



The University of Edinburgh

The UK and European Security after Brexit

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The Brexit 'process'

- UK voted 51.9% to leave EU on 23 June 2016 and Brexit mandate confirmed by Theresa May's government
- Little mention of security and defence in campaign, but clear consequences from loss of major security actor
- Both sides committed to deep collaboration in foreign and security, but disagree on the terms
- With Withdrawal Agreement (and PD) past main hurdle, now is a good time to be talking about security and defence





No Big Deal?

- Primacy of NATO as guarantor of European security
- Commonality of interests between the UK and the EU27
- EU security and defence an intergovernmental policy area
- Security questions are at the margins of politics

YOUR POUND COULD BE WORTH 20% LESS IF WE LEFT EUROPE
THAT MEANS...

Petrol 	Home gadgets 	Weekly shopping 	Holidays 
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COST MORE

Vote TO LEAVE the European Union

Food in the UK is more expensive than it could be as a direct result of being in the European Union (EU)

BEEF  Costs 36% more due to EU policies	TURKEY  Costs 22% more due to EU policies	LAMB  Costs 11% more due to EU policies	WHEAT  Costs 15% more due to EU policies	CHICKEN  Costs 22% more due to EU policies	POTATOES  Costs 10% more due to EU policies
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Not so fast...

Institutions matter!



- Membership provides necessary forums for coordination, and EU has incentives to exclude UK (moral hazard, internal consistency)
- UK would also exclude itself if it means becoming a 'rule taker'
- Removal of UK veto presages potential move away from intergovernmentalism on EU side
- NATO's membership (and function) affects its suitability for a number of tasks (European, civilian, internal security)



Not so fast...

Politics matters!

- Security and defence is no-longer ‘under the radar’ – top of the EU’s agenda and the subject of much coverage in the UK (“European Army”)
- Arguments over Brexit risk spilling over into other forums
- Both sides have strong incentives to show they are pursuing divergence (**Global Britain** and **Strategic Autonomy**)
- Neither discourse honestly conveys the limitations on both sides...





Paradoxes of Brexit

- The UK has a renewed interest in EU security and defence just as it is leaving
- It is also looking to go 'global' when the international community is recommending the opposite
- EU is pursuing strategic autonomy as one of its major strategic actors is leaving the club
- Global situation augurs for greater intra-European collaboration as UK-EU solidarity is lowest

The year ahead

- Security and defence collaboration will be marked by greater differentiation (bilateralism, minilateralism, EU+UK, NATO)
- Compatibilities will smooth some of the institutional issues (e.g. PESCO projects may enhance NATO contributions)
- But big questions remain over:
 - I. default format for UK engagement
 - II. suitability of NATO format
 - III. viability of EU initiatives
 - IV. evolution of Macron's Intervention Initiative
- Events in Britain might allow for more flexibility given Johnson's **credibility as a eurosceptic** and **sizable majority**





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