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EU security and defence cooperation in times of dissent: analysing PESCO, the European Defence Fund and the European Intervention Initiative (EI2) in the shadow of Brexit[1]

Dr Simon Sweeney, University of York

Dr Neil Winn, University of Leeds

Abstract

Has the United Kingdom Brexit referendum been a catalyst for more European Union security cooperation? How significant are post-referendum initiatives in security and defence? What are the implications of Brexit for EU and UK security and defence? This article analyses EU post-Brexit strategic choices following the launch of the EU Global Strategy (2016). EU autonomy in security and defence requires close cooperation with third countries, including Norway and post-Brexit UK. It remains to be seen whether the EU and the UK can forge a new bespoke security and defence relationship that delivers mutual benefits through shared strategic ambitions, while also protecting their various interests. We suggest there will be serious collateral damage to UK-EU security and defence cooperation if post-Brexit trade negotiations descend into acrimony and mistrust, especially in the event of 'no-deal' once the 'transition period' ends. This would undermine European security and the EU's quest for strategic autonomy in world affairs and have serious implications for both UK and EU security. We conclude that the EU needs to work with the UK on a plan to achieve global strategic autonomy, or both risk reduced influence in the wider world in the years ahead.

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Introduction

This paper outlines the fast-changing international context to which the European Union must respond – and in large measure is responding – in respect of creating the means to better fulfil the aspirations of the EU Global Strategy (EEAS, 2016) released within days of the UK Brexit referendum on 23 June 2016. In the foreword to the EUGS the then EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini refers to the ambition of strategic autonomy. In the light of this ambition, the present article explores the significance of the UK Brexit decision and three initiatives that followed the UK referendum: the activation of Permanent Structured Cooperation, the announcement of the European Defence Fund and France's leadership to set up the European Intervention Initiative (EI2). The paper considers these developments in the light of the UK's moving towards Brexit and the implications for defence and security for both the UK and the EU.

The paper considers three research questions. Has the Brexit process since June 2016 been a stimulus to greater EU27 cooperation in the field of security and defence? How significant are EU27 institutional innovations since the referendum, namely the launch of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the setting up of the European Defence Fund, and the French-led initiative, European Intervention Initiative (EI2)? And thirdly, what are the security and defence implications of Brexit for European and for UK security and defence?

We argue that while the three institutional initiatives examined in this paper are significant, they do not constitute a major shift in direction towards EU strategic autonomy since for this to be realised, member states would need to collectively demonstrate far greater resource commitment and political will than is currently evident. We also argue that the conflictive and adversarial tone of EU/UK relations that has characterised the 'negotiations' between London and Brussels since the referendum does not augur well for future security and defence cooperation, not even between Britain and France. The consequences will be extremely negative for both EU and UK security.

We begin by focusing on the conceptual and theoretical framing of European defence cooperation before looking at the regional and global context affecting policy developments in European defence.

The conceptual framing of PESCO and European defence cooperation

The present analysis is conceived around the conceptual hook of 'strategic autonomy'. The 'conceptual framework [i]s the logical master plan for (the) entire research project' (Kivunja, 2018, 47). For the purposes of this study the: 'conceptual framework is the total, logical orientation and associations of anything and everything that forms the underlying thinking, structures, plans and practices and implementation of (the) entire research project' (ibid). Strategic autonomy is defined as 'the ability to set priorities and make decisions in matters of foreign policy and security, together with the institutional, political and material wherewithal to carry these through – in cooperation with third parties, or if need be alone' (Lippert, Ondarza and Perthes, 2019, ii).

We apply a conceptual as opposed to avowedly theoretical approach to assess recent policy developments in EU foreign and security policy. The notion of strategic autonomy is introduced as a conceptual tool to assess Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Defence Fund (EDF) and President Macron's European Intervention Initiative (EI2). Strategic autonomy as a concept helps us to understand EU/European defence and security cooperation and its implications for the EU as an international actor. Brexit is examined as an example of a recent significant threat to EU strategic autonomy. While other threats exist such as the rise of Trump, Putin's Russia, and China, as well as the disparate national interests of EU member states, these are not the focus of the analysis *per se* but are mentioned where appropriate. Brexit has clear implications for UK and EU/European security, within, and, beyond the borders of Europe. It also challenges the norms of the international community and the liberal international order. It also has implications for PESCO, the EDF and EI2 and for the prospects of EU defence cooperation and strategic autonomy.

PESCO is an institutionally sophisticated arrangement combining aspects of state sovereignty in an intergovernmental process, so ultimately it is EU member states that decide what is to be done or otherwise in European defence. This limits the opportunities for the European Union to develop a coherent strategic ambition or the 'strategic autonomy' referred to five times in the EU Global Strategy (EEAS, 2016). PESCO operates as a classic case of a coalition-of-the-willing: states may agree to combine national defence resources to reach a solution to a security problem (Biscop, 2018a, 161-180). PESCO is positioned within the set of crisis management instruments that comprise EU Common Security and Defence Policy

(CSDP) and is not currently concerned with the collective defence of Europe as, for example, NATO is, although PESCO does hope to enhance EU capability, and therefore the capability of member states who are also NATO members (EEAS, 2019). Russian aggression in recent years has contributed to member state threat perceptions and has prompted increased European defence spending in NATO (Béraud-Sudreau and Giegerich, 2018, 53-74). The activation of PESCO, a greater role for the EU Commission in European defence cooperation, and the renewed commitment to the European Defence Agency ought to assist in realising the ambition expressed in the EU Global Strategy:

> Europeans must be better equipped, trained and organised to contribute decisively to such collective efforts, as well as to act autonomously if and when necessary (EEAS, 2016, 19).

But such rhetorical commitment requires follow through from member states to make a strategic difference. It is not clear that the member states want the EU to develop collective and strategic autonomy, or that they wish to define common strategic interests. The EUGS refers repeatedly to the relationship with NATO as one of partnership and the need to strengthen cooperation:

> The EU will deepen its partnership with NATO through coordinated defence capability development, parallel and synchronised exercises, and mutually reinforcing actions to build the capacities of our partners, counter hybrid and cyber threats, and promote maritime security (*ibid*, 37).

It states that NATO is the primary framework for collective defence (*ibid*, 20) and does not define an EU defence identity. Howorth suggests – and is surely correct – that the EU needs strategic autonomy, i.e. capability to look after its own defence without dependency, by working with NATO to lead European defence and security itself, taking over the lead on its own continent from the Americans who would take a back seat (Howorth, 2019b). This would clearly be a long-term project taking many decades to fulfil and needing all parties' agreement.

So how might PESCO contribute to this ambition? The conceptualisation of PESCO in the literature is contested. We characterise PESCO as going beyond traditional EU foreign policy institutional cooperation, seeing the mechanism as akin to the open method of

cooperation (OMC). This may explain how PESCO operates institutionally and also provide a framework for analysis. We interpret PESCO as consistent with a normative theory of defence cooperation. PESCO may also, from an institutional perspective, be institutionally path-dependent on decades of European defence cooperation in the EU and the Atlantic Alliance (Pierson, 1996:123-163). Indeed, the finality of the EU defence project is not spelled out within PESCO or any other EU framework. CSDP has primarily concerned a softer 'civilian power' security interpretation as opposed to one defined by hard defence interests (Duchêne, 1972; Bull, 1982; Maull, 1990; Majone, 2009). Indeed, the EU might not be the best alternative to defend Europe whilst NATO exists (Tardy, 2018:119-137). As such, European defence, even when revived through the 2017-18 Commission proposals on the European Defence Fund, the launch of PESCO in December 2017 and the French-led EI2 announced three months earlier, is still a journey is search of a destination. EU member state governments need to decide what they want from European defence, though it appears that Commission efforts to promote PESCO will see some movement towards a greater EU presence in defence matters (Biscop, 2018a: 161-180). The advent of a Commission steer in 2016 may be symptomatic of frustration at the failure of classic intergovernmentalism to deliver on the aspirations of the European Security Strategy (Solana, 2003) and various CSDP-related initiatives ever since. Equally, the EI2 perhaps signals that France has given up on CSDP becoming anything other than a humanitarian crisis management instrument, making only a marginal contribution to defence, and remaining a largely civilian-oriented endeavour.

However, there are considerable obstacles facing Macron's vision for EU defence. The ideal EU strategic culture underpinning the President's plans for European defence would be centralised in Brussels and based on a defined strategic culture that enables autonomous decision-making at the EU-level, separate from the member states if required. But this common EU-level perspective is not evident in the 2017 Defence and Security *Livre Blanc*, which is more selective:

> (The EI2) will complement major bilateral defence relationships with Germany and the United Kingdom. It will also help develop a shared strategic culture for Europeans, making them better able to operate together in the future, if the situation so requires. The objective is for Europeans to have common doctrines, the capability for credible

joint intervention and appropriate common budget instruments (République Française, 2017, 3).

The EI2 comprises a selected, invited membership of currently 13 states (*Euractiv*, 2019a). It is a pragmatic alternative to EU-level policy-making. It does not constitute an EU-level supranational defence and security entity commensurate with facilitating an EU grand strategy. Instead strategy, as far as the term can be applied, is largely defined according to national interests within EU foreign policy. There have been some marginal steps towards bolstering EU presence in defence matters since 2016, but it is too soon to ascertain the impact of this on any emergent EU strategy and decision-making in external policies (Howorth, 2019a). Fiott (2018) conceives of the EU as searching for renewed strategic autonomy in the world after 2016, where autonomy is defined as comprising three forms: autonomy as responsibility (as in NATO burden-sharing), autonomy as hedging (as in preparing one's actorness for when the hegemon is less engaged in European security) and autonomy as emancipation (from the United States). In this reckoning, only an emancipation of ideas and policies from the US (and from previous thinking) can bring strategic autonomy for EU external policy. This would in turn imply a centralised strategic culture, defined as a `set of general beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour patterns' (Snyder, 1977, 8). This implies a centralised objective underpinned by common strategies to achieve common goals.

In contrast, Meyer (2020, 11) refers to continuing differences in the strategic cultures of EU member states, while Cottey (2019) describes the EU as 'astrategic'. He suggests that the Union lacks a coherent strategic vision regarding decision-making, means, ends and outcomes. We not only agree with this perspective, we observe that the EU is riven with lowest-common-denominator policymaking in foreign and security policy and is therefore less than the sum of its parts both ideationally and materially. Indeed, towards the big issues of the day the Union lacks coherence. It is characterised by a strategy implementation-gap between the core tenets of the EU Global Strategy and what ultimately is implemented, an echo of the much-cited capability expectations gap, still apparent almost three decades on (Hill, 1993). Policy towards Russia is a case in point. EU strategy on Russia is punctuated by disparate national strategies, which militate against strategic actorness in EU foreign policy. Poland and the Baltic states view Russia as the key threat to their national security. Southern European states see Russia as a concern, but not an important one and do not define the

strategic response in military terms vis-à-vis the 'Russia problem' as do Poland and the Baltics. Other states such as Germany wish to keep open trading possibilities with Russia, as well as on areas related to energy policy and security of supply. Hungary under Victor Orban is an ally of Russia inside the EU. These various national positions on Russia undermine the prospects for an EU strategy worthy of the name. The same can be said in relation to China. Various national positions obscure a joined-up strategy: some member states such as Germany and Italy favour utilising economic opportunities from the relationship with Beijing. Others support the geo-political balancing of China as a rising power in the wider world (Cottey, 2019). This in turn impacts on the prospects for EU autonomy in defence matters. Witney (2019a:1) states that: 'above all, Europeans must stop outsourcing their strategic thinking to Washington'. The EU is the prisoner to its member states own strategic interests. Another obstacle to EU strategic autonomy is NATO and the presence of the US in European security. Furthermore, defence procurement is still driven largely by national strategic interests (Fiott, 2018). Brexit has also undermined the prospects for EU strategic autonomy give that the UK was the key military power in the EU along with France (Chalmers, 2018). Finally, strategic interests in the EU are determined by national preferences and priorities: what is a priority for Italy, is not necessarily important for Lithuania. In a sense, strategic autonomy for the EU is an ideological project that is normative in nature and not rooted in reality. It is an aspiration as is the notion of developing an EU Grand Strategy (Howorth, 2010). The aspiration might help create European strategic autonomy in the future. Europe needs a coherent set of unified ideas based on a consistent world view. The EU is keen to project its values into the outside world, even in an era of renewed nationalisms and is pushing a form of principled pragmatism in its foreign policy since the release of the EU Global Strategy (EEAS, 2016). Currently, the EU's leverage is mainly through trade policy and economic instruments predicated on liberal internationalism, but it lacks a broader strategic actorness beyond this (Pan and Michalski, 2019). This is problematic in a world where liberal internationalism is under stress and Europe is perceived to be in decline (Russell-Mead, 2019). This explains in part why President Macron launched his vision for European strategic autonomy. In the absence of an EU Grand Strategy and in searching for a common understanding of strategic autonomy, what matters now is what type of defence capability the EU wishes to possess. Moreover, to what purpose? And what does this mean for the development of PESCO, the EDF and EI2?

The context for PESCO, EDF and EI2: times of dissent

In this section we outline the various external factors which we judge have increased the urgency with which the EU needs to respond, and has responded, to perceived capability weaknesses regarding security and defence. Two such factors were, we suggest, trigger events given that they preceded significant institutional initiatives undertaken by the EU and its member states, initiatives examined in the present article. We refer to the UK Brexit referendum on 23 June 2016 and the election of Donald J. Trump to the US Presidency in November of the same year.

In January 2020, three and a half years after the UK 'Brexit' referendum, the EU's second largest member state in terms of population, GDP and net contribution to the EU budget - and its largest and strongest military power - left the club. In 2016 Donald Trump defied expectations by winning the US Presidential election. He has repeatedly appeared to question the value of several institutions on which the world order has been constructed since 1945, including GATT/WTO, NATO, the EEC/EU, collectively the key pillars of the Western Alliance. Chatham House (2017) estimated that the Trump White House would be more nationalist, more mercantilist, and less committed to engagement with Europe while also being more indulgent towards Russia. US foreign policy under Trump has been contradictory, inconsistent, and lacking strategic coherence (*Economist*, 2018; Santini, 2018). Santini judges the US National Security Strategy (White House, 2017), which coined the phrase 'principled realism', as combining the electoral slogans 'Make America Great Again' and 'America First' in ways which impinge upon the United States' traditional commitment to multilateral cooperation. Indeed, Trump's utterances concerning the EU and NATO have alarmed policy makers and military officials in equal measure, at times appearing even isolationist or unilateralist (Kupchan and Alden, 2018; European Parliament, 2019a; Brands, 2017; Stelzenmüller, 2019; *Financial Times*, 2019a). Before a meeting with the Russian President Vladimir Putin, Trump described the European Union as 'a foe' (*Independent*, 2018).

Apart from Russia and difficult relations with the US President, the Union also faces disruptive elements within, notably the rise of nationalist, populist and xenophobic parties in several member states, some directly challenging supposed foundational values of the Union.

Notably, there was widespread dissent towards Commission initiatives designed to alleviate the migration crisis emanating from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) following the 2011 Arab Uprising (usually, but in our view, erroneously labelled the Arab Spring). Migratory flows into Europe peaked in 2015, and since then EU member states have not managed to agree definitive long-term solutions to a problem that could rapidly worsen due to climate change or further conflict.

In 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic added to the Union's political and economic woes, exacerbating tensions and imbalances already exposed by the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis. Facing a devastating economic impact, the most severely affected southern member states looked to their richer Eurozone partners for debt mutualisation. German and Dutch opposition initially prevailed over French backing for so-called Coronabonds. Full debt mutualisation would have represented a significant step towards completing the monetary and economic union. A bilateral compromise emerged in May 2020 when President Macron achieved an agreement with Berlin to set up a €500bn Covid-19 relief fund. While important, the plan is well short of creating the fiscal union many believe necessary to ensure the Euro's survival (*Financial Times*, 2020). The initiative was taken up by the Commission just days later with the announcement of a €750bn package to support Coronavirus recovery (European Commission, 2020).

Threats abound, even beyond those identified in the EU Global Strategy as 'terrorism, hybrid threats, economic volatility, climate change and energy insecurity' (EEAS, 2016, 9). The EUGS also refers to cyber security, organised crime and external border management (*ibid*, 20). Of acute concern is the deterioration in relations with Russia since the brief war in Georgia in 2008 which led to the annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, with subsequent accusations of Russian war crimes in the same conflict (*Guardian*, 2018a). The *Economist* (2008) described the conflict as a Russian proxy war against the West. More of the same followed as Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and gave material support to separatist fighters in the Donbas conflict. In November 2018, the Russian navy intercepted three Ukrainian ships in the Sea of Azov, escalating tensions between Moscow and Kiev (BBC News, 2018). Other provocations continue to alarm EU leaders, including military manoeuvres near the border with the EU's Baltic states formerly part of the USSR, the installation of nuclear-capable missiles in Kaliningrad, and joint military exercises with Belarus (*New York*

Times, 2017; *Financial Times*, 2018a). There have also been allegations of interference in elections, cyber-attacks, and in the UK city of Salisbury, murder,or attempted murder of civilians.

A shifting foreign policy environment was observable before Trump entered the White House. During the Obama Presidency there were already signs of the Asia Pivot, suggesting that US priorities concerned a potential threat from China and security interests in the Korean Peninsula and the South China Sea, rather than the traditional NATO-European orientation. The 'rebalancing' of US security attention towards Asia (Defense Department, 2012; Biscop, 2012; Liao, 2013; Heisbourg and Terhalle, 2018) suggests a need for fresh thinking in Europe about its own defence capability after decades of relying on the US as the security guarantor. Evidence from the Trump Presidency reinforces this impression. Trump appears more exercised by relations with China and India and diplomatic overtures towards North Korea (Albert, 2016) than by US historical ties with Europe and NATO. Russia, meanwhile, will seize every opportunity to sow division in Europe and NATO, while Trump undermines trust between the US and its allies (Heisbourg and Terhalle, 2018). From this context many observers argue that the EU needs to strengthen its defence and security capability (Drent, 2018; Biscop, 2018b; Leonard and Rötgen, 2018; European Council, 2018a).

The Secretary General of Germany's CDU, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, raised eyebrows by suggesting that France and Germany could jointly develop an aircraft carrier to strengthen Europe's credibility as a global force for stability and peace (Roblin, 2019a). This follows earlier declarations regarding joint Franco-German development, with Airbus, of a new generation of stealth fighter planes to replace the French Rafale, built by Dessault Aviation, and the Eurofighter aircraft, a BAE Systems/British project with Germany, Spain and Italy that includes Airbus and Leonardo (Roblin, 2019b; Hepher and Thomas, 2017). These reports also refer to Franco-German cooperation in developing new generations of tanks, helicopters and missile defence systems. Such big-ticket projects would take decades to develop, but the mere mention suggests some post-referendum impetus towards more continental European cooperation and the potential marginalisation of the UK, with British defence capability development moving further into the embrace of US-led projects. While PESCO could be the vehicle for such initiatives, allowing other states to contribute, the caveat is that any such strategic developments require a shift in German strategic culture. There

must be willingness in Berlin to accept an expeditionary broad-spectrum role in security and defence, more akin to what France and Britain are used to. This is a tall order, but fundamental to the level of resources, finance and research required. There is also no point in developing new capability instruments if the will to deploy in a crisis is absent. Nevertheless, Roblin (2019b) suggests that Berlin's foreign policy calculations are changing, prompted by the UK's Brexit journey, by worsening relations with Russia, and by Trump's sceptical rhetoric regarding NATO and Washington's commitment to Europe. Despite early reservations, Germany did sign up to PESCO and there are signs that Berlin is receptive to Macron's push for a stronger Franco-German engine in pursuit of 'more Europe'. This includes deeper defence and security cooperation, if not yet integration.

Capability development is fundamental to European security and defence credibility. America's erstwhile allies 'will have to fend for themselves' (Heisbourg and Terhalle, 2018). Heisbourg and Terhalle insist that the Franco-German partnership should confront various taboos, including extending the French nuclear deterrent to cover Germany and other non-nuclear EU member states, that Berlin should accept both the principle and the mechanism for fiscal guarantees from a central source, albeit mostly funded by Germany; and Germany should accept the institutional reality of a form of multi-speed core and periphery within the Union. All of this has clear implications for security and defence. There is little doubt, however, that Germany needs to raise its resourcing and commitment to CSDP if it really wants, together with France, to strategically underpin European defence (Biscop, 2018c). Moreover, 'Realism and pragmatism should guide Europeans' choice of institutional vehicle. The CSDP offers 'new promise of technological and industrial progress' (Witney, 2019a, 1).

This section has highlighted several security-related challenges facing the EU since the Brexit referendum, including the need to develop new generations of military equipment. A recent study concludes that Heads of Government in the European Council have finally begun to act on securing deeper defence cooperation, citing Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the European Development Industrial Programme (EDIDP) as evidence (Anghel and Fogel, 2018). We now examine the significance of PESCO, the EDF and the EI2 before focusing explicitly on the impact of Brexit on the prospects for EU/UK cooperation and the security and defence interests of both.

Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)

The EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation was a significant feature of the Lisbon Treaty, ratified in 2009. However, PESCO was only launched in 2017, after the United Kingdom's referendum on EU membership which set Britain on a path towards quitting the Union. The implication is that PESCO could only move forward once the UK had signalled its intention to leave, given London's historical ambivalence towards EU defence-related initiatives, with the Blair/Chirac joint declaration at St Malo in 1998 being an exception to the general rule. After 2010 the UK displayed diminishing interest in EU defence and security engagement, preferring bilateral initiatives with France (O'Donnell, 2011; Biscop, 2012). The view in London was that other EU member states were neither doing nor spending enough on defence (Hammond, 2012). The CSDP naval operation EU NAVFOR Atalanta, a counter piracy operation off the coast of Somalia, was Britain's only significant CSDP engagement after 2010. Launched in December 2008, Atalanta was under British command until after the 'Brexit' referendum when the headquarters passed from Northwood to Rota, in Cadiz, Spain.

The Brexit process semi-detached the UK from EU security and defence initiatives, thus permitting for example, the launch of PESCO. Brexit may have presented an opportunity for the EU to develop substance to better satisfy its defence and security ambitions (Faleg, 2016). An alternative perspective is that notwithstanding Brexit, both the Union and the UK should strive for a strong future partnership as this is clearly in their mutual interests (Barrie, 2018). Immediately after the referendum, this appeared to be the mood music coming from London, but the EU response was more negative, asserting that as a third country, the UK would be outside EU defence and security structures. PESCO could, however, be an exception. Given the economic and political heft of the United Kingdom as an EU member, from an EU perspective, Brexit presents a challenge to the European integration project itself (Jones and Menon, 2019).

The purpose of PESCO is to 'enhance collaboration in the areas of investment, capability development and operational readiness' (European Parliament, 2019b, 8). It will take time before it brings a substantial increase in military capability or enhanced strategic autonomy (Biscop, 2018b), but it is at least underway. In March 2018, the Council confirmed

that PESCO consisted of 17 projects (European Council, 2018b), and by November this had increased to 34 (EEAS, 2019; European Council, 2018c). It has since risen to 47 (European Council, 2019; Biscop, 2020; Besch, 2020).

Biscop stresses the need to avoid loaded terms like 'a European army' emerging from the PESCO and EDF initiatives, but the Union needs to drive forward defence capability through armed forces integration and some 'big ticket' strategic enablers, such as a new generation of European fighter aircraft (Biscop, 2018b). Equally, major projects ought to focus on combined efforts rather than competitive projects such as having different consortia working on a new generation of fighter aircraft. A single project that included the UK and British Aerospace would be far more conducive to consolidating the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB), while an EDA official doubted the viability of two separate Future Combat Aircraft Systems projects (*Euractiv*, 2019b). Also, if FCAS or other strategic enablers were developed within the PESCO framework, participants would benefit from EDF support. Such projects will be more viable if industrial expertise across Europe is pooled rather than split between competitive consortia. Utilising available funding will also assist project viability so the PESCO/EDF route is a logical step towards enhancing both EU and NATO capability.

We argue that there is no justification for continuing to treat EU member state armed forces as separate and autonomous entities, given their strategic irrelevance in the face of growing threats. Multinational command and control is essential and joint projects to enhance force readiness and capability under PESCO can and should facilitate this. The Council at its June 2018 summit affirmed 25 member states' commitment to PESCO (Denmark and Malta are non-participants) and to the development of related projects including the EU's institutional framework consistent with the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and the revised Capability Development Plan under the auspices of the European Defence Agency (EDA) (European Council, 2018). The Council also signalled the need for the December Summit to lay out the means and conditions for third party participation in PESCO, doubtless with an eye on the UK's impending departure from the Union. The Council therefore expressed a new urgency to coordinate efforts towards defence integration. No such high-level commitment had been so clearly expressed previously. These commitments coincided with steps towards more coordinated security frameworks such as an EU Command and

Control centre for humanitarian intervention. Nevertheless, despite these promising developments, sceptical commentators point to a continuing lack of common strategic culture among member states, and no shared understanding of what strategy the EU should have, and no consensus on the desirability of strategic autonomy (Howorth, 2019b; Cottey, 2019).

Uneven commitment and widespread reluctance to provide adequate sums of hard cash or to put troops in harm's way will continue to stymie progress on security and defence capability and common action in the face of critical need. This reality underpins French ambitions to progress a new security and defence project, notably with restricted membership. France is seeking to match PESCO priorities with its own, particularly in the areas of counterterrorism, hybrid threats, trafficking, and organised crime (Pannier and Schmitt, 2019, 914).

PESCO remains a long-term initiative. It is not able to generate immediate uplift in capability, but in order to be strategically relevant it requires initiation of new strategic development projects, such as the new generation of European fighter aircraft (Sandford, 2019; Biscop, 2020, 13). At present, this ambition is being pursued by France, Germany and Spain but outside the PESCO framework. It would be a boost to the credibility of PESCO if such a strategic ambition were within its orbit (Biscop, 2020).

Biscop argues that PESCO falls short because 'its purpose remains unclear' (*ibid*, 3). Within the initial PESCO projects was the Crisis Response Operation Core (CROC), an initiative Biscop argues should be at the heart of PESCO (Biscop, 2019a). CROC began from a Franco-German ambition that the aim of PESCO should be to develop 'a coherent full spectrum force package'. This amounts to no less than revisiting the Headline Goal articulated two decades previously. Biscop argues that national contributions should be the building blocks to achieve this end. PESCO should priorities projects with 'strategic relevance' and develop a culture of compliance which ensures member states' meaningful participation and drives PESCO towards interlocking EU capability development plans (CDPs) with the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP). He also recommends that rather than depending on 25 states' involvement, projects should be based on fewer participants and lead states. The advantage of PESCO is that it is a legally binding framework that commits member states to strategic outcomes regarding capability in accordance with CDP and CARD processes. A further

strengthening of PESCO would be if the CARD process were mandatory, rather than optional (Biscop, 2017).

In summary, PESCO remains potentially significant, but falls short of offering convincing evidence of a strategic turn in EU commitment to autonomous capability. The UK leaving the Union also risks undermining this ambition, as without British participation PESCO seems less likely to deliver on what the Lisbon Treaty appeared to promise, albeit hedged by state-interest caveats.

The European Defence Fund: Commission ascendancy?

The Lisbon Treaty began the process of raising the profile of the Commission in defence and security matters, especially as it established a new institutional framework that better connected the Council and the Commission by making the High Representative for the Union's foreign and security policy also the Vice President of the Commission (HR-VP). This bridging role was used effectively by Federica Mogherini in raising the profile of EU foreign and security policy. She met the European Council demand in December 2013 to develop an EU global strategy, and she consolidated the European External Action Service, established by the Lisbon Treaty, and launched in 2010 to support CSDP. The EEAS, headed by the VP-HR, also supports and funds the 145 EU Delegations, formerly under a Commission remit (EEAS, 2020). After the Brexit referendum, the Commission wasted little time in asserting its influence, drawing up a European Defence Action Plan (EDAP) which highlighted an old EDA chestnut, that integrated military hardware procurement could save €100m annually (European Commission, 2016). The Commission then launched the European Defence Fund (EDF), again after the UK referendum. This underlines the Commission's growing role in this field, while also indicating that the diversion of EU funds to defence research would almost certainly have been opposed by London. The EDF is to support multinational cooperation in defence research and development (Barrie, 2018) and is one of three instruments, together with PESCO and the EDA's Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), that are 'complementary and mutually reinforcing' (EEAS, 2019). The EDF provides matched funding to member state expenditure on cooperative multistate initiatives. To this end, the Commission requested €13bn for the EDF over the multiannual financial framework 2021-27

(Witney, 2019b; Reuters, 2018). Still another indication of the rise of the Commission role in defence and security is its growing interest in securing a strong European defence technological and industrial base (EDTIB), boosted it hopes by a new Directorate General for Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS) within the single market remit of the incoming von der Leyen Commission (European Commission, 2019; Witney, 2019c). The EDF has the potential to make a significant contribution, especially if fully integrated with PESCO and the CARD process, supporting initiatives that strengthen the EDTIB, add capability and improve efficiency, and ultimately benefit both the EU and NATO (Besch, 2020). What would potentially constitute a game-changer would be an overarching process that coordinates all these initiatives.

The new Directorate General follows the European Parliament endorsing in July 2018 a €500m research fund preparatory to the EDF, the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP), labelled a capacity component of the EDF. The EDIDP is designed to promote multinational industrial projects that can contribute to European strategic autonomy and allow less reliance on the United States (*Euractiv*, 2018). Another fund initiated in 2017 by the Commission and administered by the EDA is the Preparatory Action for Defence Research (PADR), a €90m support to defence research and development (European Defence Agency, 2020). Both the EDIDP and PADR will be absorbed into the EDF once this launches in 2021 (Béraud-Sudreau, 2019). The EDIDP, as well as eventually the EDF, is also intended to promote EU-NATO collaboration, in accordance with Council Conclusions (European Council, 2018a).

A further initiative following the UK's referendum is the Coordinated Annual Review of Defence (CARD). This European Council initiative is tasked with assessing capability needs and monitoring progress on meeting identified targets. CARD is under the auspices of the European Defence Agency and acts as a secretariat reporting to the Council (EEAS, 2017). It is meant to 'foster capability development addressing shortfalls, deepen defence cooperation and ensure more optimal use, including coherence, of defence spending plans' (*ibid*, 1).

In summary, the EDF, the and EDIDP, the new DG for Defence Industry and Space, and Commission support for defence-related research initiatives are all signs of growing Commission engagement, and a push towards strengthening the European defence technological and industrial base (EDTIB). This is fundamental to any prospect of EU strategic

autonomy. The irony is the UK would probably have vetoed all these steps, so the British position is critical, not least because of the importance of the UK defence industrial contribution to Europe's future in this sector. Indeed, there is a strong incentive for a close UK-EU partnership in defence industries as British disengagement would greatly damage both parties (ECFR, 2018; Witney, 2018a). A risk discussed below is that the UK may be ineligible for EU defence research funding now that it has left the EU.

Enter Macron: The European Intervention Initiative and the shadow of Brexit

The slow burn nature of PESCO, and the much-criticised historically cumbersome nature of CSDP decision-making, force generation and deployment, no doubt featured in President Emmanuel Macron launching his own plan for a European Intervention Initiative (EI2) in a Sorbonne speech in 2017 (Macron, 2017). Witney (2017) charged that PESCO was toothless, bureaucratic, and voluntary, and would perpetuate the free-rider problem. Macron's EI2 plan was a separate concept outside EU structures but compatible with them. It initially gained only a lukewarm reception in Berlin, according to Mölling and Major (2018). They summarise German concerns that France was using Europe for its own ends and that EI2 could undermine European efforts towards enhanced coordination and capability since 2016; furthermore, in presenting an 'invitation only' initiative rather than a comprehensive all-member framework, Paris risked undermining European solidarity. Together with the view that EI2 could duplicate or undermine NATO (Wither, 2018, 80), these criticisms are not new. It is nevertheless instructive that the Secretary General of NATO Jens Stoltenberg welcomed the French initiative, arguing that it could help bring 'readiness' to European and NATO armed force capability (NATO, 2018a; Herszenhorn, 2019).

Macron's ambition is that others, whether EU member states or not, or signatories to CSDP or not (Denmark is not), contribute to armed intervention and stabilisation initiatives. The German criticism of EI2 that it risked muddying the waters and duplicating either CSDP or NATO or both, held no water according to Mölling and Major (2018). They emphasised that EI2 gets around the slow and cumbersome EU processes, institutional complexities, and inter-state wrangling. Moreover, CSDP, NATO and EI2 share a common ambition: to enhance

European defence capability, armed forces and equipment interoperability, and effective European autonomous armed intervention in crisis management.

Germany's unenthusiastic response exposed Berlin's limited and parsimonious efforts at defence modernisation and capability improvement, but the NATO Summit in Brussels in July 2018 welcomed fairer burden sharing, increased spending, and EU readiness to include third countries in new security and defence arrangements where appropriate (NATO, 2018b). Indeed, Germany ultimately did sign up to EI2. There was a further sign of Berlin's growing interest in playing a leading role in European defence in Aachen when France and Germany reaffirmed their 1963 Treaty of Friendship in a strengthening of mutual defence ties (Perot, 2019). However, Paris-Berlin tensions were exposed again in the lead-up to the December 2019 NATO Summit when President Macron told the *Economist* that the Alliance was suffering 'brain-death' due to US ambivalence and the failure of Europeans to commit to becoming a 'global power'. Macron called on PESCO, the EDF and the EI2 to propel Europe towards integrated defence, a foundation for autonomous post-NATO defence (*Economist*, 2019, 9). The *Economist* criticised Macron's assumption that there can be unity of purpose among EU member states, given that their priorities do not coincide, while also stressing Europe's lack of strategic enablers currently provided by the USA. Macron also signalled a need to build bridges with Moscow, an approach unlikely to gain much traction in the Baltic states or Poland. A *Financial Times* commentary criticised Macron for following the Trump rhetoric that the US has diminishing interest in NATO, although we suggest the signs were there even before Trump entered the White House. More to the point is that just as Macron issued his dire warnings, Germany did agree to increase defence spending to 2 percent of GDP, albeit by 2031 (*Financial Times*, 2019b). Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and Chancellor Angela Merkel were quick to contest Macron's 'drastic' words about NATO, affirming that the transatlantic alliance was central to European security (*DW.com*, 2019; Reuters, 2019).

Macron's perspective on the NATO issue underlines the value France places on the EI2. The Paris view is not only that from a strategic view, Europe should not rely on Washington, but that the EU should develop its own military industrial base. Furthermore, EU crisis response is handicapped by CSDP's often slow and cumbersome decision-making and force generation processes, while a French lead, as in Mali in 2013, can be quicker and more

effective. Paris recognises it cannot act alone, and that multilateral intervention adds both legitimacy and capability. Furthermore, EI2 takes account of the UK quitting the EU. Being outside formal EU structures facilitates third country participation and so UK involvement unproblematic. In fact, London joined at the start along with eight other states (*Guardian*, 2018b). This was consistent with developing security cooperation between London and Paris since the 2010 Lancaster House Treaties (Ministry of Defence, 2010), including creating the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) which allows cooperation and interoperability between French and British forces (HM Government, 2016). The CJEF is an example of the kind of bilateral partnership London likes, a partnership across many areas of security and defence that ought to strengthen despite Brexit. However, while close cooperation is in both countries' strategic interests, this cannot be taken for granted, given that Paris has made clear that 'a stronger and more dynamic EU (will be) on the basis of Franco-German leadership' (Ricketts, 2018, 1). This, according to Ricketts, makes Britain's position questionable. We suggest that while Paris would certainly want a major upgrade in Berlin's defence commitment, it is unimaginable that there should be a quick transition towards Germany matching the UK military or defence-industrial partnership with France. The desired outcome instead would be a German strategic upgrade and continuity and strengthening of UK-engagement in Europe. European strategic autonomy will require nothing less.

The challenge to Franco-British cooperation is that Brexit may have a malign impact. Strengthening bilateral ties will appeal to the UK since this would be uncontroversial at home, but with the UK outside the EU, the traditional Franco-German partnership will be reinforced within both EU and EI2 frameworks (Martill and Sus, 2018). Also, in strategic terms the USA may refer more to Paris than to London, as UK global influence declines. Britain's self-imposed detachment from its continental allies weakens its political, diplomatic, and strategic voice. On the other hand, the UK must remain a partner for France given its greater defence capability, an estimated 20 per cent of the EU28 force catalogue, including strategic enablers, far more than any other member state bar France itself (UK Parliament, 2019, 2). UK defence spending of US$65.5bn in 2018 is the second highest in NATO after the USA's US$685.1; Germany spends US$49.1bn, France US$47.1bn (NATO, 2019). There is, however, a serious risk that rather than strengthen the bilateral relationship with France, Brexit may bring competitive rivalry, undermining what has been a constructive, evolving relationship since

the Lancaster House treaties. Moreover, a former NATO General Secretary and a former French Prime Minister expressed alarm that the Brexit process could threaten Anglo-French cooperation and weaken European security. They advocate enhancing the military and nuclear cooperation contained in the Lancaster House agreements and call for the creation of a third pillar covering cyber security (Robertson and Cazeneuve, 2018).

Furthermore, regarding the CJEF partnership, and a similar British-led effort, the Joint Expeditionary Force (with Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden), Biscop highlights an anomaly where Britain is concerned. If the various states involved set up closer defence ties under PESCO, non-participation by the UK in PESCO would be at odds with the fundamentals of the CJEF or JEF (Biscop, 2018c). The UK will inevitably find itself tied to the PESCO framework. The French position post-Brexit is 'to keep the UK on board with respect to European security' (Pannier and Schmitt, 2019, 914).

The EI2, being intervention-focused, has different objectives to PESCO (House of Commons, 2019a). It is focused on four main areas: strategic foresight and intelligence sharing; scenario development and planning; support to operations and lessons learned and doctrine. As Witney (2018b) points out, EI2 is underscored by the French thinking that military forces have no use unless one is prepared to deploy them in conflict situations. Moreover, EI2 and PESCO are compatible because PESCO envisages cooperation and integration between states able and willing to contribute to an initiative. It is not dependent on all or nothing unanimity. Witney (*ibid*) welcomes the EI2 because in practice PESCO has been hobbled by the large number of states involved, many of which contribute barely anything in terms of strategic capability. A House of Commons paper suggests that while PESCO was conceived as an instrument that could allow groups of a few member states to progress projects together, Germany resisted this arguing that it would lead to a two-speed Europe in defence and security matters. The result was that activation of PESCO was delayed for seven years (House of Commons, 2018). The paper emphasises UK concerns: the EI2 is independent of both the EU and PESCO, it does not compete with NATO, it fully respects individual state sovereignty over force deployment and it does not create or contribute to a standing European force, or build a new rapid reaction force. It is designed to allow cooperation through existing joint-action frameworks such as the UN, NATO, the EU or ad hoc coalitions. A critical voice suggests that the EI2 could have been within the PESCO framework, especially as a Crisis Response

Operational Core (CROC) is already under development in CSDP (Biscop, 2018c). But notwithstanding this criticism, 'The European Intervention Initiative should help revive [EU] operational culture and could usefully generate a (virtual) European Air Intervention Group (Witney, 2019b, 1). Witney opines that 'Europeans should undertake new commitments in Kosovo and Africa' and 'should stop outsourcing their strategic thinking to Washington' (*ibid*).

Brexit – enabler or spoiler?

We have seen how the EU initiatives discussed above appear to have been prompted by the UK entering the EU departure lounge. Britain was not party to the Council deliberations that led to the activation of PESCO, and the Commission releasing the European Defence Action Plan and setting up the EDF and the Council triggering the Coordinated Annual Review of Defence (CARD) under the EDA. These developments show a changed mood among EU27 and Commission opportunism. It is plausible that the Brexit referendum has been a stimulus to deepening EU27 cooperation in security and defence. The referendum may also have played a part in prompting the European Council to endorse closer defence ties with NATO. Already in July 2016 the President of the Council, the Commission President and the NATO Secretary General signed a joint declaration on a strategic partnership. In December, the Council published its Strategic Defence Implementation Plan which focused on enhanced EU-NATO cooperation.

The key debate over Brexit and defence and security policy is that, given the importance of UK military power, its quitting the Union could damage EU and UK security unless both parties achieve their stated ambition of a close and mutually sustaining partnership to the benefit of pan-European security, and a strong partnership within NATO (Barrie, 2018). A second threat, specifically to CSDP, concerns the UK contribution to the EU budget. While the UK has contributed only 2.3 percent of personnel to CSDP missions (House of Lords, 2018) these are funded through the EU budget, where the UK contribution amounts to 16 percent (Institute for Government, 2019). The House of Lords recommended continued UK engagement with the EU's CSDP, but recognised that becoming a third country sacrifices a decision-making role. It suggested the UK should seek observer status in the Political and Security Committee and exercise influence where possible, but there may be resistance

among some member states. Clearly Brexit will deprive the UK of leverage over CSDP in both decision-making and leadership (House of Lords, 2018; House of Commons, 2019b). A Clingendael report reached similar conclusions while affirming that the UK contribution to CSDP had been marginal, much less than in justice and home affairs where the Brexit impact could be direct and substantial (Bakker, *et al*, 2017; Carrapico, *et al*, 2019). However, the same report highlighted the significant loss of UK expertise in the Brussels security and defence institutions, citing the EUMC, EUMS and EDA. Losing British representation among seconded personnel in the EUMS, and other EEAS staff, will be particularly damaging (Biscop, 2018c). Additionally, the broader aspects of British diplomatic activity have been degraded since 2016 (Whitman, 2019, 383).

During much of the Brexit process there were warm words about the need for a close relationship (HM Government, 2017), culminating in a positive message concerning a post-Brexit transition phase in which the UK would see 'closer, more intense and more productive cooperation than the EU enjoys with any other partner' (HM Government, 2018, 64). This gave way to a tetchy discourse over the Galileo satellite programme and British access to encryption and industrial component contracts post-Brexit. The Commission indicated that British contractors will not be allowed to participate in military aspects of the system, while London suggested it would develop its own Global Navigation Satellite System as an alternative to Galileo (European Commission, 2018; Gannon, 2018; Institute for Government, 2019). Even if this were feasible it would be extremely costly, and the loss of British involvement is likely to damage both parties. The UK has strong support from Airbus, the lead industrial group for European space research and manufacturing, with CEO Tom Enders warning that it would be reckless to exclude the UK from the development of Galileo (*Financial Times*, 2018b).

While the EU has focused on a somewhat mechanical approach to Brexit negotiations with a strong emphasis on EU27 unity, London proved unable to come up with detailed proposals on a post-Brexit partnership until late in 2018. The Withdrawal Agreement achieved by Prime Minister May and revised in October 2019 included a political declaration that promised 'close cooperation in Union-led crisis management missions and operations, both civilian and military' and commitment to a high level of defence and security cooperation (House of Commons, 2019b, 40, 2019c, 5). However, the 'transition period' ends in December

2020 and the risk of a 'hard Brexit' remains, i.e. the UK outside the single market and customs union, and excluded from multiple EU agencies. This could precipitate bitterness and rancour on all sides, hardly conducive to cooperation in security and defence. Such an outcome seems more likely with Boris Johnson as Prime Minister and may even threaten highly developed and institutionalised defence ties between France and Britain. A Johnson government envoy to Brussels is reported to have indicated that the UK wanted a 'looser level of cooperation' than was previously agreed (*Guardian*, 2019). This suggests London may use the British defence contribution as a bargaining chip in negotiating a new relationship with the EU. Any rancour or loss of trust in negotiations between London and Brussels is sure to have damaging consequences. It is ironic that Brexit risks harming not only multilateral security and defence relationships, but also bilateral ties between Europe's strongest defence actors, Britain and France.

The EU27-UK 'negotiations' achieved little of substance regarding future trading arrangements and nothing definitive concerning the new reality of an external land border between the EU and the UK on the island of Ireland. The Withdrawal Agreement (WA) achieved by Theresa May would have postponed any resolution of the UK/Irish border issue and left the future trading relationship to be negotiated after the UK left the Union. In the brutal context of Brexit in-fighting in the UK, it is hardly surprising that little of substance was agreed on security and defence, only homilies to the need for a close relationship.

Whatever the nature of the future EU-UK relationship, there is a powerful logic behind reaching a positive agreement on security-related issues since it is in both parties' interests. For a constructive future, both sides need to articulate a shared understanding of the security context. They need the same internal security, for law enforcement and criminal justice, including information sharing on cyber security, civil security and counter-terrorism. A House of Commons Select Committee Report expressed alarm over the lack of concrete assurances regarding data sharing, the European Arrest Warrant (EAW) and EUROPOL, just eight months prior to the first deadline for the UK leaving the Union, March 2019. There has been little progress since, despite the parliamentary committee calling on both sides to relax 'red lines' which would adversely affect vital security cooperation (House of Commons, 2018).

The UK general election in December 2019 brought the 'end of the beginning' as the UK finally left the Union on 31 January 2020, entering an eleven month 'transition period'.

The onset of the Coronavirus pandemic rather side-lined UK/EU negotiations, raising the possibility of an extension to the transition period, although Prime Minister Johnson ruled this out.

European cooperation in military security and defence requires joint capability development through PESCO and joint commitment to strengthening the European arm of NATO. Both the EU and the UK need to commit to cooperation on wider security issues including asylum and illegal migration, cyber threats, counter-terrorism and environmental challenges relating to climate change (Dennison, 2018). Instead, the tetchy atmosphere pervading the Brexit process undermines the scope for consensus. The entire debacle threatens European and British security interests.

There is an urgent need for the challenge and inconvenience of Brexit to be understood as secondary to comprehensive security needs. Both sides require a hard-headed look at their interests and to pursue strategic cooperation regardless of Brexit (ECFR, 2018). In 2017, the UK government emphasised continuity and partnership (HM Government, 2017). This was consistent with the UK strategic defence and security review two years before, which identified similar threats to those highlighted in the 2016 EU Global Strategy (HM Government, 2015; EEAS, 2016). But uncertainty remains over what will finally emerge, even regarding UK/France cooperation.

In Britain there is sensitivity around UK/EU security and defence relations post-Brexit. According to a Reuters report, the UK had wanted the original Withdrawal Agreement to ensure close engagement with EU defence and security processes, including access to the €13bn European Defence Fund. But British access is controversial on both sides. While the Netherlands and the Baltic states support British participation in weapons technology and research projects, France and Italy want third country engagement to be highly selective and insist on the UK committing to EU foreign and security policy (Reuters, 2018). One EU diplomat insisted 'the UK won't get any decision-making powers in our processes' (*ibid*). Brexit has already disrupted UK engagement with the evolving EU security and defence policy. Not only has London had no voice in post-referendum initiatives, including PESCO, it also lost the headquarters of EU NAVFOR Atalanta. It is almost inconceivable that the UK as a third country can participate fully in EU security and defence institutions, including CSDP, although London will not be happy with a non-executive or mere observer role, excluded from decision-

making (Martill and Sus, 2018). But this is exactly what Brexit implies and what many EU27 states will expect and even demand.

The Gordian knot is that for both sides shared interests cry out for a close relationship, especially in civilian-military efforts under CSDP, border security, anti-piracy operations, combatting human trafficking, military and police training and Security Sector Reform. Many concerns shade into internal security and policing under the EU Area of Freedom, Justice and Security (AFJS), such as data sharing under the Schengen Information System, passenger name records, DNA data and the European Arrest Warrant, all critical interests developed since the Amsterdam Treaty (Carrapico, et al, 2019).

An alternative channel for UK engagement with European security and defence is through NATO, which can complement existing bilateral accords. This would be domestically uncontroversial for London. But the UK has often played the NATO card to argue against an enhanced EU strategic defence relevance. In this context, it is ironic to imagine that London's NATO preferences could assist UK-EU defence cooperation after Brexit (Martill and Sus, 2018).

The focus of the withdrawal process has been on trade, budget and *acquis communautaire* issues (Rogers, 2019), with security and defence a distant second or third order consideration, along with AFSJ. Settling the security and defence relationship between the UK and the EU may prove extremely difficult, to the detriment of all parties.

Conclusion

This article has reported that since the UK's 2016 referendum, several measures backed by EU27 suggest progress towards deeper EU security and defence cooperation. That progress might still be judged by some as too cautious (*Economist*, 2019; Biscop, 2020). Secondly, the overdue activation of PESCO, the creation of the EDF and the CARD, seem in part a reaction to and a consequence of the UK's departure from the Union. We judge these developments, together with the launch of the European Intervention Initiative, to be potentially significant as Europe seeks to address capability shortfalls. A concern, however, is the lack of a properly defined end point. What does the Union seek to achieve in security and

defence, and where is the overarching driver to ensure that all the pieces fit together in a coordinated and coherent fashion, focused on achieving defined goals? The EDF is an important development, but its financial contribution remains a fraction of what EU member states and the UK spend on defence. A national mindset towards defence procurement and defence industry is still all too pervasive.

The third conclusion concerns the Brexit impact on EU and UK security. We judge that the loss of UK capability and expertise will deliver a blow to European security, a development likely to be welcomed only by those who wish harm to the Union and Europeans. The EU losing the UK's military industrial capability risks degrading Europe's military-industrial credibility, and the UK defence industry would also be gravely disadvantaged by exclusion from transnational European projects (Witney, 2018a).

Any reduction in UK defence cooperation with European partners will undermine mutual security capability within both EU and NATO structures, especially as together with France, the UK is the only European state with full-spectrum military capability. Britain represents 40 per cent of EU military industrial capability and 20 percent of its armed forces (Round *et al*, 2018). While the European Intervention Initiative, being outside formal EU structures, may help to keep the UK involved, it is hard to imagine that deteriorating UK-EU relations will not damage the relationship between London and Paris.

Brexit will greatly reduce UK influence on EU security and defence policymaking and downgrade its participation in CSDP instruments and EEAS structures. Any à la carte participation in PESCO, in Galileo, in CSDP or in EDF-funded research, will come at a price. Now Britain, a historical critic of security and defence free-riding, cannot itself become a free rider (Biscop, 2018c). During preparations for leaving the Union, London expressed a wish for a close security relationship with the EU (HM Government, 2017). This elicited a quip from the Luxembourg Prime Minister: 'They were in with a load of opt-outs. Now they are out, and want a load of opt-ins' (BCL Solicitors, 2018).

The bigger picture is that EU autonomy in security and defence will require close cooperation with third countries, including Norway and post-Brexit UK. Much will depend on how the EU defines strategic autonomy in the next decade. Biscop argues that the Union's priorities should be: (a) In the short term, a focus on EU crisis management at home and in

the vicinity of Europe in full spectrum operations, (b) In the medium term, to concentrate on autonomy in areas of modern global connectivity such as in space, air space and cyberspace and on the seas, and (c) In the long term, to achieve autonomy in NATO to take on the responsibilities of the collective defence of Europe, without the United States if necessary (Biscop, 2019b). Given the current balance of capability within Europe, it would seem essential that the EU keeps the UK extremely close, and in doing so, both will benefit. The choice is stark: EU/UK strategic autonomy or strategic irrelevance.

The EU response to British overtures on security and defence cooperation since the referendum has been mostly unenthusiastic. It is understandable that third country status cannot carry the advantages of membership (Birnbaum, 2018). But in security and defence it remains to be seen whether the EU and the UK can forge a new relationship that delivers mutual benefits through shared strategic ambitions, while also protecting their various interests. The essential ingredient is political will, which is often in short supply. The greatest danger lies in the process of building a new relationship becoming embroiled in a long-running and adversarial win-lose struggle. There may be serious collateral damage to UK-EU security and defence interests if post-Brexit trade negotiations descend into acrimony and mistrust. That is a real danger, perhaps accentuated since Boris Johnson moved into Downing Street in July 2019. It is hard to envisage a poisonous atmosphere over trade being set aside to facilitate a good outcome in security and defence. Perhaps in the end pragmatism will prevail in both the trade and security spheres. We can but hope.

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