

Navigating Through Unchartered Waters: Impact of 'Brexit' on the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy - Who Loses and Who Wins?

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Abstract

This paper assesses the possible consequences of 'Brexit' on the European Union's foreign, security and defence policy. This prospective exercise is focused on four major topics: the United Kingdom (UK) and European Union (EU) foreign policies; UK and United States (U.S.) relations; the future developments of Common Security and Defence Policy; and the new balance of power within the EU. At least for now, the outcome of this divorce will result in a negative sum game. Despite the consequences of the UK's departure on foreign and security domains being relatively marginal in contrast with other aspects of the UK-EU relationship, such as those of a financial and economic nature, it is crucial to anticipate the possible effects, most particularly the long-term ones produced by the new correlation of forces within the Union created by 'Brexit', which at this stage are difficult to fully assess.

Resumo

Navegando por Mares Desconhecidos: O Impacto do 'Brexit' na Política Externa e de Segurança da União Europeia – Quem Perde e Quem Ganha?

Este artigo avalia as possíveis consequências do 'Brexit' no domínio da política externa, segurança e defesa da União Europeia (UE). Este exercício prospetivo centra-se em quatro temas principais: as políticas externas do Reino Unido (RU) e da UE; as relações do RU com os Estados Unidos; os futuros desenvolvimentos na Política Comum de Segurança e Defesa; e o novo equilíbrio de poder no seio da UE. Pelo menos por agora, o resultado do divórcio será de soma negativa. Apesar das consequências da partida do RU serem no domínio dos assuntos exteriores e da segurança relativamente marginais, quando comparadas com outros domínios das relações UE-RU, nomeadamente as de natureza económica e financeira, é fundamental tentar antecipar os possíveis efeitos, em particular os de longo prazo resultantes da nova correlação de forças no seio da União criada pelo 'Brexit', os quais são neste momento difíceis de avaliar na sua plenitude.

Introduction

On 23 June 2016, United Kingdom (UK) voters chose to leave the European Union (EU). Irrespective of the agreements to be negotiated in due course between the UK and the EU in different domains, which will help us to understand the terms of the new relations, it is important to assess the repercussions of the turbulence caused by the referendum and to analyse the possible consequences of that same decision. Most of the debates about the UK's departure are centered on the economic and financial consequences and tend to disregard other important domains such as those of foreign security and defence. The impact of 'Brexit' on these realms has not attracted media headlines as have others, but this does not mean they are minor issues, especially when as pertains to long term consequences. This article is a tentative contribution to fill this gap. The exit from the Union of its second largest economy, a net contributor, most important military power (possessing nuclear armament), a G8 member and a United Nations (U.N.) Security Council Permanent member will have consequences that we will try to anticipate, based on the information available at the time this article was written (August 2016).

This prospective exercise is focused on four major topics: UK and EU foreign policies; UK and United States (U.S.) relations; future developments of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP); and the new balance of power within the Union and its geopolitical repercussions.

Some analysts argue that the consequences of the UK departure on foreign and security areas might be relatively marginal in contrast with other aspects of the UK-EU relationship (Whitman, 2016a). In the short term, we would tend to agree with them. At least for now, the outcome of this divorce will result in a negative sum game: both sides have clearly lost although not dramatically or catastrophically. In the long term, however, we cannot dismiss the geopolitical effects produced by the new correlation of forces within the Union created by 'Brexit', which at this stage, might be difficult to fully grasp.

'Brexit' and UK and European Union Foreign Policy

We will first examine the impact of 'Brexit' from the UK perspective and then that of the EU. In the case of the latter, we will focus on the possible consequences it might have on the EU's ambition to become a global player. Due to its importance, UK relations with the U.S. will be treated separately in the following section. At this stage, it is important to underline the qualitative difference that characterize relations between the UK, the EU and the U.S. While in the case of the latter, the UK played, and continues to play a follower's role with a subordinate status; in the case of the former, the UK enjoyed a rather different status of *primus inter pares*. Its voice was both heard and conditioned the strategic decisions of the Union; the UK was a

power broker with a veto power, capable of thwarting decisions that could negatively affect its national interests.

Many analysts tend to agree that with the withdrawal from the Union, the UK will become a less relevant diplomatic player and the EU will become weaker, with its defense and foreign policy seriously impaired (Bosoni, 2016; De Wall, 2016; Heisbourg, 2016; Howorth, 2015; Keohane, 2015; Knigge, 2016). There is a wide consensus among pundits that with the exit, the UK is going to lose influence and maneuvering capacity in the international arena. The UK's exit will not improve its position in the international system. The possession of nuclear weapons and its permanent membership status at the U.N. Security Council are foreign policy assets which speak for themselves and contribute to the prominent status London enjoys internationally. However, one cannot ignore the crucial contribution that the close relationship the UK has maintained and nurtured with the U.S. and Europe have given towards its international recognition. From now on, the UK's international relevance is going to be very much dependent on the interests and moods of the U.S. and, as stated before, it will hinge on a superior-inferior relationship, which is far from being an equal partner rapport, despite the so-called post-world war II "special relations" established between the U.S. and the UK.

With the withdrawal from the Union, the UK has lost the possibility to use its member state's status to enhance its international influence, and to leverage and amplify its national foreign and security policy objectives (Whitman, 2016a). For instance, due to 'Brexit', the decoupling of Britain from numerous EU-led peace and development initiatives and the renegotiation of dozens of trade deals, will leave London with a fraction of the influence it currently wields in Africa (De Waal, 2016).

CSDP was a very convenient arrangement for the UK; it was a multilateral framework that provided excellent opportunities for its foreign policy. It considerably augmented the UK's capabilities to intervene and advance its national interests, with fewer resources than if it had to act unilaterally. CSDP provided the UK with the best of both worlds. On the one hand, the UK enjoyed the freedom to act independently where it chose and to act collaboratively and leverage common resources where it preferred (Whitman, 2016a)¹; and, on the other hand, it facilitated the coordination of its bilateral and multilateral cooperation policies.

We wonder whether the UK has the means and skills to reach out on its own to certain regions of the globe as it used to do through the CSDP. This question is superbly answered in the Review of the Balance of Competences (thereinafter "the Review"), an audit carried out by the UK government on what the EU does and

1 The wording of the original text is in the present tense.

affects (positively or negatively) the UK². As “the Review” concluded, the EU’s wider geographical coverage permits the UK to reach countries that it could not reach alone. Quoting from the report: “The close alignment of UK and EU development objectives, and the EU’s perceived political neutrality and global influence, mean the EU can act as a multiplier for the UK’s policy priorities and influence” (H.M. Government, 2013, p. 6)³. The report is also candid about the possible consequences if the opposite happens. As underlined in the Foreign Policy Annex of “the Review”:

“It is...in the UK’s interests to work through the EU in foreign policy. The benefits come from: greater influence with non-EU powers, derived from Britain’s position as a leading EU country; the international weight of the EU’s single market, including its power to deliver commercially beneficial trade agreements; the reach and magnitude of EU’s financial instruments, including for development and economic partnerships; the range and versatility of the EU’s tools, as compared with those at the disposal of other international organizations; and the EU’s perceived political neutrality, which enables it to act in some cases where other countries or international organizations might not be able to” (Whitman, 2016b).

The EU’s strategies, such as the Neighborhood Policy and Eastern Partnership, the Sahel Strategy, and the Strategy for the Horn of Africa, among other frameworks of cooperation were also important forums for the UK’s intervention under a multi-lateral hat. Some European services have expertise and presence in parts of the Islamic world, notably North Africa and the Sahel region where the prospects of a UK standalone intervention were and still are very grim. With the ‘Brexit’ all these opportunities will be lost.

Therefore, the withdrawal from the EU will have a direct effect on UK’s international ambitions. Its willingness to be a strategic actor “with global reach and influence” as underlined in the *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015* (SDSR) will be seriously affected⁴. The EU was an important instrument to achieve that goal. After the departure, the UK would probably remain a significant military power, but it would certainly become a much-diminished diplomatic player (Keohane, 2016)⁵.

2 The Review is an official unbiased document that helps us understanding the consequences of ‘Brexit’. Interesting to note that many arguments put forward by the document coincide with ours.

3 This excerpt of the report was also mentioned by Whitman (2016b).

4 The National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015 was published by the British government on 23 November 2015. This document sets out UK’s National Security Strategy for the coming five years, and explains how it will be implemented.

5 The ‘Brexiters’ called for a back to the past, as if it was possible to re-awaken its old empire from the ashes, like a phoenix. Some ‘Brexit’ supporters argued with the need to reinvent the Commonwealth, and use it as a launch pad to regain the influence in international affairs

Other obvious consequences of 'Brexit' is the UK's self-exclusion from the EU decision-making process, thereby losing its ability to influence Brussels' policies on a wide range of issues, namely foreign policy in light of the key role that the UK plays. The capability to shape EU strategic decisions may likely wane as well as its ability to set the CSDP agenda. Furthermore, one ought to consider that 'Brexit' will not mean the UK's complete departure from the security landscape of Europe. Geography is not going to change. For economic and political reasons, the United Kingdom and the European Union will maintain close ties after 'Brexit'. From now on, whether the UK likes it or not it will have to continue cooperating with CSDP, but as an external partner. This might involve the negotiation of a special status for the UK within the European Union security project. But regardless of the status or arrangement the UK will negotiate within the CSDP framework, it is going to be worse than the one UK has enjoyed so far as member of the EU.

Looking at 'Brexit' from the EU's foreign, security and defence policy perspective, with particular emphasis on its geopolitical impact and global strategy, it is obvious that it will greatly damage the EU's already-struggling defense policy and, by extension, its foreign policies (Keohane, 2015). The net effect is likely to be a smaller and less ambitious Union (Renard, 2015).

It is evident that the exit of the most powerful member of the Union (militarily speaking), with the most prepared armed forces, the biggest spender in defence and owner of the most capable military expeditionary forces, in addition to the fact of possessing nuclear armament and membership of the U.N. Security Council, will reduce the EU's capacity to operate on a global scale. 'Brexit' is going to produce a negative effect on the EU's ambition to become a relevant player in international politics. In the years ahead only France may equal Britain's international presence; so far, Germany has been reluctant when it comes to adopting a prominent military role. With the 'Brexit' affair things may change.

The first immediate victim of 'Brexit' was the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS), presented on 28 June 2016 by Federica Mogherini, the High Representative, to the European Council, a few days after the referendum⁶. The plan was conceived with the UK⁷. Although the presentation to

UK had, once boosting the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and transforming it into an EU competitor is out of question. On this issue and the possibility of UK becoming a member of the EFTA, see Kitwood (2016).

6 The European Council's meeting communiqué refers to the EUGS only in a very short paragraph empty of meaning: "welcomes the presentation of the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy by the High Representative and invites the High Representative, the Commission and the Council to take the work forward" (European Council, 2016); nothing else was added, let alone a single remark or comment on the 'Brexit'.

7 It is important to note the dismissive behavior of UK representatives in the preparation of the EUGS illustrates the importance given by the British political and military circles to the subject.

the Council kept the initial wording, in a business as usual posture, everyone in the room was well aware that the document was already outdated before being submitted to their consideration. Without the UK, the CSDP's level of ambition in terms of Europe's role in the world has to be reassessed and significantly downgraded.

Looking east, 'Brexit' also raised questions about the EU's future relationship with Russia. Poland and the Baltic states also saw the UK as a critical partner on issues related to Russia, since London has fought for a tough European stance against Moscow, in response to its annexation of Crimea (Bosoni, 2016). With the UK's departure, we should not exclude a more pragmatic approach of the Union towards Russia leading to the lifting of sanctions. Even before the referendum, EU members such as Hungary, Greece and Slovakia had expressed their reservations about prolonging the sanctions, which affect their economies negatively. If, as a consequence of 'Brexit', sanctions are lifted Russia will be a winner.

'Brexit' and the UK Relations with the United States

The UK's engagement with CSDP has to be understood from the perspective of the UK and U.S.' special relationship⁸. The U.S. has been an active outsider of the European debate on a European identity; it has monitored, commented and interfered in the development of ESDP/CSDP as it has done in the majority of European joint endeavours irrespective of the matters at stake (Branco, 2000). Important segments of the American political elites consider the development and strengthening of CSDP as a geopolitical threat to U.S. interests. Washington has perceived it this way since its very inception: on the one hand, as an emergent centre of power that could compete with the U.S.' hegemonic global project and a challenge to its leadership; on the other, as an instrument that could endanger U.S. influence in Europe. The EU's defence integration has been one of the most disturbing themes for the American political elites. It could compete and challenge NATO's supremacy. In an article published by the Heritage Foundation, Luke Coffey (2013) voiced what many American policymakers think but do not dare to express out loud:

“...Developments within the CSDP threaten to undermine transatlantic security cooperation between the U.S. and its European partners. Far from improving the military capabilities of European countries, the CSDP decouples the U.S. from European secu-

The UK showed a permanent distance from the process and did not contribute to the debate. The assertiveness that usually characterizes the participation of UK representatives in EU decisions was this time replaced by detachment and lack of interest, always keeping a low profile in the “focal points” meetings. In addition to this, the UK did not promote any outreach event.

8 With the term “special relations”, we refer to the expression used by Winston Churchill in 1946 to describe the exceptionally close political, diplomatic, cultural, economic, military and historical relations between the UK and the U.S.

rity and will ultimately weaken the NATO alliance. U.S. policymakers should watch CSDP developments closely and discourage the EU from deepening defense integration. It is clear that an EU Army is the ultimate goal of the CSDP..."

These worries were very well articulated (and underlined) by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in the so-called "three-Ds" approach, establishing the limits permitted by the U.S. to European integration: against De-coupling from NATO, Duplicating NATO's mandate, and Discriminating against NATO members which are not in the EU.

Privately, British officials [were] reject[ing] the idea of those in France and Germany who would seek to manipulate the vanguard group to assert a European defense identity both decoupled from the United States and NATO and signaling an institutionalized separation between the transatlantic allies (Vinocur, 2003). Mirroring the U.S. concerns, the UK was equally fearful of the development of a European autonomous military capacity that could challenge NATO primacy.

The U.S. policy towards CSDP envisioned balancing a fine line between encouraging the EU to gain capabilities, while discouraging it from developing different foreign policy goals from the U.S. The essence of the U.S. concerns can be summed up as wanting the EU to become more self-reliant, but not wanting the EU to be able to challenge its global leadership. There was also an economic reason behind the evolution of the U.S. stand towards European defence: the so-called burden sharing. In pragmatic terms, the U.S. wanted more European involvement in defence issues without losing the political control of the events. This drives the debate into a swampy ground, because it is very difficult to strike a fair balance between level of contribution and distribution of power.

Throughout the years, the U.S. strategic goal of keeping CSDP at bay has not changed⁹, only tactics have altered, shifting from a clear opposition to support, modifying its posture according to the circumstances, always safeguarding that the European integration was not going to be strong enough to challenge U.S. global supremacy. The U.S. did everything it could to retain a permanent *droit de regard* on the developments of European security policy (Van Ham, 1997). This is where the UK enters, a EU prominent member state and a faithful ally to the U.S. From within the European institutional apparatus, the UK could assure that European defence integration would not go too far, and would be kept within certain – acceptable – boundaries, without stepping over any red line.

That is why the U.S. has always staunchly advocated Britain's EU membership. The UK withdrawal will undermine the long-term U.S. strategy, pursued by both

9 This behaviour also applies to the CSDP predecessor initiatives, such as the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

Democrat and Republican administrations over recent decades (Whitman, 2016b). Not surprisingly, President Barack Obama and other North American high dignitaries were vocal on the advantages of having the UK in the Union on several occasions. Obama's speech in England on the 22 April 2016 is quite illustrative¹⁰. As Knigge (2016) stated, "it ['Brexit'] represented a historic moment in a negative sense for American foreign policy". This is the reason why the U.S. might not be happy with the outcome of the referendum. Therefore, one might conclude that the U.S. may probably be added to the list of losers, at least for the time being. This issue leads to another key topic: once the UK's mission of putting European integration on the "right track" has lost its meaning, what could the UK offer the U.S. in terms of security and defence matters? (Howorth, 2016).

In the short term, the UK cooperation with the U.S. will neither cease nor suffer perceptible changes, namely in the intelligence domain¹¹, but in the medium and long term, London as an independent player is likely to have to push harder to demonstrate its continuing relevance [towards U.S.] (Inkster, 2016). The special relationship between the U.S. and the UK in the field of intelligence, nuclear cooperation and cutting-edge technology (such as stealth or submarine acoustics) would be compromised by Britain reverting to its pre-1975 status in Europe (Heisbourg, 2016)¹².

Finally, it is important to understand what could UK's role be in the future relationship between CSDP and NATO. The UK will be a non-player in such a crucial debate. The necessary recalibration of that relationship will take place with Paris, Berlin and Washington as active players and the UK as an increasingly bemused onlooker (Howorth, 2016).

10 Excerpt of President Obama's speech "...Let me be clear. Ultimately, this is something that the British voters have to decide for themselves. But as part of our special relationship, part of being friends is to be honest and to let you know what I think. And speaking honestly, the outcome of that decision is a matter of deep interest to the United States because it affects our prospects as well. The United States wants a strong United Kingdom as a partner. And the United Kingdom is at its best when it's helping to lead a strong Europe. It leverages UK power to be part of the European Union..." (White House, 2016).

11 President Barack Obama said that the U.K. vote to leave the European Union would not change the "special relationship" the country has with the United States (Reilly, 2016).

12 It is interesting to read President Obama's speech delivered in a press conference held at the Foreign Office, warning that the UK would be at the "back of the queue" in any trade deal with the U.S. if the country chose to leave the EU, as he made an emotional plea to Britons to vote for staying in. This mood helps us to extrapolate what could be the U.S. reaction in other domains, as the ones referred to above (The Guardian, 2016).

Tossing a Stick into ESDP/CSDP Spokes

In 1998 (3-4 December), Prime Minister Tony Blair met with President Jacques Chirac at Saint-Malo, in France, to discuss the future of European security and defence. The outcome of that meeting gave an enormous boost to European defence integration. Most of the issues agreed would be later politically institutionalized in what would be called European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), and in its successor the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), through the Lisbon Treaty.

As mentioned above, the U.S. has consistently pressured the UK to become a full and active participant in all EU policy areas, including defence and security (Howorth, 2016). That was the fundamental reason why Tony Blair went to Saint-Malo, after one decade of an attitude [towards ESDP] ranging from skeptical to hostile, and a preference for a strong NATO and a continuing engagement of the U.S. in and for Europe (Jorgensen, 2015).

With the UK at the CSDP's steering wheel, the U.S. was seated in the first row overseeing and monitoring the developments of European defence integration. In line with U.S. geopolitical objectives and acting as their *lunga manus* inside the EU institutional apparatus, the UK tried everything it could to hamper the development and further consolidation of the CSDP, obstructing any attempt to build a credible European military capacity which in the long term could challenge NATO and the U.S. role in European security. The UK mobilized all assets at hand to hinder the creation of a European autonomous military capacity. We must admit that the UK performed that task superlatively.

Despite the important role that the UK played in the foundation of the CSDP, the latter has never been a core component of the UK security and defence planning for the years to come. Britain ceased to invest politically and military in the ESDP in any substantial manner from the Iraq crisis of 2002–03 onwards (Heisbourg, 2016). This course of dissociation from the CSDP turned into a permanent feature of UK's action by favouring bilateral cooperation with European countries, namely with France and Germany, which has been strengthened and intensified in detriment of the multilateral cooperation within the CSDP framework. In 2010, UK signed the Lancaster House treaties with France, an important bilateral agreement in the field of conventional and nuclear defence¹³.

13 The document with 11 pages and 17 articles signed in London, on 2 November 2010, entered into force on the 1 July 2011, and covered vast areas of cooperation between British and French Armed Forces, such as defence and security cooperation, nuclear stockpile stewardship, operational matters and industry and armaments. The Treaty is a bilateral initiative and does not have any formal link with CSDP. It does neither use the Lisbon Treaty's Permanent Structured Cooperation facility, nor involve the European Defence Agency. On further information on the Treaty see "Treaty between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the French Republic for Defence and Security Co-operation", at

The UK was able to be at the same time in and out of the CSDP, according to its convenience. But the UK's divorce from CSDP became crystal clear in the 2015 SDSR. CSDP is mentioned only once in the document, to underline that the EU has a range of capabilities, which can be complementary to those of NATO, and stress that UK will continue to foster closer coordination and cooperation between the EU and other institutions, principally NATO. On the operational strand, the UK has given priority to its commitments with NATO in detriment of other international/regional organisations¹⁴. London has been a modest contributor to the CSDP military operations, preferring to participate in the EU's civilian missions, such as border observation and capacity-building, among others.

Using its veto prerogatives, the UK has blocked the concretion of strategic decisions whose implementation could deepen and widen European security integration, thus insuring that these developments were not going to undermine NATO. Along these lines, and voicing the U.S. position, the UK strongly opposed the French-German initiative to create an operational planning headquarters for the EU, separated from NATO, a project whose materialization would be a bone in the US Government's throat. That headquarters would give ESDP/CSDP the capability to exercise political control and strategic direction of the war.

One can mention many other examples of the UK's fierce opposition to further European security integration: the deepening and widening of a European defence industry, the development of permanent structured cooperation in defence (PSCD)¹⁵, or the enhancement of intelligence cooperation.

One of UK's goals was to avoid the development of a single European defence industry that could compete with that of the U.S. and impede this project from gaining momentum. This was valid for the U.S. and on a different scale also for the UK, considering the dimension and economic importance of its defence industry. The UK defence industry is the fifth in the world and London has the sixth largest military budget. According to the SDSR 2015:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/238153/8174.pdf.

14 According to SDSR 2015, paragraph 5.12: "...We are making our defence policy and plans international by design...We will place more emphasis on being able to operate alongside our allies, including in the UK-France Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force, and NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force which the UK will lead in 2017..."

15 The Lisbon Treaty introduced the possibility for certain EU countries to strengthen their cooperation in military matters by creating permanent structured cooperation (PSCD). Thus PSCD should enable participating Member States (PMS) to increase at a quicker pace than at present their national level of ambition in terms of deployability and sustainability. In other words PMS will be able to field more capabilities for the full range of operations in all frameworks in which they engage (Biscop and Coelmont, 2010).

“...the defence and security industries manufacture make a major contribution to UK's prosperity. In the UK, they employ over 215.000 people, predominantly highly skilled, and support a further 150.000. In 2014, these industries had a collective turnover of over £30 billion, including defence and security export orders worth £11.9 billion. Half of all firms in the sector expect to grow by at least 10% over the next year. The security sector, in particular, has grown on average five times faster than the rest of the UK economy since 2008...” (SDSR, para. 6.49).

These reasons explain, at least partially, why the UK obstructed, for instance, the increase of the European Defence Agency budget¹⁶.

To be credible, CSDP needs to be backed by a strong defence industrial and technological base, a fundamental premise for the development of a competitive industry capable of producing top quality military equipment at competitive prices. That requires economies of scale. The UK's participation in this joint venture was indispensable to provide those much needed economies of scale for the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) weapons production. Without the UK the plans for setting up the EDTIB needs must be reassessed and become less ambitious. The Defence industry was a domain where losses weighed more on the European side. 'Brexit' will have little or no impact on the UK's defence industry. However, it will undermine the emergence of a competitive and strategically autonomous EDTIB, which, in turn, risks undermining the future “security of supply” of defence equipment sourced from within Europe (Utley and Wilkinson, 2016); it will [also] increase the danger of EU states becoming irreversibly dependent on U.S. imports to meet their future national defence and security needs in core capability areas (Utley and Wilkinson, 2016).

Intelligence cooperation was another domain where UK obstructions were instrumental in blocking meaningful developments. Thanks to the UK, the Lisbon Treaty did not consider intelligence as an area of cooperation¹⁷ making it explicitly clear that Europe has no competence in matters of security¹⁸. These issues should be kept as national prerogatives. Naturally, the UK could keep the upper hand in intelligence matters, once it enjoyed competitive advantages provided by the special relations it holds with the U.S. in this field¹⁹.

16 On this issue see, for instance, Maulny (2016), “...Les Britanniques, qui refusent d'augmenter le budget de l'Agence, sont responsables de l'atonie de cette organisation...L'incapacité des trois grands Etats, la France, l'Allemagne et le Royaume-Uni à s'accorder sur un rôle ambitieux pour cette structure a fait le reste...”.

17 Article 3a, No 1: In accordance with Article 3b, competences not conferred upon the Union in the Treaties remain with the Member States.

18 Article 3a, No 2: National security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State.

19 We mean, the UK's close cooperation with the U.S. through the National Security Agency (NSA), one of the most important intelligence organisations of the United States, and the Government

'Brexit' will also have financial consequences. The CSDP budget will shrink due to lack the UK contributions, and it is not foreseeable that other Member States will be able to fill that gap. This will have an immediate and adverse impact on CSDP outreach activities. In practical terms, it means, for instance, less money for development programmes and missions in Africa²⁰.

Despite the UK's lack of commitment to the CSDP, the EU has, ironically, lost the best military capacities it had at its disposal. Without the UK, the EU is going to have less deterrent capabilities. The CSDP's ambition in terms of defence will suffer a significant blow.

With the UK out, doors are now open for new developments in the CSDP. The "spoiler" cannot mingle any longer, and new opportunities for speeding up defence integration may occur. As we will demonstrate later, this might have already started.

A New Balance of Power in the European Union and Its Repercussions

The New Balance of Power

As demonstrated above, 'Brexit' will change the UK and the EU status in the world and will contribute to the reshaping of European geopolitics. In fact, the UK's exit is going to unequivocally transform the existing balance of power within the Union. Complementary to the key aspects referred to earlier, the most important and dramatic consequence coming out of 'Brexit' is of a geopolitical nature: there will be a new balance of power in Europe and the EU will have to rethink its role in the world (Bosoni, 2016).

For better or for worse, the UK has played an important role in the pre-'Brexit' *status quo*. Functioning as a hinge between Germany and France, in the past the UK played a crucial role in the EU's internal balance of power. On the one hand, Germany relied on Britain's backing when it came to promoting free trade in the face of France's protectionist tendencies; on the other hand, France saw Britain not only as a key defense partner but also a potential counterweight to German influence (Bosoni, 2016). With the exit of the UK, one cannot discard the likelihood of an initiative led by the most powerful Member States, who will feel tempted to fill the power *vacuum* left by the UK and use it as an opportunity to grab control and take over positions in the EU establishment.

Seminatore (2016) proposes three post-'Brexit' possible forms of governance in the EU, all conceived around the emergence of a core group of Member States: an "hard executive" group originating in an imperfect duopoly, asymmetric and elastic,

Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), the most important British Intelligence organisation that works side by side with the Security Service (MI5) and the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6).

20 On the impact of the 'Brexit' in Africa, see, for instance, De Waal (2016).

comprising a two-member power center – a director and a legitimizer –, with different resources and capabilities, coordinating their actions and dividing influence (Germany and France); a “soft executive” encompassing a flexible unipolar center, predominantly German, acting on a permanent logic of compromise; and a “flexible executive” with a weak decision power or a power weakened by internal coalition games of flexible formats (Germany, France, Italy, Poland and Spain). From the political legitimacy perspective, the first form will be an oligarchy, the second an autocracy and the third a polyarchy.

On 25 June 2016, two days after the referendum was held, two meetings took place in Berlin. The first, gathering the six founding members of the EU, and the second between the foreign affairs ministers of France and Germany, with the purpose of examining the results of the British polls and to discuss the way ahead, excluding the other Member States of the Union from such a crucial debate.

The communiqué that came out of the German-French meeting underlines the responsibility that Germany and France reserve themselves to reinforce the solidarity and cohesion within the EU (bilateral meetings might not be the most appropriate way to reach that goal)²¹. It is clear in the Communiqué the enhanced role those two countries are determined to play from now on in the Union.

France and Germany emphasized the fact that Member States differ in their levels of ambition when it comes to the project of European integration: “While not stepping back from what we [Member States of the EU] have achieved, we have to find better ways of dealing with different levels of ambition so as to ensure that Europe delivers better on the expectations of all European citizens”²². The repetition throughout the text of terms like “flexibility” and “different levels of ambition” denounces the veiled willingness of those two Member States to reorganize the Union around a “core Europe”.

This would mean a different European Union comprising two groups of Member States with different levels of ambition participating at different speeds, an idea already voiced on several occasions in the past. In other words, it would mean a small group, led by Germany, dictating the rules to other Member States.

If Europe is inclined to follow the course suggested above, bearing in mind the visible signs already displayed by the strategic positioning of certain Member States – the creation of an informal core group with additional prerogatives in the decision-making process, sidelining the remaining countries – then Germany and France will have their positions enhanced. The small member states who do not

21 Ayrault and Steinmeier (2016). Thereinafter the Communiqué, page 1: “...France and Germany recognise their responsibility to reinforce solidarity and cohesion within the European Union...”.

22 Communiqué, page 1.

have the possibility to join that core group/directorate will augment the list of losers. At this stage we cannot assess the dimension of the loss. This will depend on how far their exclusion from strategic decisions will go, especially those affecting – either directly or indirectly – their vital interests.

In this new centripetal development, regardless of the formality/informality it may assume, the EU as a whole will also be a loser. It will be difficult for the heads of State and Government of certain Member States to explain to their constituencies why they remain in an association where their voices will not be heard (or heard in a quieter tone) and their national interests not duly taken into account. If the situation becomes harsher to the smaller countries, the temptation to follow the UK's example may increase, thus leading to the possible disintegration of the EU or, alternatively, to a cooperative formula considerably different from the one that exists today.

The weakening of the EU will open up space for the affirmation of sub-regional arrangements, such as the Weimar²³ and the Visegrad²⁴ groups. In a very short period of time several meetings of these groups have taken place. The first took place in July, when the Visegrad Group Member States met to assess the referendum's impact on the four countries that comprise that association and to discuss proposals for EU restructuring²⁵. Rather than further integration, those countries supported a more intergovernmental European Union and are wary of further integration. One still has to understand if that concern includes the foreign and defence and security domains.

It is also important to note the meaning of the intense diplomatic activity carried out by German Chancellor Angela Merkel holding successive meetings with the heads of many EU Members States²⁶, to coordinate ahead of the EU summit to be held in Bratislava (16 September) – the first since the British referendum –, in order to make it a display of European unity. That activity suggests a practice of “soft executive” form of governance.

The events that took place after ‘Brexit’ are strong indicators of the disruption occurring at the EU's power base, suggesting that the formation of a Directorate of nations is on the way and in full swing. Using Seminatore's taxonomy, one could

23 France, Germany and Poland.

24 Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

25 In a similar vein, the Greek Prime Minister Alexi Tsipras invited six Southern European countries for a meeting in early September, just days before the meetings of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU to be held in Bratislava, also with the purpose of evaluating the impact of ‘Brexit’ on these countries.

26 Since 21 August, Chancellor Angela Merkel has met with the leaders of France, Italy, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary.

say that power re-alignments in the EU suggest a movement towards either the first or the second form of governance, with an inclination to the second.

The Consequences of the New Balance of Power on EU Defence and Security

With a clarification on the re-alignment of forces in the EU, one is in a better condition to anticipate the consequences it may have on the European security and defence domains. Germany and France proposed in the two peers meeting – a rehearsal of a “new informal setting” framework? – held on 25 June 2016, a “European Security Compact”, i.e. a pack of proposals encompassing all aspects of security and defence, many of them obstructed in the past by the UK. We will analyse the ones that merit a closer look. It is crucial to grasp what the implications of that “course of action” could be on EU security and defence.

Those two Member States proposed that the EU start conducting regular reviews of its strategic environment, supported by an independent situation assessment capability, with production of strategic and intelligence analysis approved at European level²⁷, and, in the medium term, to work towards a more integrated approach for EU internal security, based on the creation of a European platform for intelligence cooperation, fully respecting national prerogatives and using the current frameworks²⁸.

The Communiqué also proposed the setting up of a permanent civil-military chain of command with the justification that the EU needs to plan and conduct civil and military operations more effectively²⁹. In addition to this, the document also included a proposal to use a common fund for the employment of EU high-readiness forces; opened the door to willing states to establish permanent structured cooperation in defence initiatives or to push ahead to launch operations in a flexible manner; considered, if needed, the possibility of establishing standing maritime forces or acquiring EU-owned capabilities in other key areas³⁰. The Communiqué also dedicated considerable attention to the security of the Union's external border, stating that it is no longer exclusively a national task but a common responsibility, proposing the creation of a multinational border and coast guard³¹.

27 Communiqué, page 4.

28 Communiqué, page 5.

29 Communiqué, page 4.

30 Compact, page 4. There are other proposals whose full reach we cannot at this stage grasp, such as the establishment of a European semester on defence capabilities. Through this process, the EU will support efforts by Member States by ensuring the coherence of defence and capability-building processes and encourage Member States to discuss the priorities of their respective military spending plans.

31 Communiqué, page 6. Those proposals, namely the increase of intelligence sharing, the creation of a multinational border and coast guard, and the joint research and investment in com-

The Communiqué also highlights the EU's ambition to become an independent and global actor, based upon its ability to leverage a unique array of expertise and tools, both civilian and military; security is also considered an element of the global ambition of the European project³². The document adds that the European Union Global Strategy is a first step in that direction, without making any reference to the new conditions arising from the UK retreat, i.e. a weaker EU with less resources and means to implement such an ambitious strategy. Last but by no means least, the document forgets to mention NATO and the transatlantic relation.

The mere enunciation by Germany and France of the willingness to implement the above set of proposals is a clear evidence of U.S.'s reduced influence and leverage on EU security and defence matters in the post-'Brexit' era. The "European Security Compact" unmistakably indicates Berlin and Paris' intention to deepen and accelerate European security and defence integration. These ventures would be impossible with the UK in the Union.

How the new relation of force is going to work is a question mark, particularly in light of France's willingness to coexist and accommodate itself with German leadership. It is still too soon to say how Germany will assert itself in the future, in the international affairs arena and in the security and defence realm. Germany's interventions in the post-Cold War period have been very selective, acting in a decisive manner when their national interests were at stake, such as its conduct during the Yugoslav crisis has shown. Berlin's pressure on other EU Member States imposing the premature recognition of Croatia and Slovenia's independence led to a civil war with well-known results and illustrates Germany's determination.

One still does not have a clear picture of Germany's intentions. For instance, it is crucial to understand the extent of Germany's willingness to build an EU Army, regardless of the impact it can have on transatlantic relations. The upcoming publication of a Defense White Paper, a strategy document setting out guidelines for German defense policy, will certainly provide important elements to respond to this question. It is decisive to understand to what extent German political and economic elites believe that Berlin has already paid for its past errors and it is now time to claim an international status and role more in line and compatible with its economic relevance.

mon defense projects were also agreed by the Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi during a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande, on 22 August.

32 "...Providing security for Europe as well as contributing to peace and stability globally is at the heart of the European project...we see the EU as a key power in its neighbourhood but also as an actor for peace and stability with global reach..."

The evolution of the German defence budget in the near future will certainly also provide indications of its intentions and elements to figure out what could be a possible answer to our present questions. Important to include in this reflection are the various statements of the German president and foreign and defense ministers saying that Germany should assume more responsibilities for international security, implying that Berlin should contribute more militarily, as well as in other ways (Keohane, 2016).

It is interesting to note in the German Minister of Defence Ursula von der Leyen's speech at the Munich Security Conference, in 2015, where she expands on the concept of "Leadership from the Centre", a glimpse of an elegant construct on how Germany should lead and shoulder greater responsibility in Europe and in international politics, very much in line with the "soft executive" form of governance enunciated by Seminare. She argues that a stronger German military contribution to European defense will remain constrained by domestic politics and should therefore not unduly raise the hopes or fears of allies. However, we have to wait and see what the German elites are going to do in order to persuade their constituencies of the need of a greater military role for Germany³³.

Conclusion

Based on the arguments extensively discussed throughout this paper, one can conclude that the impact of 'Brexit' on Foreign and Security Policy of the Union was responsible for the emergence, in the short term, of one potential winner (Germany), eventually two (Germany and France), and one winner in the long term (Germany). For the remaining players (the UK, the EU, the U.S. and smaller EU Member States) 'Brexit' represented a negative-sum game.

'Brexit' is not going to improve UK's position in the international system and the UK will most likely become a less relevant diplomatic player; it is going to lose influence and maneuvering space in the international arena; it will lose the possibility to use its member state's status to enhance its international influence; it can no longer use CSDP to promote its national interests; and the goal of becoming a strategic actor with global reach and influence will be seriously affected. Moreover, the departure of the UK is not going to improve its relations with the U.S. The leverage and influence exerted by the UK in the EU decision-making is gone, thereby reduc-

33 On this issue, it is important to read the speech of the Defence Minister Ursula Leyen to the 2015 Munich Security Conference where this problem is identified: "...Thus, *we need to tirelessly communicate and explain* throughout Germany that the commitment to unity, justice and freedom today is no longer a purely domestic, national affair. And *we need to explain* that the grueling, often painful and hard struggle in defense of human rights, democracy and freedom worldwide is not a duty for others to fulfil, but equally concerns us Germans..." Author's italics.

ing U.S. capability to influence the evolution of CSDP. From this perspective, one could argue that the U.S. is also a potential loser.

'Brexit' is not going to improve EU's internal and external situation either. The Union will most probably evolve into a smaller and less ambitious organisation. 'Brexit' is going to produce a negative effect on the EU's aspirations to become a relevant player in international politics. The EU will likely become a weaker actor in the international arena; the first immediate victim of 'Brexit' was the EUGS. Without the UK, CSDP will suffer a significant blow and its level of ambition in terms of Europe's role in the world has to be reassessed and significantly downgraded; the EU is going to have less deterrent capabilities. In the domain of the defence industry and technology, the EU seems to lose considerably more than the UK.

When it comes to developments in the EU's power base and a new internal realignment of positions, the possible creation of an informal core group of states with additional prerogatives in the decision-making process, sidelining the remaining countries, may represent an enhancement of German and French positions, making them the winners. German assertiveness may transform the current "soft executive" into a "hard executive" form of governance, making it also a winner in the long term. A visible consequence of this centripetal movement created by the new balance and correlation of forces within the Union is the indication of Berlin and Paris' intention to deepen and accelerate European security and defence integration, something impossible to occur with the UK in the Union.

The smaller nations who do not have the possibility of joining that core group/directorate group will increase the list of losers. The EU project as a whole might also be a loser, if challenged by sub-regional arrangements inspired by Brexit, regardless of the formality/informality they may assume.

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