Brexit has given an impetus to reshape Europe's foreign, security and defence policies

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As part of the ESRC-funded UK in a Changing Europe initiative, **Benjamin Kienzle** *and* **Inez von Weitershausen** *created* **The Brexit Reader on Security & Defence***, which provides academics, students and practitioners with a useful guide to the academic literature on the foreign, security, and defence implications of the UK's decision to leave the EU.*

Foreign policy, security or defence are traditionally considered matters of 'high politics', i.e. areas over which governments are particularly keen to maintain control. In the context of European integration, however, the heads of state and governments of EU member states have agreed on a rather wide range of political and legal instruments to facilitate coordination and cooperation in these bastions of national sovereignty. Despite the comparatively low degree of institutionalisation which characterises these policy realms, and even though national governments have demonstrated time and again that they find it difficult to give up the driver's seat when it comes to strategic foreign policy decisions, numerous initiatives have demonstrated that EU member states frequently do see an added value in a joint approach to international politics.
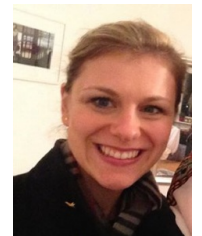
While a rather large body of academic literature has analysed the preconditions for and various forms of cooperation in foreign, security or defence policies in Europe, Brexit has given new impetus to such enquiries and shifted attention to the relevant frameworks, including the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) and Permanent Structured Cooperation. As the literature on these and other foreign, security and defense-related aspects is rather vast, Dr. Benjamin Kienzle and Dr. Inez von Weitershausen created an online compendium to provide researchers and practitioners with an overview of academic publications. Focusing on six key areas, namely

- strategy,
- policy-making,
- British contributions to EU policies,
- Europeanisation,
- EU-NATO relations, and
- developments that occur in the context of Brexit,

the *Reader* is designed to enable an informed and fact-based discussion about the potential and anticipated consequences of the UK's decision to leave the European Union in the area of security and defence.

Key Findings

Strategy-related work discusses to what extent the EU as a whole possesses a 'grand strategy' and in how far the convergence of national strategic thinking has allowed for the emergence of a common European strategic culture. As the majority of studies conclude that there is some degree of convergence, but only few argue that there exists a strategic culture that is shared across member states as such, the question arises whether in strategic terms the UK is closer to other actors and how this will be reflected in its policy priorities post Brexit. Yet, in general terms, the literature on strategy reveals fairly little interaction between British and EU strategic thinking, in terms of both the existence and analysis of the various strategic approaches to foreign, security and defence policy.

Concerning policy-making, the *Reader* reveals that while there is widespread agreement in the literature that the UK, together with France and Germany, has played a key role in the making of European foreign, security, and defence policies, systemic analyses on the role of each of these EU member states individually remain relatively scarce. Rather, key debates in the literature focus on how power influences cooperation among the 'Big Three', the roles of institutions in the policy-making process, and the development of informal norms and rules. As the literature furthermore suggests, the multi-layered and often cumbersome policy-making process in the EU could become even more complex as an important external voice is added to the existing decision-making process after Brexit. Finally, insights into the central role of informal policy-making arrangements suggest that once the UK leaves the formal structures of the EU after Brexit, these less-apparent efforts to divide labour and achieve sustainable outcomes could indeed remain a crucial feature of foreign, security, and defence cooperation in Europe and even grow in importance over time.

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The *Reader* also sheds light on the UK's contributions to EU policies in terms of political support and capabilities, showing that parts of the literature suggest that Britain has been of considerable value for EU foreign, security, and defence cooperation. Stressing London's support for the enlargement of the EU, initiatives to bring Europe closer to NATO, and attempts to further the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy, often in cooperation with France, these accounts contrast, however, with insights regarding the UK's minimal or even negative influence on the CSDP and the CFSP more broadly. In particular British attempts to block permanent military structures in the EU are used as a prime example in this regard. Meanwhile, a major gap in the literature on British contributions is identified with regard to the lack of systematic analyses of capabilities in terms of personnel, military hardware, logistics or intelligence – a fact which arguably reflects the low degree of European cooperation in this area.

A review of the phenomenon of Europeanisation reveals that the penetration of British systems of governance through the dual processes of 'uploading' and 'downloading' has been addressed in numerous ways. While some scholars stress the converging policy contents as well as institutional changes which are meant to increase the UK's relationship with and its influence in the EU, others underline that Whitehall has maintained an overall sceptical attitude and sought to resist the influence of EU foreign, security, defence policies on UK positions and activities. Among the reasons suggested for the apprehension of parts of Britain's foreign policy elites are geopolitical considerations, institutional blockages, and the Euroscepticsm that characterises in particular the older population. Against this background, whether and how Europeanisation will continue after Brexit is questionable, as the tools, forums, and mechanisms which so far have been crucial are likely to undergo a number of changes once the UK is no longer a regular member of the EU.

In terms of EU-NATO cooperation, the literature analysed in the *Reader* suggests that, in line with its self-perception

as a 'transatlantic bridge', the UK has traditionally been one of the staunchest supporters of a close relationship with NATO, whereas other member states pushed envisioned the EU as the primary actor in providing military security in Europe. Moreover, the scholarly literature has underlined the successful cooperation between NATO and EU institutions within the C/ESDP framework, highlighting in particular the 2002 'Berlin Plus agreements'[1], and relations at the political and strategic level. Despite these cooperation and coordination mechanisms, some authors see the relationship between between the EU and NATO mainly in terms of competition. These voices tend to stress that C/ESDP and NATO cover the same political areas and compete for political space, influence, and resources. As the literature furthermore suggests that there is still a subliminal conflict between 'Atlanticist' countries, which give preference to NATO and transatlantic relations, and 'Europeanist' countries, which prefer an independent EU as a European security actor, a future key question is if Brexit will strengthen the coordination or the competition between NATO and the EU.

As consensus on the security and defence implications of Brexit has yet to emerge, many relevant peer-reviewed journals have not yet published research articles on the topic. Exceptions include journals with a clear policy focus such as *International Affairs*, *Survival*, and the *RUSI Journal*. These articles either argue that Brexit will not have major negative security and defence repercussions, especially in the short term, or they express scepticism about any net security benefit for either Britain or the EU after Brexit. A number of studies have also developed scenarios and possible steps forward. Contextualising recent developments, they tend to share the assumption that continued cooperation between the UK, the EU and specific member states is the best way to preserve both national and European interests. Overall, however, this kind of literature is still in its infancy and it is difficult to predict how it will develop during the next couple of months and years.

In general, the *Reader* finds that the academic literature does not offer a coherent picture of the UK's relationship with and contribution to the EU, and therefore does not allow for straight-forward responses regarding the security and defence implications of Brexit. At the same time, it appears, however, that informal groups and decision-making processes, the intricate relationship between NATO, the EU, and their member states, and the future of transatlantic relations will emerge as particularly interesting avenues for future research.

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[1] Berlin Plus is essentially about the use of existing NATO assets by the EU if NATO as a whole does not get involved. In practical terms, however, NATO military assets have rarely been used by the EU so far as especially the unresolved conflict between Cyprus (an EU but not a NATO member) and Turkey (a NATO but not an EU member) remains a major obstacle in this regard.

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