

Germany and the Visegrad countries within the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy: promising partners after Brexit?

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INTRODUCTION

- **Brexit** is expected to have large implications for European security
- The significance of **German leadership** will rise X a lot of reluctance → importance of international institutions, int. cooperation and **partnerships**
- Partnership between **Germany and V4 countries** within CSDP
 - Is it viable vis-à-vis Brexit?
 - Has the defence cooperation between Germany and V4 countries intensified?
- V4 countries as **supportive partners** for Germany?
 - Role of path-dependency
 - A way to balance France
 - Central Europe's pivot to Germany (interrupted by the migration crisis)
- **Defence** as the area where V4 countries most visible as a united group
- Rise of **bilateral defence relations**

MINILATERALISM AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- Minilateralism as a “trendy” mode of international cooperation
 - Aims to “bring to the table the **smallest possible number** of countries needed to have the **largest possible impact** on solving a particular problem” (Naim 2009)
 - A “process of a small group of interested parties working together ... in tackling **subjects deemed too complicated to be addressed appropriately at the multilateral level**” (Moret 2016)
 - Based on “**purpose-built partnerships**” (Patrick 2015)
 - “Functional multilateralism” where “**coalitions of the willing and relevant**” aim to address a certain part of governance as a **first step in solving a larger problem** (Haass 2010)
- **CSDP** offering space for minilateral initiatives (EU battlegroups, “pooling and sharing”, PESCO, ...)
- Can recent **strengthening of bilateral defence relations** between Germany and some V4 countries go beyond bilateralism?

GERMANY AND V4 COUNTRIES WITHIN THE CSDP:

1) EU BATTLEGROUPS

- Examples of **minilateral formations in CSDP** – cooperation within established groups of states under the leadership of a “framework nation”
- Fruitful ground for a **concurrent engagement of Germany and V4 countries**
 - **BG I-2010** (Poland, Germany, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia)
 - **German-Czech-Austrian BG II-2012** (Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Croatia, North Macedonia, Ireland)
 - **Weimar BG I-2013** (Germany, Poland, France)
 - **German-Czech-Austrian BG II-2016** (Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands)
 - **German-Czech-Austrian BG II-2020** (Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands, Sweden)
- + German operational headquarters for the Czech-Slovak BG II-2009
- + Appreciation of the V4 BG (I-2016, II-2019) by Germany

2) PESCO

- Typical **purpose-built, output-oriented partnerships**
- Established by *“those Member States whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions”* (Lisbon Treaty, 42(6))
- **Germany and France** – main drivers X differing visions

PESCO projects led by Germany with a participation of V4 countries

PESCO projects	CR	Hu	Po	SI
European Union Training Mission Competence Centre	X			
EUFOR Crisis Response Operation Core				
European Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems	X			
European Medical Command	X			X
Network of logistic Hubs in Europe and support to Operations		X	X	X
Geo-meteorological and Oceanographic Support Coordination Element				

3) DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION

- German-V4 Group defence industrial cooperation – little viable
- **POLAND:** major obstacle of a Germany-V4 cooperation; resisting EU strategic autonomy, close ties to the US → unintegrated into European defence industry; disputes over national policies
- **HUNGARY:** increasingly linked to Germany; a way to overcome German reservations over internal policy matters?
- **CZECH REPUBLIC:** interconnected economies suggesting high feasibility in defence projects X not materialized so far, though some promising departures
- **SLOVAKIA:** engagement with Germany non-existent despite all rhetoric; partnership with the CR as the most viable link in minilateral cooperation
- Ongoing bilateral cooperation
- Nascent minilateral cooperation as an upgrade of existing bilateral ties (but only very specific and underdeveloped)

IMPLICATIONS OF BREXIT FOR GERMANY-V4 DEFENCE COOPERATION

- Brexit is expected to shift the **balance of power** in the EU → strengthening of **German leadership**
- For V4 countries, Brexit means both...
 - ... new **challenges**
 - ... new **opportunities**
- The position of V4 countries will depend on a proper rearrangement of their **relationships with Germany** and on strengthening their pro-European attitudes
- The potential for cooperation far greater than in the economic field
- **Security and defence policy** offer a lot of opportunities to strengthen mutual relations
- V4 countries extend the area of EU's security to the East – much appreciated by Germany

CONCLUSION

- The record of utilizing the minilateral form of cooperation among Germany and V4 countries in CSDP is **mixed**
 - **1) EU battlegroups** – cooperation on several occasions X no sign of an intensification since the in/out referendum
 - **2) PESCO** – V4 countries present in 4 German-led projects → a viable platform for minilateral cooperation
 - **3) Defence industrial cooperation** – yes, but bilateral approaches perceived to be more effective than minilateral cooperation
- Generally, Brexit accelerated European defence cooperation in many ways, BUT
 - CSDP has **not** turned out to be **the primary platform** for V4 countries to cultivate minilateral cooperation – when compared to NATO (FNC)
 - Other **competing minilateral formats** of cooperation (e.g. CEDC)
- Prevailing preference of **bilateral ties**
- Minilateral cooperation in a **nascent phase**

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