

German-UK defence cooperation in Brexit times: Between multilateralism and new bilateralism

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Research departure



Is new bilateralism a path the UK would wish to invest in?

2017

post-no-deal



Is it a path Germany would find acceptable and viable?

development

UK-EU relation



Repercussions for future UK-GER defence relations

silent alliance no more?

EU defence

underdeveloped relationship

- silent alliance
- differing strategic cultures

Brexit pressure

- UK incentives to diversify and build bilateral links
- German balancing act and leadership role – multilateralism trap

understudied relationship

- most attention to UK-USA, UK-FR, other platforms
- defence discussion void

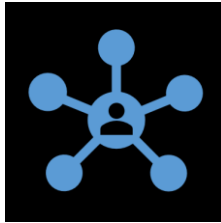
pivotal to UK-EU defence relations

- determines not only bilateral defence link, but impacts heavily on UK-EU defence relationship

Why search for new bilateralism here

New bilateralism

While not mutually exclusive with mini or multilateralism, its development would serve to undermine EU defence cooperation effort



discussed option for UK

Krotz & Schild, 2018; Major, 2018; Martill & Sus, n.d.; Sartori, Marrone, & Nones, 2018



sought indices

Kiatpongsan (2011); Mattelaer (2019), and Smith and Tsatsas (2002)

New actors

in bilateral defence relations

New instruments

for bilateral defence relations

New agenda

in bilateral defence relations

Increased prominence

of security in bilateral relations

Analysis



if new bilateralism is a viable option for UK-German defence relations we expect Brexit pressure to deliver progress (marked by the presence of multiple indicators) in **THREE AREAS:**



official interaction



military cooperation



defence industrial cooperation

Official interaction

- first indications of re-investment prior to 2015 first indications (UK review, increased Germany status and vice versa)
- Joint Vision Statement under preparation
- momentum building until Brexit referendum
-
- post-Brexit referendum
- Cold-shoulder until 10/2018 JVS signature
- Since JVS all quiet on the Western front
-
- New actors: NO, apart from Scottish rapprochement with Germany economically and defense industries reaching out for joint ventures (Rhein..)
- New agendas: NO, not even like Aachen treaty, where explicit coordination is extended to new fields (export coord.)
- New instruments: YES - JVS, committees
- New increased prominence: YES - to the extent of Brexit context (so absolutely yes, but relatively no)
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Official interactions

- first indications of re-investment **prior to 2015**
 - UK review, increased Germany status and vice versa
 - **JointVision Statement** under preparation
 - momentum building until Brexit referendum
 - post-Brexit referendum
 - Cold-shoulder until 10/2018 JVS signature
 - since JVS all quiet on the Western front
 - visits less frequent
- **New actors: NO**
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 - **New agendas: NO**
 - unlike Aachen treaty, where explicit coordination is extended to new fields (export coordination)
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 - JVS, committees
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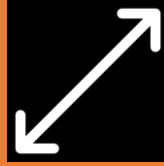
Military cooperation

- prior - passive long -term and traditional BFG, **largest stationed presence abroad**
 - but still behind military cooperation with FR or other bilateral (US) units
 - active lagging behind - strategic culture
 - prior to referendum - decision to withdraw by 2020
 - Post-Brexit referendum
 - Until 2018 same passivity
 - **Reversal of withdrawal 2018**, MoD minister tied it as a result of Brexit - to keep int. presence
 - hindered by poor German operability and willingness
 - multilateral programs much more viable than bilateral
- **New actors: NO**
 - not in any format, (FNC)
 - **New agendas: NO**
 - no new joint units or excercises
 - **New instruments: NO**
 - apart from JVS no active convergence
 - **New increased prominence: NO**
 - seemingly during 2018, but declaratory only
 - **withdrawal would signal full abandonment of deeper bilateral defence relations**

Defence industrial cooperation

- revealing field, joint projects tie to joint procurement and integration displays priorities
 - private ownership secondary
 - prior to Brexit referendum, mostly multilateral projects or with FR (e.g. OCCAR)
 - post-referendum UK direct search for bilateral projects and arrangements for EADS, MBDA
 - ambitions to "go it alone"
 - Rheinmetal (KMW) acquisition of BAE Land Systems key market move
 - post-2018 renewed ambition to join EU projects –locked out at the moment (MGCS, FCAS,)
- **New actors: YES**
 - While private entities, still subject to government approval and clearly enter the debate with actorness
 - **New agendas: NO**
 - unlike Aachen treaty, where explicit coordination on arms exports is bilaterally present with France (and follow-up)
 - **New instruments: YES**
 - JVS does foresee a platform for joint defence projects
 - **New increased prominence: YES**
 - Due to the intra-EU debate and UK's crucial role – defence industrial and R&D role gained bilateral prominence

Conclusion



reversal of trend toward new bilateralism in defence relations



from 2018 Germany not entertaining intensifying relations other than on the UK-EU platform

most EU projects have so far shut the UK out however, and significantly so



UK veered from seeking bilateral alternatives, including with Germany, to intensified UK-EU projects inclusion, however

UK exclusion has led to a re-opening of bilateral efforts these efforts do not lead toward Germany



pending Brexit result – future new bilateralism between UK-Germany in defence is not supported by evidence

as intensification of bilateral defence relations had not materialised during the Brexit process and Germany has opted to invest heavily in multilateral EU projects