrence-strategy (last accessed September 20, 2020).

16 Thornton, Rod (2018): Current Russian and Chinese ways of warfare: the end (?) of military violence in peer-state conflict, published online 2018, available at: http://strategicstudyindia.blogspot.com/2018/02/current-russian-and-chinese-ways-of.html (last accessed September 21, 2020).

ment such efforts. It is here, where both the triangle France, Germany and the UK as well as the EU as a whole would have to enter the stage.

On the other hand of the spectrum of Alliance tasks and despite the valuable experiences gathered in crisis management operations in the Western Balkans and in Afghanistan, this type of defence cooperation will decline within the NATO portfolio anyway. For nearly all of the potential out-of-area crises spots, where a need for deployment may emerge, the prospect for consensus in the North Atlantic Council seems very remote these days.

Finally, any thought experiments about global NATO or a NATO role in the Indo-Pacific region are risky distractions. The geographic limitation of NATO is not an anachronistic legacy but still a strategically wise self-restriction. However, this does not imply to ignore the rise and role of China, since in the cyber, information and space domains, it does have direct implications for NATO, too.

A new strategic concept – which is urgently needed anyway – could and should underwrite such a rebalancing towards a clear prioritization of collective alliance defence of Europe and North America.

A modified division of roles between NATO and the EU could emerge with a more focused role for NATO in the field of alliance defence on the one hand and a more prominent role for the EU, the OSCE and the UN (or ad-hoc coalitions) in crisis management on the other. This makes additional sense, since the EU, the OSCE and the UN can dispose of a complete toolbox of military and civilian capabilities in comparison to NATO as a military alliance. Such a reorientation of NATO requires significant European ownership; in particular from the side of the E3. Against the background of the traditional French reservations towards NATO, a trilateral initiative to »save and Europeanize NATO« with strong ownership in Paris would carry a particularly forceful message.

BROADER STRATEGIC REFLECTIONS AND THE WAY AHEAD

All of the above-mentioned issues are more or less about the practical forms of cooperation. A more general question relates to our European perception of the strategic environment and our role in the global security system. Looking at the debates within the strategic communities in Berlin, London and Paris it sometimes seems as if it would be recommendable that Europe (or European states) should play a more prominent security policy role in general and intervene more often and more robust in practice in particular. This appears to be counter-intuitive – at least for the time being – against the background of historic experiences with Western-led interventions, capabilities and strategic environment. The reduced willingness of the USA to intervene in the Middle East (as evidenced in Libya and Syria) and Africa may well be a partial reflection of its pivot towards Asia. But it is just as well a consequence of a meagre track record, despite the

huge efforts and resources invested. To assume that Europeans will be more successful playing the role the US has played during its supposed unipolar moment, despite having fewer resources, facing a chronic and enduring lack of crucial capabilities and a lack of public appetite for foreign adventures, is quite optimistic. There are a number of compelling reasons therefore to halt the intervention inflation and to pursue a more modest course where rhetoric and ambition on the one hand better match capacities and sustainability on the other. Yet, there is also no way to just shrug-off our intervention legacies, which is why the E3 – including Germany – should think hard how to turn the ongoing commitments into success. In addition to living up to our commitment to human security and the moral responsibility taken over by intervening in the first place, it is also a prerequisite for Europeans to be taken serious in its role as contributor to global security. Kishore Mahbubani said it all in one simple sentence: »It is inevitable that the world will face a troubled future if the West can't shake its interventionist impulses, refuses to recognize its new position, or decides to become isolationist and protectionist«.[17]

Both, from a normative and from a realist point of view, a more defensive European posture and mindset seems to be warranted. Europeans need to choose wisely when it comes to interventions »out of area«, to the questions of where, when and how to engage. Even more important, however, is the need to keep peace and assure our and our allies' security in Europe. NATO is an invaluable asset in this matter. We should therefore recalibrate it to its main purpose, which was and is enshrined in Articles 5 and 6.

THE WAY AHEAD

Instead of new bilateral agreements or new institution-building, the E3 states should pragmatically develop and subscribe to a joint vision and agenda for their security relationship. This should prioritize a commitment to jointly support (i) the Europeanization of NATO, (ii) the cooperation in multilateral institutions like the UN and (iii) a concerted European/E3 push for a new arms control and disarmament agenda covering a wide range of weapon categories.

Since the French-German as well as the French-British relationship heretofore have been the dominant ones in this triangle, a lot will depend on Paris in this regard. Against the background of the fast-changing security environment, a trilateral agreement or statement outlining a shared vision and agenda should be articulated as soon as possible. Only then will the E3 have the chance to reflect such a common position in the various upcoming strategy reviews: the new strategic compass for the Common Security and Defence Policy to be developed until 2022 the next edition of the Global Strategy of the EU (or alternatively a Security and Defence Policy Whitebook), the UK Defence Policy Review and

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17 Mahbubani, Kishore (2018): Has the West lost it? A provocation, London: Penguin, p. 92.

a new NATO strategic concept. Finally, in Germany the Defence Policy Whitepaper of 2016 may also be due for a review after the next federal elections. A quick and bold E3 declaration on security cooperation in Europe therefore would be quite timely.

3

THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY

Neil Melvin and Malcolm Chalmers, RUSI

INTRODUCTION

The United Kingdom's exit from the European Union marks one of the most significant shifts in European and transatlantic geopolitics since the fall of the Berlin Wall. While the UK has left the EU, the British government is committed to pursuing a leading international role after Brexit in the form of the »Global Britain« agenda. The government has also publicly made clear that it wishes to continue to work closely both with the EU and major European powers on foreign and security policy.

The departure from the EU was a historic step away from one of the three core pillars of the UK's post World War Two foreign and security policy, namely European integration (primarily an economic project from the UK perspective).[1] Post-Brexit, the UK remains committed to the remaining two pillars, the Transatlantic relationship, notably through NATO and the global multilateral system, organised primarily through the United Nations and its agencies. The fast shifting international security order is, however, raising fundamental questions about the UK national interest, about the overall future direction of the UK foreign and security policy, and about the best tools and partnerships for the UK going forward.[2]

Against this background, the UK is attempting to craft a foreign and security policy that takes account of its new position in international relations, the uncertainty about the resilience of its existing partnerships and alliances, as well as major shifts in international security – notably the rise of China. European security remains a core focus and the UK has already demonstrated a strong interest in the new European security forums and arrangements that have emerged in recent years, particularly where it can work closely with France and Germany. At the same time, the UK

will approach European security in a pragmatic fashion and will assess its engagement in any institution primarily on the basis of its effectiveness. The UK will also be ready to forge its own partnerships within Europe and beyond around issues that it identifies as central to its national interest.

THE UK IN 2020

The United Kingdom is a significant international actor. The UK holds a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and makes substantial commitments to United Nations institutions, including peace operations. The UK is also a major provider of development assistance and has enshrined in law to commit 0.7 per cent of the national income as Official Development Assistance (ODA).[3]

The UK is arguably Europe's strongest defence power and has substantial global intelligence assets. It is one of only two NATO European states possessing 'wide-spectrum' military capabilities (including a nuclear deterrent). The UK is committed to fulfilling its NATO commitment to spend 2 per cent of GNP on defence (nearly £50 billion annually), with NATO reporting in 2019 that it was spending 2.1 per cent.[4] UK armed forces are deployed in support of international missions across the world, including in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Following the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union on 31 January 2020, and in line with the periodic review of UK defence and security policy, the UK Government announced that it will »hold the largest review of the UK's foreign, defence, security and development policy since the end of the Cold War«, known as the Integrated Review of Foreign Policy, Defence, Security and International Development.[5] The Integrated Review was paused as a re-

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1   Within the European Union, the UK worked closely with other member states on a variety of security issues. Together with foreign and defence policy, justice and home affairs (notably involving matters related to policing, illegal immigration, and terrorism) was a key area of cooperation. The focus of this paper is, however, confined to the UK's role in European foreign and defence matters.

2   For an extended discussion of this framework, see Malcolm Chalmers, Taking Control: Rediscovering the Centrality of National Interest in UK Foreign and Security Policy, RUSI Whitehall Report 1-20, RUSI, February 2020. https://rusi.org/publication/whitehall-reports/taking-control-rediscovering-centrality-national-interest-uk-foreign (last accessed September 21, 2020).

3   Official Development Assistance, *Gov.UK*, 23 Nov. 2015; https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/official-development-assistance/official-development-assistance (last accessed September 21, 2020).

4   Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2012-2019, NATO, 23 June 2019; https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_06/20190625_PR2019-069-EN.pdf (last accessed September 21, 2020).

5   PM outlines new review to define Britain's place in the world, *Gov.uk*, 26 Feb. 2020; https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-outlines-new-review-to-define-britains-place-in-the-world (last accessed September 21, 2020).

sult of the Covid-19 pandemic, but it was restarted in the summer of 2020.

While Brexit and European security will remain key challenges to be addressed in the Review, the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the focus on national resilience in security priorities. The economic crisis precipitated by the pandemic will significantly curtail the resource picture for UK defence and security for several years ahead, possibly leading to reductions in capabilities. At the same time, China has emerged as a new priority, including the possibility of increasing the presence of UK forces in the Indo-Pacific region. This points to a likely rebalancing of UK security efforts toward homeland defence and international commitments, with a potential diminution of the UK contribution to some parts of European collective security.

While the Integrated Review may set out some new directions for UK foreign and security policy, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation will remain the bedrock of UK defence policy. There is firm cross-party support amongst the UK's main political parties for a continued UK membership of the alliance. NATO membership also commands broad public support with 65 per cent of those surveyed in the UK expressing favourable views on the alliance.[6] The Article V commitment continues to attract strong support, although surveys indicate higher levels of support for UK military defence of the United States and western Europe, versus eastern Europe and Turkey.

In early 2020, before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, the UK reaffirmed its commitment to NATO with the announcement that the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) would provide an enduring and substantial contribution to NATO's Readiness Initiative (NRI).[7] The JEF's primary focus (reflecting its north European membership) is on, but is not limited to, the High North, North Atlantic and Baltic regions, where it forms part of the NATO deterrence efforts. The UK contribution to the NRI also includes land capabilities as part of a UK-led brigade and in the maritime domain through a UK Carrier Strike Group.

Within NATO, the UK leads the multinational battalion battlegroup in Estonia as part of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic region, makes a significant contribution to the battlegroup based in Poland, and contributes to NATO Baltic Air Policing. The UK also participates in NATO's Tailored Forward Presence in south-eastern Europe, notably with regular deployments of fast jets to Romania as part of NATO's Southern Air Policing mission and naval deploy-

ments to the Black Sea. The UK participates in regular military exercises with NATO European allies, and key NATO partners in eastern Europe (Ukraine, Georgia).

The UK has important bilateral defence agreements with individual European states, of which the most important is with France. The French-British Combined Joint Expeditionary Force is a bilateral arrangement providing for joint French-British intervention in a wide range of scenarios. The UK is working closely with European partners beyond Europe, notably with France in the Sahel, and European navies in the Gulf and Indian Ocean.

BREXIT NEGOTIATIONS AND SECURITY

As a member of the European Union, the UK made a substantial commitment to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The October 2019 Political Declaration accompanying the Withdrawal Agreement expressed the intention of the UK and the EU to »support ambitious, close and lasting cooperation on external threats«, while recognising that any future co-operation should respect both sides' »strategic and security interests, and their respective legal orders«.

The UK government negotiating mandate »The Future Relationship with the EU: The UK's Approach to Negotiations« (February 2020), however, provides little detail on how the UK proposes to take this cooperation forward, and the UK government appears to have shifted away from some of the ambition contained in the Political Declaration. The UK has indicated, nevertheless, that it is open to participation in EU programmes and instruments, if it is in its interest to do so. The UK preference would be for cooperation to be based on a combination of formal agreements enabling coordination on a case-by-case basis, rather than one single formal treaty. Such a relationship would be underpinned by regular consultation and co-ordination across all aspects of the UK–EU foreign policy relationship.

In areas of defence and security cooperation where the EU has developed strong shared legal frameworks, programmes and assets – for example in relation to economic sanctions, the European Defence Fund, law enforcement databases and judicial cooperation – the UK's refusal to accept any role for the European Court of Justice in the oversight of cooperative mechanisms is likely to lead to the UK and the EU going their separate ways. In areas which remain primarily inter-governmental, by contrast, the potential for continuing cooperation at or near current levels is much greater. This is the case for most activity under the CFSP framework.

While the UK is no longer a member of the European Council, the UK and EU are likely to have strong mutual interests in coordinating their foreign and security policies with each other in numerous areas. Indeed, on most such issues, this relationship will be one of the most important for both sides. The UK is more likely to be successful in pursuing its foreign policy interests if it does so with the EU. The obverse is also true.

6   Moira Fagan and Jacob Poushter, »NATO Seen Favorably Across Member States«, *Pew Research Center*, 9 Feb. 2020; https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/02/09/nato-seen-favorably-across-member-states/ (last accessed September 21, 2020).

7   »UK further commits to NATO and European Security through JEF Readiness Declaration and deployment of Typhoons to Lithuania«, *Gov.uk*, 12 Feb. 2020; https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-further-commits-to-nato-and-european-security-through-jef-readiness-declaration-and-deployment-of-typhoons-to-lithuania (last accessed September 21, 2020).

In the short term, the nature of this relationship will be affected by the outcome of the wider negotiations on the future relationship between the UK and the European Union. Even if these negotiations lead to a ›no-deal‹ outcome at the end of 2020, however, both the UK and the EU will continue to have strong interests in ensuring that they work closely together on issues of common concern. Indeed, arguably, the case for such cooperation could be even greater if the economic relationship moves onto ›World Trade Organization terms‹. The ultimate nature of the security relationship is also likely to be shaped by the degree of convergence between the UK and the EU on key strategic issues, notably that of how to respond to the disruptive geopolitics pursued by Russia and China.

THE UK, EUROPE AND ›GLOBAL BRITAIN‹

The UK departure from the European Union is taking place at a time of far reaching changes in international security. Many of the core assumptions of UK foreign and security policy are being challenged, significantly regarding the reliability of the United States as a security partner and the role of multilateralism in a world where most major powers are becoming more nationalist. Responding to the threat that the rise of China represents has also become a defining issue in the UK security and defence debate. These changes form a key part of the current UK calculation on the national interest regarding its future role within European security and the relative priority of European security within the shifting international security order.

Within Europe, the tectonic shifts in global security can be felt with the fragmentation of the European regional security order, including the marginalisation of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe as well as the collapse of much of the post-Cold War arms control regime. The EU foreign and security policy is also facing major challenges. Initial optimism about the CFSP as a means for the projection of Europe as a global actor has given way to the perception of the decline of European influence, with EU foreign policy often appearing to be little more than ›declaratory diplomacy‹. The departure of the UK has not, at least so far, led to a more cohesive or integrated EU foreign policy.

Brexit, thus, appears to be only one part of a shifting European security architecture. In this context, a variety of initiatives and forums have emerged to supplement, and in some areas potentially displace, the established pillars of NATO and the EU.

THE E3

The informal E3 format – the UK, France and Germany – has operated in international diplomacy since 2003. The grouping had a prominent role in the negotiation process that resulted in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which is intended to restrict the development of Iran's nuclear programme. The grouping has also been important in coordinat-

ing the European position following the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA, including at the summit level when Angela Merkel, Emmanuel Macron and Boris Johnson issued a joint statement on 6th January 2020 on the situation in Iraq following the killing of Iranian General Soleimani. The E3 has further provided a means to coordinate a comprehensive package both of material and financial support to Iran to combat the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in Iran.

The E3 has played a useful role in the coordination of positions in climate change negotiations and regarding North Korea. The format has proven to be flexible, allowing other countries to join the troika on certain issues, for example the E3 statement on Moldova together with Sweden and Poland on 10 June 2019 and the statement with the Netherlands on media freedom on 2 May 2020.[8] The E3 has also served as a mechanism for building out relations beyond Europe, notably in the case of the summit with Turkey on the situation in north-eastern Syria in December 2019.

The E3 format is attractive to the UK as it provides a flexible and problem driven approach to managing international relations. Importantly, it can offer a way to work together on areas where there is no EU consensus, for example the E3 joint statement on the situation in the South China Seas in August 2019, and where there are disagreements with the United States, such as the killing of the Saudi Arabian journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018.[9] The format has also demonstrated that it can function effectively at the summit level, and at a more working foreign minister or political director level.

While the E3 format has proven its utility, it does not offer a comprehensive European security mechanism. Notably, the format was not activated during the 2014 Ukraine conflict, when France instead initiated the so-called Normandy Format that does not include the UK. In the case of China's introduction in 2020 of security legislation relating to Hong Kong, the UK issued a statement together with Canada and Australia, whereas France and Germany elected to support EU statements.[10]

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8 Republic of Moldova: joint statement by the UK, France, Germany, Poland, and Sweden, 10 June 2019, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-further-commits-to-nato-and-european-security-through-jef-readiness-declaration-and-deployment-of-typhoons-to-lithuania and World Press Freedom Day 2020: E3 and Netherlands Foreign Ministers' statement, 2 May 2020, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/e3-and-netherlands-foreign-ministers-statement-on-world-press-freedom-day (last accessed September 21, 2020).

9 E3 joint statement on the situation in the South China Sea, 29 August 2019, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/e3-joint-statement-on-the-situation-in-the-south-china-sea and Disappearance of Jamal Khashoggi: joint statement by foreign ministers from the UK, France and Germany, 14 October 2018, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-on-the-disappearance-of-jamal-khashoggi-by-foreign-ministers-from-the-uk-france-and-germany (last accessed September 21, 2020).

10 Joint Statement from the UK, Australia and Canada on Hong Kong, 22 May 2020, Declaration by the High Representative, on behalf of the European Union, on the announcement by China's National People's Congress spokesperson regarding Hong Kong, 22 May 2020, and Declaration of the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on Hong Kong, 29 May 2020 (last accessed September 21, 2020).

While the E3 is an attractive format for the UK, it also has its limits. Suggestions that the E3 could become the basis for a European Security Council would, therefore, raise questions in London about how such a change would affect the effectiveness of the existing format. Notably, there would need to be clarification about how the E3 would relate to EU structures, in particular the position of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the principle of consensus driven foreign and security policy.

THE EUROPEAN INTERVENTION INITIATIVE

The UK was quick to signal its support for French President Macron's proposal to establish the European Intervention Initiative (EII/EI2), following its announcement in September 2017. At a Franco-British summit on defence cooperation it in January 2018 the UK committed to working:

> …with France and other European partners to support the development of the proposed European Intervention Initiative (EII). The EII will be a defence cooperation framework that aims to improve operational planning and coordination of military deployments among European partners with meaningful capabilities. The EII will be separate from the EU, and will be complementary to existing NATO, EU and JEF [Joint Expeditionary Force] military structures and initiatives.[11]

In July 2018, the Minister for the Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster set out the position of the British Government on the EII:

> The European Intervention Initiative does not affect the independence of UK Armed Forces in any way. It is a flexible, non-binding forum, that provides a framework for increased co-operation between participating European states. It is not a standing force.
>
> It aims to improve information sharing, planning and co-ordination of deployments to save time and make sure work is not duplicated when tackling common threats and challenges. The decision on whether to participate in its specific activities rests with us at all times.[12]

The UK is, thus, supportive of the EII and keen to be involved, although its utility remains largely untested. The EII is viewed as something akin to a club whose members meet to share threat assessments and to conduct joint planning around particular missions. In this capacity, the EII is seen as a useful supplement to European security.

For the UK, it is crucial that the EII does not duplicate the functions of NATO, nor is seen as a potential alternative to NATO. Its future will depend on how France, as the lead nation, seeks to develop the format, and notably whether it can maintain its autonomy and strategic focus.

THE NORTHERN GROUP

Given the importance of the North Atlantic, the Arctic and the Baltic region for UK defence, the Northern Group defence ministers has become a useful forum for informal discussions on defence and security issues of common interest to northern European nations. The Group has, in particular, made important progress on issues of military mobility and the practical implementation for the reduction of timelines for cross-border military traffic, common military exercises and manoeuvres.

EUROPEAN DEFENCE COOPERATION

Brexit has raised an important question about the future of European military research, development and procurement. It will not be possible for the UK to be a full participant in the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), given that these are funded through the EU's own budget, governed through EU mechanisms, and subject to EU law (for example in relation to intellectual property). There may be some areas in which the UK and EDF could co-finance research and development projects, on the basis of separate agreements. Given the relatively modest amounts now in prospect for these funds over the next EU budget cycle, however, the impact on cross-Channel defence cooperation could turn out to be relatively limited. As in the past, the most important decisions on defence procurement are likely to be taken at national rather than European level, most of all in London, Paris and Berlin. Thus, for example, the failure of the UK, French and German governments in 2012 to agree on the proposal for a BAE – EADS[13] merger had a fundamental impact on the shape of European defence industrial cooperation. Similarly, the future of combat air systems production in Europe will depend, to a large extent, on whether, and how, the Franco-German-Spanish Future Combat Aircraft System and the British – Italian – Swedish Tempest programme relate to each other.

THE UK AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY

The United Kingdom is and will be interested in close foreign and security cooperation with other countries in Europe, notably with France and Germany. UK success post-Brexit will be greatly assisted if London can develop close cooperation on security and defence issues with other European allies. As the UK will continue to be a major political and military power, Europe as a whole will have more impact globally if the UK is part of key European security partnerships.

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11 Downing Street and Ministry of Defence Press Release, 18 January 2018.
12 PQ160129, EU Defence Policy, 10 July 2018.

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13 Defence, security and aerospace companies BAE Systens plc and European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company NV (today Airbus SE).

NATO will remain the central pillar of UK defence policy and London will be keen that European cooperation is focused on strengthening the European pillar within NATO and on the construction of a European defence identity around this pillar. As the same time, the UK will be open to other fora which are not competitive with NATO, as well as on bi- or mini-lateral security frameworks. The UK is also ready to work closely with European nations in ad hoc coalitions of the willing on security and defence issues outside Europe, where neither NATO nor the EU are leading actors.

Growing transatlantic tensions and uncertainty about the future nature of the UK-US relationship further reinforces the UK interest to keep in close contact with Paris, Berlin and Brussels, and with other European capitals. While there has been considerable debate about whether the UK will align more with Washington or Brussels on foreign policy after Brexit, the UK is likely to seek to avoid a binary choice. Instead, the UK will aim to remain close both to Europe and the United States and follow a variable geometry in relations on an issue by issue basis.

The UK would welcome cooperation with European partners on, inter alia, Russia, including sanctions, Iran and the Middle East, China, terrorism, and working together in international organisations to maintain and shape efforts to respond to shared global challenges (for example to climate change and pandemics).

While the UK is open to substantial foreign policy co-operation, its leaders are likely to be sceptical on proposals for a new all-encompassing institutional framework, and will resist initiatives that undermine existing cooperation – notably with NATO. Overall, the UK will seek out the cooperative relationships that can best deliver on its national interests, and is therefore likely to be institutionally promiscuous. This is also increasingly the case for other European nations.

Post Brexit, the UK government has been exploring ideas for how to build new partnerships and strengthen existing alliances beyond Europe. With China increasingly a focal point for UK foreign and security policy, London is seeking to build new international alliances to balance Beijing, including such ideas as the embryonic proposal to establish a D10 group of democracies.[14] At the same time, the UK is also looking to develop the role of the Five Eyes intelligence sharing agreement, potentially including intensified economic, foreign policy, and even technology cooperation.[15]

There is also increased debate on a UK 'Middle Power' strategy. While the UK's European partners form a key part of such an approach, as do Australia, Canada and Japan, it could also involve increased priority being given to developing Asian powers such as India and Indonesia. How either of these ideas develops is likely to depend significantly on the future of the relationship with the US, and thus on the outcome of the 2020 Presidential election. The more nationalist the direction the US takes, the more that the UK is likely to want to hedge its bets through increased cooperation with like-minded middle powers.

The proposal to create a European security council including the UK has not been rejected out of hand by the UK. But policy-makers in London remain puzzled as to what this proposal means in practice. A key question for the UK will be the balance that such a body seeks to strike between effectiveness of action and maintaining overall European consensus on foreign and security issues. The E3 format has been attractive precisely because it is light and flexible. While on some issues, such as sanctions, European unanimity will be an advantage, overall, the UK will not want to get caught in protracted institutional debates or a mechanism that will overly constrain its actions and require drawn-out decision-making processes.

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14 Erik Brattberg and Ben Judah, »Forget the G-7, Build the D-10«, *Foreign Policy*, 10 June 2020 (last accessed September 21, 2020).

15 »Five Eyes Expanded to Focus on Economic Impact«, *The Australian,* 7 June 2020 and »UK turns to ›Five Eyes‹ to help find alternatives to Huawei«, *Financial Times*, 13 July 2020 (last accessed September 21, 2020).

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EUROPEAN SECURITY AFTER BREXIT

A British, French and German Perspective

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Despite the deeply interconnected nature of the relationship between France, Germany and the UK, the practice of security policy relations varies and differences in threat perception, strategic culture, and interest make security policy a difficult field of cooperation. Brexit has brought into the equation an additional element of doubt on the one hand as well as the need to maintain sovereignty on the other.

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Careful considerations have to be taken to not create the appearance of undermining existing cooperation in NATO and the EU. The three countries therefore might shy away from new institutional frameworks, instead seeing the cooperation as a flexible and pragmatic approach.

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As the three countries will remain divided on military interventions, arms export and defence integration, these are problematic avenues to follow. But closer cooperation in the UN Security Council and Peacekeeping could be promising as well as the discussion of a new arms control agenda and the future of NATO.

Further information on the topic can be found here:
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