

EGMONT PAPER 100

**BREXIT, STRATEGY, AND THE EU:
BRITAIN TAKES LEAVE**

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EGMONT

February 2018

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INTRODUCTION: IN THE BEGINNING

When as a young boy I was asked what I wanted to be later, unlike many others of my age I never chose to be a fireman or a truck driver. For years, my answer was: I want to be an Englishman. I guess I read too many books about the history of the British Empire at too young an age. Since then I have read a lot more, but I do still see myself as an anglophile (even though successive British governments do their best to dissuade me). I feel absolutely no Schadenfreude over Brexit therefore. Brexit is bad news for the EU and a disaster for the UK. In the area of foreign policy and defence that I will address here, the consequences will be far-reaching and the cost very high, for both Brussels and London.

In the beginning, however, in the immediate aftermath of World War Two, the UK was a strong proponent of European cooperation. None other than Winston Churchill, in his 1946 speech at the University of Zürich, stated that “We must build a kind of United States of Europe”. That was the task the UK saw – for the others. For itself, the UK saw a different role.

Financially and economically exhausted by World War Two, knowing that the Empire was entering its final stage (India, the jewel in the crown, gained independence in 1947), Britain fundamentally changed its grand strategy. Instead of an independent global role, the UK opted for the part of permanent (and, certainly its own eyes, essential) ally of the US. The war had seen the start of the Anglo-American “special relationship”. The UK had started out as the dominant partner, but as the US mobilised its enormous war potential, the relationship had turned around. After the war, the US was left as the only Western superpower, with Britain a distant second (even though it acquired the atomic bomb). But while many in the US were initially inclined to demobilize and let Europe take care of its own defence, Britain played a key role in convincing the Americans of the need of a permanent transatlantic alliance, NATO, as a continuation of the war-time alliance.

The UK did engage in European cooperation. In 1947 it signed an alliance with France, the Treaty of Dunkirk, followed the next year by the Treaty of Brussels with France and the Benelux Countries. Britain’s view of the latter was largely shaped however by the fact that the US had put a European initiative as a precondition to start the secret talks with Canada and the UK that would lead to the creation of NATO (in 1949). In the end, the UK remained outside the main track of European integration: the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC, 1951), the failed European Defence Community (EDC, 1954), and the European Economic Community (EEC, 1957) that grew out of that failure. It did join the Western European Union (WEU, 1954) that succeeded to the Brussels Treaty and added West Germany and Italy as members, but that organisation quickly became an empty shell as NATO and the EEC took off.

At first sight, it may seem as if having decided to leave the EU, the UK has come full circle. But a closer look reveals that the choice for Brexit actually is a fundamental break with past British strategy. In the 1940s, the UK sought a permanent transatlantic alliance, in order to guarantee permanent American involvement – in the security of Europe. Because it knew very well that a strong and secure Europe was a prerequisite for a strong and secure Britain. Hence London was in favour of cooperation between the other states of western Europe, even though at that time it did not join their main project itself. In the area of defence, the UK did opt for an Atlantic rather than a European-only strategy. But in 1945-1955 the UK did not distance itself from Europe. It had just fought a major war to liberate Europe from the Nazis.

That is a completely different attitude to Europe than the anti-European stance of the core Brexiteers who in June 2016 forced Brexit upon the UK.

ILLUSIONS

At times it almost appears as if the Brexiteers would want the EU to collapse, just to prove that they were right. They need proof, because so far all they have managed to create is uncertainty. Not even those who shouted the loudest in favour of Brexit actually expected to win the referendum, so there was no plan. A year and a half later things are not much clearer.

One answer is fatalism. At a seminar, I heard a Conservative MP confess, when asked what the desired end-state of the Brexit negotiations was, that he had no idea where the UK wanted to land, but that in any case there was no alternative now but to see it through, since “the people have spoken”. Others try to mask their fear or ignorance with bravura and, like Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, talk about a “glorious future”. But I am very much afraid, for the UK, that all the talk about “global Britain” as an independent actor in world politics is nothing but hubris. The mistake that the Brexiteers are making is to assume that they can return to the status quo ante, and that there are many options available for British grand strategy.

The reality is that Britain’s strategic options have been severely limited ever since the end of World War Two. Already during the Greek civil war (1946-1949) London was forced to ask Washington to take over its military commitments in the country (in support of the non-communist camp), because it simply no longer had the means to carry on. This is exactly why after the end of the war the UK did not opt for an independent grand strategy, but for the role of permanent “deputy sheriff” of the US. The 1956 Suez crisis was the last gasp for Britain, and France, as independent powers. When these countries militarily occupied the canal zone, they were immediately called back by the US, and duly retreated.

Many Brexiteers see the Commonwealth as Britain’s natural constituency that can support its global role, but that is a very loose grouping of countries. Or they refer to the “Anglosphere”, but even countries like Australia, Canada and New Zealand have a much more diverse population than 70 years ago and a much looser emotional link with the UK. The Queen may still be the Head of State, but when push comes to shove, they will choose the national interest over the British legacy. Canada is economically dependent on the US, Australia on China, and for their security both look to America. Pretending that even these key members of the “Anglosphere”, let alone the Commonwealth as such, can replace the EU in British trade and foreign policy, is not very realistic.

Of course, the UK still is an important country. But it is not a great power – not anymore. Britain enjoys a strong diplomatic position. It has a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and is a member of the G7, the club of the world’s seven biggest economies, but the same applies to France, and Canada and Italy are members of the

G7 too. Nobody pretends that any of these countries can play a major part in world politics by itself. The players that matter are countries the size of a continent, or countries that have grouped together to achieve that size: the US, China, Russia, and the EU. This holds true in the military domain too. The UK entered World War Two with a Royal navy of over 1400 ships. Today it counts less than a hundred. Both in absolute and in relative terms (compared to other major actors) the UK doesn't even come close to the power that it had even in 1945.

Furthermore, the centre of gravity of the world system is shifting to Asia, where even the EU as a whole has difficulties being heard. Nobody in Asia is waiting for new initiatives from a single European country. Yes indeed, China has already stated its willingness to negotiate a new bilateral trade agreement with the UK once Brexit becomes effective, but on different terms than those that apply to China and the EU. Read: on terms that are more advantageous to Beijing.

The conclusion should be obvious: the option for the UK to return to an independent great power strategy no longer exists. The UK could of course try and return to the period before its accession to the Union, in 1973, and once again opt for the role of "deputy sheriff" to the US as its key strategic part. The Brexiteers certainly like to play up the "special relationship". But is the US itself still interested in having a country as a deputy that has lost so much power?

Suppose the US fights a limited war. Then it doesn't need the UK, except maybe for political reasons. American military might is such that it can project its power anywhere in the world without the help of allies and partners. Whereas if the US were to fight a truly major war, with China for example, the UK has become too small to make much of a difference. The UK was much more important to the US as a Member State of the EU, in order to ensure that the EU would not diverge too far from Washington's guidelines. That part the UK has always played excellently well, notably by continuously putting obstacles in the way of autonomous structures for European defence. That's one of the main reasons why the EU still has but very limited command and control capacity within its structures, and why the European Defence Agency (EDA) never received the budget it would have needed to really play the role it was intended to. The UK also has always been the greatest proponent of Turkish accession to the EU, and of EU enlargement in general. In the strategic debate on whether the EU should be deepened first (by integrating more) or widened first (by allowing in more members), the British view has won out – and now the Brits are leaving. Thus Washington loses its closest ally within the EU. And the UK loses a lot of its interest for the US.

Unless, that is, a British government would join forces with President Donald Trump, who has welcomed Brexit, to actively undermine the EU. The UK could attempt to sabotage collective EU decision-making through bilateral deals with individual Member States. Perhaps this is what some Brexiteers are dreaming of, just like some

seem to covet the American model of society. That's a model in which the welfare state is being dismantled, a tax cut massively favours the rich and undermines the future functioning of government, and the state does less and less to assist those who are worst off. Probably not exactly what most of those who voted for Brexit had in mind.

But such an anti-EU policy would be very risky, for it would be directly at odds with British interests. It would also go against centuries of British grand strategy, which has always considered a divided but stable European continent to be a precondition for a stable UK. Britain could only focus on its global role and the Empire as long as it was not in any way directly threatened in Europe. Therefore it regularly intervened on the continent, and often played the decisive part in restoring the European balance of power, from the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) to World War Two. The need for a strong EU may understandably appear counter-intuitive to many British, because in the past restoring the balance of power always meant preventing a single great power from dominating the continent of Europe. But the EU is unique, because it is of course a voluntary coming together of states that choose to pool their sovereignty, rather than the subjugation of Europe by a single state, as Louis XIV, Napoleon, Wilhelm II, and Hitler have attempted. Today it is precisely the unravelling of the EU that could once again lead to war in Europe, in which sooner or later the UK would inevitably be involved. For the first time in history, a (voluntarily) united Europe serves the British interest better than a balance of power between individual European states.

By choosing to leave the EU, the UK may paradoxically have become more useful to the EU than to the US. To the extent that the "special relationship" endures and the UK has more influence in Washington than any other European country, the UK could perhaps play a part in moderating some of the more eccentric of Trump's views on Europe and the world. The attempt would certainly be worthwhile, for British interests often coincide much more with EU interests than with those of the Trump administration. But does Trump really listen to anybody who doesn't agree with him in the first place? As long as he remains president, a "special relationship" may be an illusion, sadly for both the UK and the EU.

OUT OF THE EU, BUT IN NATO

In addition to emphasising the importance of the “Anglosphere” and the “special relationship” with the US, the Brexiteers always stress the fact that the UK will of course remain an Ally in NATO and will continue to play a key role in the security of Europe. But the UK will soon find out that in NATO as well it will no longer be able to play its traditional part.

Once Britain effectively leaves the EU, it will at a stroke lose its direct influence on EU decision-making on security and defence, and thus also most of its influence on relations between the EU and NATO. After Brexit, London will quickly realise that its views will no longer automatically be heard in the EU debate. Just like any other third country, if the UK will want to be heard, it will have to lobby. And those who undertake demarches only in order to block proposals, have a lot more difficulty in gaining attention than those who table constructive proposals. Bilateral relations with individual EU Member States will obviously remain, not in the least with France and Germany. But EU decision-making has its own dynamic. In the end one is a part of it – or not.

In this regard too, the UK is therefore set to lose a lot of its usefulness to the US. Brexit will affect Britain’s standing in the Alliance. This may have an impact on the posts that Britain holds. Currently, NATO’s military number two, Deputy SACEUR, is always a British general. It is already being debated whether this has not to change, because Deputy SACEUR is automatically in command when an EU military operation has recourse to NATO command and control. Should not that officer therefore come from an EU Member State?

Most importantly, as long as it exists, the political centre of gravity of Europe is, and will remain, the EU, not NATO. And the EU will carry on, with or without the UK. As long as France and Germany seek “ever closer union” (the phrase in the European treaty that the UK objected to from the start), closer union is what we’ll have. This is because the Franco-German axis is not just the engine of the EU, but its essence. The process of European integration was launched precisely to create a reconciliation, and then a partnership, between France and Germany, in order to prevent a third world war from ever starting in Europe. In this geopolitical sense, the UK is in the periphery rather than in the core of the European project, hence the project can continue without it, while it would tumble the moment France or Germany gave up on it.

Many in the UK do not seem to understand this and are under the illusion that other EU Member States will do anything to keep the UK on board. But certainly for the founding members of the EU, this is about vital interests, so they cannot but prioritise the continued existence of the Union. This should have been clear to the UK even

as the referendum campaign was still ongoing. Initially, encouraged by Prime Minister David Cameron, the referendum was not given that much attention in Brussels. It was just generally assumed that the British people would vote the “right” way. When it became apparent that they might not, and that Brexit was becoming a real possibility, Brussels quickly came to a conclusion: we’d rather not have Brexit, of course, but if Brexit it is, we will carry on with the EU. This crucial realisation even before the outcome of the referendum was known, meant that there was never any possibility of the Brexiteers’ mirage becoming reality. Not just Brussels and the founding members, but all Member States have to take a similar stance, because of the interests at stake: you cannot expect to leave a club yet retain all benefits of membership, otherwise it would be the end of the EU. You can’t have your cake and eat it, that the British of all people should know.

Yet many Brexiteers still seem to think that people in Brussels and the other capitals wake up every morning, and go to bed every night, thinking: how are we going to solve Brexit? The unsurprising reality is that first on the agenda of the EU is – the EU. Since the referendum the EU debate has focused on the future of the European project. Brexit is first and foremost a British problem: the UK has chosen to leave and must now search for its own path. The EU is absolutely right not to allow Brexit to dominate its agenda. A team has been appointed to wage negotiations with the UK on behalf of the Union, so that the EU as such can focus on its own future. That is a big enough challenge.

OUT OF THE EU, BUT IN EUROPE

None of this means that there cannot be an enduring close partnership between the EU and the UK. In the area of defence, this would definitely be in their mutual interest. The UK accounts for no less than a quarter of the defence expenditure of the EU-28, and 10% of the total troop numbers. Moreover, excellently trained and highly experienced British forces constitute a very high share of the relatively small number of European troops that are actually deployable on expeditionary operations. The quality of the British defence effort is also reflected in the fact that the UK spends some €155,000 per soldier as compared to the EU average of €130,000. Together with France, the UK is the leading military power in Europe. It is very much in the interest of the EU therefore to ensure that the UK continues to contribute to the security of Europe.

The British armed forces will not, of course, disappear. When the clock strikes midnight on the eve of Brexit, British tanks will not change into pumpkins nor frigates into watermelons. And, come Brexit, Britain will have left the EU, but it will still be in Europe. Any military threat against Europe will thus also constitute a threat against the UK. Continuing cooperation in the field of defence is as much in Britain's as in the EU's interest therefore.

This implies that the Brexiteers cannot use the security argument in order to get a better deal from the EU. Some have made the case that the UK is entitled to better conditions from the EU because it makes a more than average contribution to NATO. But this is not how it works. NATO and the EU are separate organisations: one cannot ask for a discount in one club because one already pays fees into another. Besides, then the EU should somehow also reward other Member States that have a larger defence budget than the EU average (such as Greece). The threat of abandonment cannot work either. The UK can hardly refuse to contribute to European security since that is still its own security. If a certain threat against Europe requires a military response, it is still much more likely than not that the UK will be part of that response.

When in a given crisis Europeans engage in *combat* operations, they increasingly do so in ad hoc coalitions, outside the formal framework of NATO or the EU. Brexit will likely reinforce that trend. Of the two key military actors in Europe, one, the UK, will no longer be a member of the EU, while the other, France, is not going to turn its back on the EU and channel its entire operational commitment through NATO. At the same time, troops on other types of operations will of course continue to be deployed under EU, NATO and UN command.

A practical question therefore is whether, after Brexit, the UK will still be willing to contribute to EU operations if in a specific contingency the other Europeans opt for the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as framework for deployment. Even

though today the British contribution to military CSDP operations represents just 3.6% of the total (and 5.8% for the civilian missions). There already is an arrangement for the participation of non-EU Member States in CSDP operations. Many countries, from Asia to South America, have contributed ships to the EU's anti-piracy operation, Atalanta, for example. London has already made it understood, however, that it considers this arrangement to be insufficient, as it allows third countries to contribute capabilities to an operation, but not to be involved in its strategic direction. (And many other third countries have also expressed their dissatisfaction, actually). In view of Britain's military weight in Europe, some sort of special arrangement does seem advisable. But if London wants a special status, it will have to offer something special, more than other third countries. For example, the UK could continue to make its operational headquarters in Northwood available to the EU after Brexit. Only in return for permanent concrete contributions, could structural involvement in decision-making on CSDP operations be envisaged, for example by offering the UK a seat – but without voting rights – in the relevant EU bodies.

After Brexit, Britain will continue to participate in European military operations, under various flags, possibly even that of the EU. It's a different question, however, whether the UK will be able to play the same leading role as before in *initiating* operations. Until now, it has usually been London and/or Paris that took the initiative to mount an operation and forge a coalition to that end. But as British decision-makers will be absorbed by the Brexit negotiations, and the many domestic issues that Brexit also entails, there will be less and less bandwidth left for strategic initiatives. The question for the EU is then whether France alone can play this role, and whether Germany may gradually grow into it. Because of the country's history, German public opinion remains very reticent to see the armed forces deployed abroad. Nevertheless, Germany has made singular progress. German troops are deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq and Mali – twenty years ago, that would have been unimaginable. Berlin will have to play an even stronger leading role in the area of defence though, if it really wants to strategically underpin European defence together with Paris.

For the further development of military capabilities in Europe, Brexit will probably not matter much. If anything, Brexit has in fact had a positive effect, because the debate on military cooperation and integration in Europe has accelerated since the referendum. For the wrong reasons: it's not because of the UK's departure that the remaining Member States will miraculously agree on everything. True, the UK has traditionally vetoed certain initiatives, mostly those having to do with setting up new structures. A permanent military headquarters for the EU, for example, remains a red line for the UK, which sees this as a superfluous duplication of NATO. But the UK never opposed multinational schemes to enhance capabilities through cooperation and even integration. It most likely would not have participated in most of such schemes itself, but neither would it have stopped other Member States from doing

so. On the other hand, many Member States who were not actually that enthusiastic themselves were always able to hide behind the UK. It was easy to pretend to support an initiative even if one opposed it in order not to complicate relations with those that tabled it, if one knew that the British would veto it anyway. After Brexit, those Member States will have to come clean.

European defence has momentum now, as the activation of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in December 2017 shows. 25 EU Member States have signed up to binding criteria for their defence effort and have announced around 15 capability projects to start with. The Commission is ready to support multinational projects from the EU budget with its new European Defence Fund (EDF). The non-participation of the UK will not have much of an impact on PESCO's eventual success, since nobody expected it to join in the first place. Britain and France were at the origins of the idea, back in the days of the European Convention and the 2003 Constitutional Treaty, but London had long lost interest.

Now that PESCO has started, it may have an impact on the UK though. Britain has never been very keen on big multinational projects or on far-reaching integration, but it has constructed some very close bilateral military cooperation arrangements. In 2010 it notably concluded the Lancaster House agreements with France, in the context of which a Franco-British Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) has been created. The CJEF is about cooperation to increase interoperability, not integration to create multinational capabilities; it basically allows a British and a French brigade to be deployed together. On the British side, the very same forces constitute the British contribution to a similar scheme with Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden: the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF). If in the future, however, France, or one of the countries participating in the JEF, were to effectively integrate some of the capabilities concerned with those of other countries in the framework of PESCO, then the British in the CJEF or JEF would no longer just cooperate with a purely national capability but with a multinational European one. Technically this is perfectly feasible.

At the same time, as the January 2018 Franco-British Summit showed, Brexit need not prevent bilateral defence cooperation from being deepened. French President Emmanuel Macron's European Intervention Initiative even seems to aim at a new scheme for cooperation on expeditionary operations outside PESCO and the EU, and could involve the UK. It would be much more advisable for France to pursue this initiative inside PESCO however (where a very similar Crisis Response Operational Core or CROC is also envisaged), in order to prevent a fragmentation of effort. The UK, like other third states, cannot take part in the overall decision-making on PESCO, but it could participate in individual projects, such as the CROC, on a case-by-case basis.

As PESCO and the EDF gather pace, the British defence industry, unlike the British government, will likely want to join in. If thanks to PESCO and the financial support

from the EDF, the EU Member States effectively managed to harmonise their defence efforts and, in the future, start just a single collective project to build each of the next generation of major platforms, then these will dominate the European market. It remains a big if, but if it works out as intended, British firms will have a major interest in participating in the industrial consortia that will develop and build Europe's future arms and equipment. As usual, the British will probably wait and see, and jump on the wagon only if PESCO and the EDF clearly are successful.

All things considered, Brexit may not affect EU defence policy that much. Brexit does imply that the UK will no longer contribute to the EU budget, including the EDF, nor to the EDA. Either the other Member States compensate by increasing their own contribution, or budgets from other lines will have to be reallocated to defence. Brexit will also mean that many British staff will leave the EU institutions. British citizens who have permanent appointments as EU officials are likely able to stay. Even so, quite a few are applying for Belgian nationality (who would have thought that people would feel it's better to be Belgian than British). However, a third of the posts in the EEAS, and all posts in the EU Military Staff, are held not by EU officials but by seconded national diplomats and military officers. From this category, all British personnel will automatically disappear. It so happens that it's precisely the UK that sends many excellent people to the EU. A British general once told me that among the staff that Member States second to Brussels, there are swimmers, floaters, and sinkers. In my experience, Brits have always been overrepresented among the swimmers.

BUT WHAT ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY?

There seems to be more debate about the colour of future British passports than about the substance of its foreign policy after Brexit. But even though it is talked about much less than defence policy, it looks a lot more complicated to keep the UK involved in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). That there is a mutual interest in this area, too, is evident. The UK is an important diplomatic actor. Any EU position to which the UK also subscribes and that its extensive diplomatic network and experienced diplomats can support, will carry a lot more weight. If the EU were to adopt economic sanctions against a third country, any divergence between EU and UK sanctions regimes would only be to the profit of the targeted state.

Vice versa, there is not that much space for an independent British foreign policy outside the EU framework. The UK may be able to exercise significant influence on some specific issues or individual countries with which it has special ties. But what impact do the Brexiteers think the UK on its own will have on the major issues of world politics: the Ukraine crisis, the wars in the Middle East, the rise of China? The UK alone, just like any other European country, no longer has sufficient power to aspire to significantly influence any of these.

Imagine that on a major issue, the EU adopts a clear-cut common position, enters into a dialogue with the US, and that Brussels and Washington coordinate their views and take joint action. What will the UK do – the opposite? On the big issues, London's margin for manoeuvre will be limited to the choice between joining EU and US action, or simply not doing anything at all. If the EU and the US adopt opposing points of view, which, with Trump in the White House, is not unlikely, London will be in an even more uncomfortable position, forced to choose between the one and the other or, again, to remain inactive. This is happening already: in reaction to Trump putting in doubt the nuclear agreement with Iran, the UK sided with France, Germany and the EU to stress its importance. The conclusion is obvious: the UK would do well to seek a close partnership with the EU in foreign policy as well as defence.

There is as yet no arrangement for involving third countries in EU foreign policy. Certain countries, notably candidates for accession, subscribe to EU positions on a nearly systematic basis, but they don't really participate in EU decision-making. Moreover, this mechanism mostly concerns diplomatic statements and rarely the operational decisions on election observation, sanctions, civilian missions, or military operations. One can certainly imagine pragmatic solutions. The EU could allow the UK to maintain its seat on the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) and all preparatory bodies, but without voting rights. In this manner, London could contribute its views to the EU decision-making process from the start, instead of just being able to choose whether or not to subscribe to an EU decision at the end of the process. Such an arrangement would certainly benefit the quality of EU foreign policy.

A NEW “SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP”?

Arrangements to continue to involve the UK in CFSP and CSDP post-Brexit, and, of course, continued consultation through NATO, could amount to an EU-UK strategic partnership – a new “special relationship”, as it were.

Unfortunately, it is far from certain that all concerned will be sufficiently pragmatic to agree on workable solutions. On the EU side, no matter how unjustified, the fact is that there exists in many corners a certain revanchist attitude: the idea that the British deserve to be punished. They will have to beg for it, on their bare knees, was how a general from another Member State reacted when I first vented my idea to maintain a British seat in the FAC. Another general, not without reason, warned against repeating the experience of the now defunct Western European Union (WEU), which in the end had so many associate members, associate partners, and observers, that the actual full members lost their autonomy of decision-making.

A EU-UK partnership will have to be clearly defined, therefore. First of all, a Euro-British “special relationship” must be just that: special. It cannot be seen as a precedent for similar arrangements with any other state (which, for most Member States, means: with Turkey). That is easy to justify, if necessary: after Brexit, only one non-EU European state will have a permanent seat on the Security Council, so only that one state qualifies for this type of strategic partnership.

Second, as the UK has always strongly opposed free-riding, it cannot now do so itself. A seat in the FAC, even without voting rights, cannot come for free. The CFSP remains an intergovernmental area of EU policy: decisions require unanimity. In practice, Member States hardly ever vote in the FAC or its preparatory bodies, but either take decisions by consensus or don't decide at all. A seat without a vote thus actually comes very close to having a normal seat. Therefore, it would be but logical that in this scenario the UK would continue to abide by all Treaty stipulations on the CFSP, and continue to pay into the CFSP budget. An “opt-in” into the CFSP cannot be partial: it would have a very negative impact on decision-making if the UK subscribed to one EU common position and not to another. Having a seat implies subscribing to *all* CFSP decisions, and defending them in all other forums, just like the Member States.

This would send a strong signal to the other powers, such as Russia and China, that in diplomacy even after Brexit there will be but one Europe, which would be in the interest of all European states. The UK would also benefit because it would retain an important asset in its relationship with the US. And the EU Member States would benefit because if the UK remains fully involved in the CFSP, they need not fear the emergence of new parallel circuits that would by-pass the EU. Smaller Member States especially would not be keen on the UK trying to influence foreign policy from

the outside through bilateral relations with the other big European players, France and Germany. At the same time, it would be clear that if one leaves the Union, one cannot come back in on the cheap, so this would strengthen Brussels' hand in the Brexit negotiations.

Third, with regard to the CSDP, British involvement would only concern the EU operations and missions in which it would take part, and not capability development. Decisions on capability development will henceforth shift to PESCO, of which the UK is not a member, but it could contribute to individual projects.

CONCLUSION: PRAGMATISM VERSUS EMOTION

Both sides stand to gain from a pragmatic partnership. There's no point in debating who needs the other more. If we don't manage to create a EU-UK strategic partnership in foreign policy and defence, both sides will lose – that's what counts.

The biggest obstacle to such a partnership, however, are the British themselves. The British government, in *Foreign Policy, Defence and Development: A Future Partnership Paper* (September 2017), expressed a very positive view of CFSP and CSDP. One almost wonders why it would wish to leave. Unfortunately, and contrary to the British reputation for pragmatism, in the debate on the EU and Brexit ideology and emotions prevail. That renders it very difficult for the British political leadership to adopt a nuanced stance. Prime Minister Theresa May's electoral defeat in June 2017, against all expectations, demonstrated how volatile British domestic politics have become. This certainly doesn't make the Brexit negotiations any easier.

Not just in foreign and defence policy, but in many other policy areas there are very good reasons to maintain practical cooperation between the UK and the EU even after Brexit. Cooperation between police and intelligence services and justice departments in the fight against terrorism is an obvious example. The problem is that when every British ministry draws up the list of what it still wants to do with the EU after Brexit, and London then assembles all those lists, the result will look very much like membership. That will be politically unfeasible, even though every individual item on every list will be perfectly logical. This demonstrates the sheer absurdity of Brexit: after years of negotiating on how to leave, the UK will then have to start another round of negotiations on how to link back up with the EU in a whole range of areas.

If the general atmosphere in the negotiations were to turn permanently sour, the risk is that foreign and security policy will suffer as a consequence, and that none of the pragmatic solutions on offer will be implemented, to the detriment of both sides of the Channel. A "hard" Brexit is a definite possibility. At the same time, there still is a slight chance that in the end Brexit will not happen. Once the negotiations have been concluded and an agreement is on the table, it will most probably become very clear very quickly that this will not quite bring the golden future that the Brexiteers promised. By that time the economic impact of Brexit will have become clearer as well. For now, the impact is limited, because governments and companies are waiting to learn what the future status of the UK will be. Gradually, however, the flow of investments to the UK will slacken – nobody is going to embark on a major investment without knowing whether the UK will remain in the single market.

Perhaps, if offered the chance to vote again, British citizens will prefer to stay in the EU after all. Meanwhile, however, the EU itself will (hopefully!) have advanced and made new steps towards more integration. Even if the UK were to remain, which personally I strongly hope for, something, sadly, has been broken between the UK and the rest of the EU.

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ISBN 979-10-96843-14-5

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