Executive Summary:

• Maintaining the closet practical co-operation in foreign, security and defence policy co-operation is in the interests of both the UK and EU post-Brexit given the wide range of shared challenges and threats they continue to face. Both sides will remain important factors in each other’s foreign policy calculations.

• A range of existing structures can facilitate their ongoing co-operation, including NATO and the UN, as well as bilateral relationships. However, because none of these matches the EU’s CFSP in terms of the frequency and intensity of interactions, they would entail a more ‘arm’s length’ relationship.

• Foreign policy developments at EU level will continue to matter to the UK, such as plans to develop EU27 military capabilities through CSDP, EU sanctions, etc. The UK thus needs to mitigate the consequences of being absent from policy- and decision-making debates where it still has an interest - i.e. the challenge of ‘no longer being in the room’.

• There are a number of options for institutionalised co-operation post-Brexit, including:
  - a specific bilateral foreign, security and defence partnership with the EU encompassing varying levels of institutional engagement and policy areas - the model of Norwegian cooperation with the EU is a useful example here. Thus could fit within the framework of a broader strategic partnership, similar to the arrangements between the EU and other significant non-member states.
  - involvement in/alignment with specific EU policies and/or initiatives, such as participation in specific CSDP crisis management missions; an ongoing role in the EDA; and potential involvement in PESCO in the future.
  - continued technical and diplomatic involvement in CFSP, e.g. observer status, at the level of working groups and the Political and Security Committee. A formal role/vote in decision-making would be very unlikely, however.
  - Whilst technically feasible, the challenge here will be political: the willingness of the EU27 to countenance continued UK involvement in its policy-making in whatever form; and the UK’s willingness to accept a more limited role vis-à-vis formal decision-making, whilst maintaining a degree of influence. Political tensions will only be exacerbated in the event the Brexit negotiations fail.

• If approached pragmatically and with goodwill, there is an opportunity for both sides to ensure cooperation in foreign, security and defence policy forms part of the foundation for a positive and productive post-Brexit future relationship.

The Policy Challenge

1. The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is the primary means of foreign and security policy cooperation among EU member states. The UK played an important role in its establishment and subsequent development into one of the most institutionalised environments for foreign policy co-operation created by sovereign states.
2. Brexit ends UK involvement in CFSP and its related elements, including the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In practical terms, this means the UK will no longer be represented in CFSP’s policy-making structures: the Foreign Affairs Council; the Committee of Permanent Representatives and Political and Security Committee; and its 30+ working groups.

3. Brexit means:
   - the UK loses access to the resources and international impact of the EU as a foreign policy actor, and its capacity to directly influence EU foreign policy-making as it will no longer be ‘in the room’.
   - the EU loses the involvement of one of Europe’s primary foreign/defence policy powers, including the range of resources, capabilities, leadership and expertise it has contributed/can contribute.

UK-EU foreign, security and defence relations post-Brexit

4. Key elements of British foreign, security and defence policy will not change (at least in the short-term) following departure from the EU. It will continue to:
   - be one of Europe’s two leading military and only nuclear powers, alongside France, and be one of only three states with both the capacities to exercise influence at a global level, alongside France and Germany.
   - play a leading role in and have a national interest in maintaining the influence of a range of multilateral organisations, particularly NATO and the UN (especially its Security Council).
   - face difficult domestic choices about the availability and allocation of sufficient financial resources to sustain its diplomatic and military capabilities, a long-term challenge that pre-dates the referendum vote.

5. The UK and EU27 will continue to face the same range of often inter-related strategic threats and challenges following Brexit, including:
   - a resurgent and revisionist Russia;
   - instability on Europe’s eastern and southern frontiers and the consequences this brings, for example the ongoing migration crisis;
   - security threats emanating from the Middle East;
   - the threat of proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, etc.

6. The UK and EU27 will remain important variables in each other’s foreign, security and defence policy calculations. They will continue to have a clear interest in cooperating as closely and intensively as possible to address the range of challenges they face, something emphasised in HM Government’s ‘Future Partnership Paper’ on foreign, defence and development policy and in subsequent ministerial statements, and a view widely held across the EU27.

7. Translating this ambition into practical and sustained cooperation will be a challenge and will depend on the calculations both sides make over the consequences (negative and positive) of the UK ‘no longer being in the room’ and the level of goodwill between them.
Enhancing existing channels of engagement

8. As an external ‘3rd country’ without any form of privileged/special foreign and defence relationship with the EU27, should the UK wish to engage with and influence EU foreign policy-making, its options would be:

i. Use its existing bilateral diplomatic network and relationships across/with the EU27, perhaps focusing in the main on states who are considered particularly important partners - e.g. France, Germany, Poland, the Baltic States, etc. Additional financial and diplomatic resources would be required to enhance the UK’s capacities.

ii. Maintain and boost the role and resources of UKREP as a diplomatic platform to promote British influence and interests ‘outside the room’. The degree to which it can deliver on this will obviously be reduced in the new environment and sustaining and expanding its resources will be necessary.

iii. Utilise and develop the channels provided through NATO for engagement with EU partners. While NATO does not match the CFSP in terms of the level and intensity of cooperation and interaction between members, it is nonetheless an important forum for interaction. The UK has a clear and ongoing interest in ensuring NATO and the EU remain as complementary as possible on security and defence policy. In particular, EU-level efforts to improve member state capabilities and inter-operability (e.g. through PESCO) should be welcomed and encouraged given their potential to enhance similar efforts by NATO.

iv. Utilise and develop the channels provided through the United Nations - as with NATO, the UN is an important additional means for formal, institutionalised engagement with European partners. As a permanent member of the Security Council, alongside France, the UK has an important leadership role and responsibility in responding to international security challenges. EU states have developed into an important and influential ‘caucus’ at the UN, and continuing UK-EU alignment on many questions would seem likely given the shared challenges and threats they face.
Options for new/alernative forms of institutionalised relationship

9. The UK could pursue a more institutionalised/formalised relationship with the EU27 to facilitate foreign, defence and security policy co-operation. The options for this include:

A bilateral UK-EU ‘foreign/security/defence’ partnership

10. This could be a specific bilateral relationship encompassing varying levels and degrees of contact, with joint UK-EU working groups (for example on sanctions), ambassadorial and ministerial meetings. The potential logistical and resource demands in creating such a new set of arrangements would need to be considered alongside expectations of what they could realistically deliver. This would, though, be a means of enabling ongoing alignment on a range of foreign policy positions.

11. Such a bilateral arrangement could be framed within the context of a broader Strategic Partnership, an instrument used by the EU (and championed by the UK) to prioritise particular international relationships (e.g. with the US, China, and India). These cover a wide range of policy areas and are characterised by joint decision-making and a long-term mutuality of interest.

12. No current Strategic Partnership matches the level of intensity the UK and EU27 might seek in terms of foreign, security and defence policy co-operation. However, such arrangements are inherently flexible and so could be organised and structured to meet the requirements of a future UK-EU relationship.

13. Crucially, neither a specific bilateral arrangement focusing only on foreign, security and defence policy, nor one forming part of a wider and more ambitious strategic partnership, would seem to resolve the issue of the UK being ‘outside the room’ when the EU27 take decisions on foreign, security and defence policy.

Ongoing involvement in CFSP

14. A more ambitious (and potentially controversial) option is for the UK to seek some level of ongoing technical and diplomatic involvement in CFSP policy-making.

15. This could include formal observer status with speaking rights in certain institutional components of the CFSP, such as the Political and Security Committee and the working groups where much of the technical policy work is carried out, and perhaps relating to a clearly demarcated set of issue areas agreed by both sides. UK ministers participating in meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council on a regular basis would be more challenging given the political sensitivities involved.

16. The UK could and should not expect formal rights in decision-making as a non-member - for example, it would no longer have its current ability to block decisions it opposes. However, the nature of CFSP decision-making is such that strength of argument, expertise and willingness to deploy resources bestow significant influence in policy decisions and crucially the UK would have the potential to be heard on an ongoing basis.
17. Whilst technically feasible, the challenge remains political. Ultimately, the EU27 would need to determine whether the continuing presence of the UK was deemed positive to their deliberations while the UK would need to accept a more limited degree of influence.

18. In the short-term, the outcome of the Brexit negotiations could impact on the desire and willingness of both sides to explore such a possibility. However, such an arrangement would demonstrate a clear commitment by both sides to maintaining the closest possible relationship in foreign, security and defence policy.

**Ongoing involvement in CSDP**

19. Given its historic championing of a European defence and security crisis management capability since the 1998 Anglo-French *St Malo Agreement*, the UK might also seek to continue its participation in the CSDP in some form. A number of options exist for this:

20. Alignment with and participation in specific CSDP missions - there is a precedent for non-member states to align themselves with and participate in CSDP missions and, indeed, wider EU foreign policy positions. Two notable examples are: Norway, which has frequent coordination and consultation with the EU on foreign and security policy and has formal agreements for participation in military and civilian CSDP missions; and Serbia which, although still negotiating accession, has already participated in a number of CSDP missions including *EUNAVFOR Atalanta* and *EUTM Somalia*. The UK could maintain its operational participation in CSDP on a similar basis, although questions of planning, command and control would need to be addressed.

21. Involvement in the *European Defence Agency* - the UK Government has already expressed its support for more innovation in Europe’s defence industry and has made clear its willingness to continue collaborating with and investing in EDA projects and initiatives. This commitment could be formalised as part of an agreed future partnership.

22. Involvement in *Permanent Structured Cooperation in Defence* (PESCO) - the EU’s recently launched PESCO is one of several policy initiatives designed to enhance and improve EU member state military capabilities, improve inter-operability and coordination, and support better use of defence budgets - all objectives the UK has previously urged on its EU partners. The modular structure of PESCO is intended to enable states to identify particular areas where they wish to cooperate, and raises the possibility of interested non-member states becoming involved, provided they agree to the binding commitments involved. It remains to be seen, though, whether PESCO will deliver on its promise.

23. There are a number of arguments in favour of continuing British involvement in CSDP:

   (i) CSDP is an important means of utilising and amplifying the collective crisis management capacities of member states. These capacities have been seen most clearly in civilian crisis management (capacity-building, stabilisation, etc.), an area where the EU has historically been able to bring more added value than organisations such as NATO.

   (ii) The UK has long sought the development of meaningful military capabilities by its EU partners, particularly where those would enhance NATO. CSDP remains an important institutional structure for achieving that. Participation in PESCO and the EDA, for example, would therefore help the UK pursue this ongoing interest.
Mailing a strong transatlantic defence and security partnership between Europe and the US has been a cornerstone of British post-war policy. UK support for initiatives that could also help strengthen the credibility of Europe in this regard would be valuable, particularly given the current US Administration’s doubts over NATO’s long-term utility and the commitment of some of its European members.

The UK could ensure for itself an ongoing voice in Europe’s longer-term strategic debates as well as meeting its ‘Future Partnership’ pledges and commitments.

24. As with involvement in CFSP, the key challenges remain political, including:

(i) The willingness of the EU27 to accept continuing UK involvement in CSDP. Given its relative lack of support and enthusiasm for CSDP in recent years, notably its opposition to a permanent operational headquarters capability (now going ahead), the UK has earned a reputation for awkwardness and obstruction, while its commitment has been further called into question as a consequence of the Anglo-French Lancaster House agreements as a bilateral alternative.

(ii) Whether the UK considers re-engagement with the CSDP a worthwhile investment of time and effort. The UK must balance the potential benefits of its involvement with the likelihood of there being any significant change in the willingness of particularly non-neutral EU member states to invest in and use military capabilities.

(iii) Whether the UK would have a meaningful decision-making role. If the UK were to commit financial and military resources, for example, it would presumably and not unreasonably expect to have a voice and vote in decision-making. It is not immediately clear how this could be achieved.

Conclusion

30. On balance there are clear benefits to both the UK and EU in maintaining the closest possible partnership in foreign, defence and security policy.

31. There are clear technical and political challenges to surmount, depending on how close a relationship the two sides wish to pursue.

32. The UK must determine whether a more arm’s length relationship will suffice; or whether it wishes to pursue a closer and more institutionalised relationship, although this raise the difficult issue of (lack of) formal decision-making power.

33. For its part, the EU will need to make a similar calculation over the pros and cons of maintaining close British involvement in its deliberations.

34. If approached pragmatically and with goodwill, however, there is an opportunity for cooperation in foreign, security and defence policy to form part of the foundation for a positive and productive post-Brexit future relationship.

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