UK-EU foreign policy relations: Transiting from internal player to external contestation?

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Introduction

The 2016 referendum on its membership of the European Union has triggered a recalibration of the UK's relationship with Europe. Although the UK's formal departure from the EU is currently deferred, the Brexit process of negotiating departure has witnessed a transition in the foreign policy of a major European state.

Significant attention has been given to analysing the UK's EU referendum campaign, analysing public opinion and to commentary on the domestic political dislocation that has become the hallmark of Brexit. Rather less attention has been paid to the Brexit impact on the role and orientation of the UK's European (foreign) policy and more broadly its role in international relations. The relevance of considering the EU-UK relationship in terms of a European foreign policy is that it allows for the exploration continuity and change as the UK transitions from an EU insider to an EU outsider.

This paper is an attempt to frame some questions to inform examination of an evolving EU-UK relationship. Its central motif is that the UK is transitioning from an EU member state *insider* to an EU *outsider* or third country. Although the final destination of the future EU-UK relationship is yet to be determined, the paper illustrates where there are emergent practices in the relationship between the EU and the UK which anticipate a new insider-outsider relationship.

Defining UK European (foreign) policy

The UK's relationship with the EU has been characterised as the UK's European foreign policy.[1] And it has been analysed as a component of the UK's broader European diplomatic strategy which embraces the UK's approach to bilateral and multilateral diplomacy (including the EU, NATO and other regional organisations) in Europe.[2] The EU component of the UK's European foreign policy encompasses the

strategies and resources that the UK has devoted to a set of broad objectives pursued through the EU's institutions and in association with the other member states.

The UK has not pursued its European foreign policy through formally defining an overarching strategy for Europe including the EU.[3] The UK's broader strategic foreign and security objectives (including those for Europe) have, in contrast, been more systematically set out, and are codified in the National Security Strategy (NSS) and the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR).[4]

The relative attention that should be devoted to Europe within a broader UK approach to international relations has been a centrally contested question in British foreign policy since the foundation of the modern British state. Post-Brexit referendum the centrality of the EU and Europe to the UK's diplomacy, defence and security is being actively contested in debate around the notion of a post-Brexit 'Global Britain'. relationship between Brexit, the UK's place in Europe and its wider international role are interwined.

The UK's relationship with the United States has been an important conditioning aspect of Britain's approach towards Europe. The notion of the UK as a bridge between Europe and the U.S. has been a key touchstone for British politicians and officials. The election of President Trump, shortly after the EU referendum, created a condition of uncertainty for the UK's key bilateral relationship. Further, the Trump administration has been unsettling for the UK in its ambivalent messaging on security commitments to Europe and NATO. NATO for the UK being an especially sensitive issue as the central component of the UK's security and defence policy and the second pillar (alongside the EU) of its European strategy. With the election of President Trump alongside voting to exit the European Union, the UK has put into question key components of a European strategy that has been in place for over half a century.

The UK's European foreign policy in practice
The UK's post-war European diplomatic strategy has its origins in the aftermath of the Suez crisis and the recognition that a shift in emphasis towards Europe from the late 1950s (and by implication the relative downgrading of the focus on Empire/Commonwealth and Atlantic) was reflective of the country's primary economic

and political interests being within the UK's European neighbourhood.[5] It was also driven by a recognition that retaining significant global influence would come with acting in combination with Western European allies. European Economic Community (EEC) accession in 1973 was a crucial staging post in the post-Suez UK European diplomatic strategy, embedding the UK in the process of European economic and political integration alongside its military role within NATO.

The UK's accession to the EEC gave rise to an uncodified, multipronged European foreign policy and a European diplomatic strategy.[6] The central purpose of this strategy was that the UK sought to maintain a leading role for itself in shaping the future direction of the politics, security and political economy of Europe. The EU component of this UK strategy was, however, often at odds with the objectives that the founding member states had developed in the decades before the UK became a member. This gave rise to the sentiment that the UK was an 'awkward partner' in intra-EU diplomacy.[7] However, the broader politics of the Cold War allowed these differences of emphasis to be contained and subsumed to the maintenance of a unified collective position on Western European security.

The UK also remained distinctive from other member states in that EU membership remained an issue of contention within and between the UK's political parties, giving rise to the first Brexit referendum in 1975 (and withdrawal was a Labour Party policy position as the official Parliamentary opposition from the late 1970s to the second half of the 1980s).[8] The UK public also maintained much lower levels of support for European integration than demonstrated in other member states. Public scepticism on European integration was somewhat at odds with the attitudes of the foreign policy-making elites that demonstrated greater investment in the advantages for the UK of EU membership.[9]

With the end of the Cold War the UK's European diplomatic strategy evolved.[10] The UK was confronted with new challenges with the demise of the Soviet Union, the rise of the newly independent states of Central and Eastern Europe, German reunification, revamping NATO and preserving the U.S. security commitment in Europe. The end of the Cold War also presented new European security challenges, with the extended conflicts in the Western Balkans demonstrating the inadequacy of the existing security

architecture and approaches to conflict management for managing Europe's post-cold war international relations.

These developments all gave impetus to a push for greater European integration. Consequently, one of the most significant challenges for the UK's European diplomacy in the early 1990s was to respond to the drive for greater European integration by the expansion of the EU's competences. The push for economic and political union that would be codified in the Treaty on European Union (the Maastricht Treaty) was a process that presented the UK with, to that date, the most problematic set of European integration proposals since UK accession in 1973.[11] The UK's diplomatic approach was to try and blunt the momentum of the proposals for political and economic union and, when this failed, to secure opt outs from participation in the project for economic and monetary union that included the creation of a single currency, and cooperation in the area of Justice and Home Affairs (internal security).[12] The UK accepted a more ambitious international role for the EU through the creation of common foreign and security policies and even allowed for defence to become an area of collective cooperation, but for this to be on an 'intergovernmental' rather than 'supranational' basis. In UK domestic politics the Maastricht Treaty negotiations and parliamentary ratification process were also the genesis of the process that was to lead to the UK's referendum on EU membership in 2016. The Maastricht Treaty issues crystallised an alternative vision for the EU's future and the UK's relationship with the EU, - a vision that was set out in Prime Minister Thatcher's Bruges Speech.[13] It also resulted in Prime Minister Thatcher losing her Premiership, her successor facing fierce organised Parliamentary opposition to the UK's European policy, and the birth of an extra-parliamentary movement pushing for the UK's exit from the EU.[14]

Notwithstanding the domestic political impact of the Maastricht Treaty, post-Cold War UK European foreign policy coalesced around five broad objectives.[15] These were maintained under the Conservative, Labour and coalition governments of the 1990s and through to the 2015 David Cameron-led government.

- To maintain and to deepen the EU's single market as a liberalization and deregulation project. And, further, for the single market to be as open as possible to international free trade by promoting and deepening trade

liberalisation multilaterally and bilaterally through the EU's common commercial policy and external relations with third countries.

- To see the EU maintain a commitment to an ongoing programme of membership enlargement. The UK was a strong supporter of the 1995 membership enlargements to Austria, Finland and Sweden; the enlargements to central and eastern Europe in 2004 and 2007; and to the Western Balkans with the accession of Croatia in 2013.

- Related to a preference for the expansion of the EU to new member states, was to halt or slow the development of the EU as a nascent political union and to veto any definition of the EU's final destination as a United States of Europe. The resistance to the 'deepening' of integration and a preference for intergovernmentalism over supranationalism was demonstrated by the UK government during the deliberations for the reform of the EU's treaties during the intergovernmental conferences (IGC) of 1996, 2000, 2003 (followed by a Convention on the Future of Europe) and 2007 each IGC resulted in amendments to the EU's founding treaties in the Treaties of Amsterdam (1997), Nice (2001) and Lisbon (2007).[16]

- For the UK was to maintain a leadership role as one of the EU's largest member states whilst at the same time ensuring that a Franco-German alliance did not determine the agenda for the future strategic priorities of the EU. Pursuing this objective resulted in a policy of shifting relationships with individual member states rather than an enduring set of bilateral or minilateral alliances – a UK preference for 'promiscuous bilateralism' in its EU diplomacy.[17]

- To preserve autonomy in national foreign, security and defence policy making, whilst promoting mechanisms for the EU to develop more coherent collective policy-making in these areas. An important caveat was to ensure that EU security and defence policy acted as vehicle to enhance national security and defence capabilities of the EU's member states in a manner that was supporting

and complementary, rather than duplicating, of NATO's collective security role.[18]

Strands of these UK European diplomacy objectives began to atrophy during the government led by Gordon Brown from 2005, a process which accelerated during the two governments led by David Cameron from 2010 onwards.[19] The UK's position outside the Eurozone ensured that it was semi-detached from the EU's response to the 2008 financial crisis (and preoccupied with its own policy response). The Conservative Party - the majority party of the 2010 UK coalition government - was already detached from the European party political mainstream, having withdrawn from the centre right European People's Party (EPP) grouping in advance of the 2009 European Parliament elections. This had already been a cause of disquiet among Christian Democrat-led governments across the EU. In power the coalition government also pursued an approach that stressed a 'de-centreing' of the EU in the UK's approach towards its wider foreign policy.[20] After the significant UK diplomatic investment made in bilateral relationships with other European states during the Blair-led government (especially EU candidate member states in Eastern and Central Europe) there was a relative neglect of bilateral relationships within the EU. Where Prime Minister Cameron did demonstrate enthusiasm for Europe it was for building relationships outside the EU, either through trying to cultivate new groupings or via coalitions of the willing for military intervention in Libya and Syria.[21] The prospect for intervention on the latter was circumscribed by opposition in the UK Parliament.

Other EU governments viewed the UK as a disengaged EU partner – an impression reinforced by its responses to the migration and Eurozone crises, where Conservative Party and domestic electoral considerations were given priority over the UK's European policy interests. The UK's isolation on key EU policies was illustrated by the Government's unwillingness, in late 2011, to support an amendment to the existing EU treaties to enhance the governance of the EU's growth and stability pact. The result was a separate intergovernmental treaty (excluding the UK and Czech Republic as signatories), the *Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union* (TSG) or *Fiscal Stability Treaty*. This arrangement replicated the approach adopted when the Schengen Treaty was signed in 1985, also excluding the UK.

For David Cameron, as for the four preceding leaders of the Conservative Party since 1990, the European Union was an issue deeply dividing his party.[22] The imperatives of managing the increasing body of Eurosceptic Conservative MPs and party membership, and the increasing levels of opinion poll and electoral support being enjoyed by the pro-Brexit UK Independence Party, pushed him into offering the most radical shift in Conservative Party policy on the EU since 1975.[23] In January 2013, and while in a coalition government with the Liberal Democrat party, he committed the Conservative Party to holding an in/our referendum on the EU if it won a majority in the 2015 General Election.[24] The 2015 Conservative Party manifesto promise to negotiate a 'new settlement for Britain in the EU' to then be followed by a referendum was fulfilled, with a relatively short term set of negotiations, an agreement, and then putting these new terms for British membership to the UK public.[25] Cameron's decision was to result in a point of rupture for the UK's European diplomatic strategy that had already seen the UK detached from its partners.[26]

Interregnum: transiting from member state to third country

The relatively rapid transition from Prime Minister from Cameron to Prime Minister May did not provide for an extended discussion on the implications of the Brexit vote. Prime Minister's May's statement that 'Brexit means Brexit' and a concern to take decisive steps to embark on Brexit limited discussion on a strategy for a UK exit from the EU.[27] Brexit was adopted as a core Governmental and civil service objective without an extended Parliamentary or public discussion or devising a framework for debate with the devolved administrations or British Overseas Territories.

The UK's room for manoeuvre in determining its approach to Brexit was to be constrained by two broad factors. Domestically, Theresa May's faced the challenge of managing her Conservative Party's expectations for a timetable that would see a swift exit from the EU but lacking a clarity of view as to the nature of the post-Brexit EU-UK relationship. Externally, the UK was in negotiations with the EU on the basis of a previously untested process allowing for the withdrawal from the Union. Moreover, in the EU the UK was facing a negotiating partner with a high degree of experience and

expertise in negotiating with third countries on the terms of their relationship to the EU's single market and regulatory regime.

The subsequent negotiation processes conducted between the EU and the UK, under the terms of Article 50, was conducted under terms and through processes that closely replicate the EU's template for negotiations with third countries. The UK's initial ambitions for the structure, process and sequencing of negotiations (primarily to seek to discuss the obligations and issues arising from relinquishing membership *alongside* future EU-UK relations) were relinquished and conformed to the EU's preferences of negotiation structure and process.

The Article 50 negotiations were conducted alongside the continuation of the UK's maintaining the full legal and policy compliance requirements of a member state and maintaining participation in the EU's decision-making processes. The EU did, however, create new meeting formats excluding the UK to allow for discussions between the EU27 on issues concerning Brexit and on the future strategic agenda setting for the EU.

The UK's dual roles as member state and Article 50 negotiating partner were, however, in a symbiotic relationship. The UK's capacity for EU agenda setting and policy modification became progressively constrained once the Article 50 negotiation process was triggered. Notably a number of areas of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), where the UK had previously resisted initiatives, were taken forward.

The UK conducted a three-fold approach to EU membership during the Article 50 negotiation period: First, a constructive and permissive approach to EU policy development; second, maintaining a separation between the conduct of Article 50 negotiations and the conduct of other EU policy issues; third, conducting a managed withdrawal from EU commitments that were scheduled to extend beyond the UK's scheduled departure date from the EU. Indicative of this approach was the relinquishing of the UK's EU Presidency scheduled for the second half of 2017, exiting the EU Battle Groups roster and passing on the Operational Headquarters for the EU's Atalanta (EUNAVFOR) operation.

The key characteristic of the Article 50 negotiations was the impact of the UK's domestic political instability which determined the pace of the negotiations. The loss of a Government majority in the House of Commons, following the General Election of 2017, and the loss of authority by Prime Minister May in managing her Cabinet and parliamentary party significantly impinged on the UK's role in the negotiation process. The UK Government's 'red lines' and a constantly delayed publication of its blueprint for the future EU-UK relationship (the 'Chequers Agreement' not appearing until July 2018) significantly encroached on the form and scope of the Withdrawal Agreement and the accompanying Political Declaration agreed in November 2018.

The Withdrawal Agreement, in providing for the terms of the UK's exit from the EU, also set the direction for EU-UK relations from the formal exit date until the end of a 'transition period' ending in 2020 (or by extension until 2022). This transition period was to allow for negotiations on a future EU-UK relationship to be concluded but also has the effect of tying the UK into a form of 'hyper-Association agreement' with the EU to be bound by EU law and policies, remaining within the EU's single market, customs union and EU trade policy but to be outside its decision-making structures. The UK's formal relationship with the EU being managed via Joint Committee rather than an arrangement that allows for an observer status in EU decision-making forums. The accompanying Political Declaration sets out a level of ambition for EU-UK relations that would see the UK enter into a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU and with third country terms of participation in the EU's internal and external security regimes, foreign and defence policies. An important caveat to the form of the future relationship is the 'Irish backstop'. This would see the whole of the UK remaining in a customs union with the EU (and Northern Ireland retaining a regulatory alignment with the single market) if an agreement is not reached on a future EU-UK relationship that would maintain the current border arrangements between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland.

For analysts of the EU the interregnum period in the UK's relationship with the EU (post-Brexit vote and pending the determination of the future EU-UK relationship) presents an analytical challenge. The UK remains within the EU's diplomatic system (pending formal departure from the EU) but has also been engaged in a form of

structural diplomacy with the EU (as a third country under the terms of Article 50) and which also anticipates a future strategic diplomatic relationship.[28]

A new polycentric diplomacy?

The Brexit referendum and the triggering of the Article 50 negotiation process has introduced a new impetus into the UK's approach towards bilateral relations with EU member states and non-member states. A renewed interest in upgrading bilateral relations with EU member states was made apparent both in increasing diplomatic resources in third countries but also in seeking to launch new bilateral initiatives.[29] The use of bilateral relations to improve the UK's outcomes from the Article 50 negotiating processes proved to be largely ineffective. Rather, the UK's difficulties in formulating and pursuing a consistent set of objectives for the Article 50 negotiations have strained bilateral relations. Furthermore, with uncertainly as to the terms of the UK's future access to the single market and whether it is in a customs union with the EU have limited the parameters of discussions on future relations with non-member states in Europe and beyond.

The prospect of Brexit has created a new imperative to create enhanced bilateral relationships to replace the loss of the EU's multilateral arrangements that allow for a extensive range of issues to be addressed with twenty seven other European states.[30] This could be read as a degree of continuity in this approach with the 'promiscuous' bilateralism that was viewed as a characteristic of the UK's approach to EU diplomacy pre-Brexit. The UK was viewed as especially prone to forming temporary alliances in areas where it is seeking to maximise influence. Prime Minister Cameron sought a modest departure from this approach in pursuing formal political dialogue arrangements such as the Northern Future Forum.

The Brexit negotiations have also been instructive for the UK in illustrating how other member states preferences could be uploaded into the EU agenda. The ability of Ireland, as an EU member state, to pursue its national interests by working to see these adopted as a key EU negotiating objective in the EU-UK Article 50 negotiations, have been instructive for the UK in its status as an EU third country. Ireland's Brexit diplomacy has also been a case study of how a member state can mobilise national

diplomatic resources to shape the strategic and structural collective diplomacy of the EU.[31]

The limits of the UK's push for renewed polycentricism can be seen in Anglo-German and Anglo-French relations post-Brexit. Both Germany and France have been reticent in setting a post-Brexit agenda for their relationship with the UK. They have also maintained support for the EU's negotiating mandate and avoided any public contradiction of Mr Barnier's role in messaging the EU27's collective position on the Brexit agenda issues. A hallmark of the period since June 2016 is that neither France nor Germany have proposed any new trilateral or contact group format with the UK that could be seen as confirmation of an intent to accommodate post-Brexit Britain into a new leading European role outside the EU.

France and Germany have both remained in lock-step on the issue of Brexit and the future relationship EU-UK relationship. While both have held to the view that the UK could reverse its Brexit decision they have also empowered Mr Barnier's strength in the EU negotiations by maintaining the position that the UK's position as a third country should be close, but not enjoying the benefits of membership as a non-member state. Both countries have been assiduous in maintain the position that the UK cannot 'cherry pick' the terms of its access to the EU's single market by deviating from interlocking core principles of freedom of movement for labour, capital, goods and services (or the legal framework including the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice that underpins these arrangements).

While France and Germany have been careful to preserve pre-existing foreign policy cooperation with the UK since June 2016 – and with policy towards JCPOA and Russia over the Skripol poisonings unencumbered by Brexit. However, the UK's exclusion from the recent Franco-German initiative on the Western Balkans (and despite the UK hosting a major summit on the region in 2018) demonstrated a willingness to exclude Britain. And adding to the exclusion of the UK from the Normandy format contact group of Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine, intended to resolve the war in Eastern Ukraine demonstrates, there is no automatic reflex to include the UK in contact groups on key security issues.[32]

There has, however, been differentiation between the French and German positions on future relations with the UK. The French position has been more quixotic than that of Germany. Mr Macron's opposition to an extension of the Article 50 negotiating period, agreed at the April 10-11 2019 Special European Council, diverged from the German position. Mr Macron has offered a more developed vision for where non-member states, including the UK, would fit into a future architecture of European cooperation.[33] The French E2I initiative has also incorporated the UK into a new forum for security cooperation but there has also been a noticeable loss of tempo in the Franco-British defence ties created under the 2010 Lancaster House Treaties.

Global Britain in Europe: a contesting power?

The UK Government adopted the notion of 'Global Britain' shortly after the June 2016 referendum to allay concern that in voting to leave the EU that the UK was to reduce its international role. The Global Britain vision was first outlined in a speech by Theresa May to the Conservative Party Conference on 2 October 2016.[34] The central narrative of Global Britain, and as promulgated by Minister and officials, is that the UK will be more engaged beyond Europe that has been the case in recent years. The slogan has encouraged commentary and think tank advocacy for competing visions of a post-Brexit foreign and security policy for the UK.[35] Much of this work builds on argument advanced in the EU referendum campaign that the UK should give renewed attention to the Five Eyes partners, CANZUK states or more broadly the Anglophone or Commonwealth states. A hallmark of this work is a de-centring of the EU and Europe from the UK's foreign policy.[36]

Although Global Britain has become a point of reference in official discourse on the direction for the UK's foreign policy post-Brexit it has remained substantively undefined.[37] Consequently the relationship between European foreign policy and a new overarching UK approach towards international remains largely undetermined. A Brexit paradox is that the direction for 'Global Britain' cannot be settled until the UK UK's European foreign policy – and primarily the EU-UK relationship – remains contested.

Even assuming the public decision to remain outside the EU is not reversed, public and parliamentary sentiment is likely to be highly influential in the future UK European diplomatic strategy. Even if gaining approval by Parliament for the Withdrawal Agreement the UK government will face significant constraints in its negotiations for the future EU-UK relationship. Consequently, current and future UK governments might be keen to engage with the EU in a manner that minimises the domestic political turmoil and the UK financial costs of engaging with the EU as a non-member state. A concern with 'status issues' in the EU-UK relationship, and prevalent during the Withdrawal negotiations, may perpetuate in the UK political discourse in a manner that circumscribes European strategy. Expectations that the post-Brexit EU-UK relationship would be a partnership of equals are likely to be dashed as the relationship will, in all likelihood, be asymmetric due to the market power exercised by the EU.[38]

An additional key challenge for the UK's European diplomatic strategy, as a state significantly invested in the European security order, is the extent to which the EU will deliver on its security and defence policy aspirations. Since the Brexit vote the EU has stepped up its work, with a new implementation plan on security and defence.[39] The moves include the creation of a common European Defence Fund (EDF) that allows for co-financing from the EU budget for the member states' joint development and acquisition of defence equipment and technology. There is also an intention to share defence spending plans through the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), and to deepen defence cooperation through the intergovernmental agreement between 25 member states on permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) with the purpose of creating shared capabilities. Furthermore, and in contradiction to the UK's longstanding opposition, they have agreed to establish a new command centre for EU military training and advisory missions (MPCC).

Consequently, for the UK, a decision on future EU-UK security and defence collaboration is not just about continuing existing collaboration, but also the degree to which it wishes to be involved in projects which it will no longer have a role in defining. Prime Minister May has made a close EU-UK security relationship a key UK objective. UK Parliamentary and political opposition to a close future security partnership has been negligible, with significant enthusiasm for sustained EU-UK linkage in this area. Furthermore, the EU27 governments and commentators have also stressed the

prospective loss of the UK's security and defence policy capabilities to the EU as a consequence of Brexit.[40]

Divergence in the UK's Brexit negotiating position between an aspiration for a security relationship as close as possible to member state status and a more detached future political economy relationship with the EU provides a hint on a future UK strategy. This might see the UK balancing elements of a less integrated relationship in some areas with a more integrated approach in others.

In such areas as single market regulation, Eurozone management and EU trade policy the UK may seek proxy influence on EU policy formation through member state national capitals, complemented by diplomatic activity in Brussels. In other areas the UK may pursue a more integrated approach: where direct tangible engagement with the EU is politically tenable, where objectives appear to be of mutual advantage and where the financial costs (to the UK) are modest. Areas that lend themselves to the latter approach would be in foreign and security policy. However, the complexity of implementing such a strategy for both the UK and the EU's member states are highlighted in the current arrangements in the area of external relations. Alongside foreign and security policy the UK's external relations also encompass a wide variety of areas including trade, aid, environment, energy, development policy, immigration, border, asylum, cross-border policing and justice policies, all of which are currently intertwined with EU policies.

Cooperation in security and defence policy is also an area in which EU member states retain significant autonomy. The UK already has an existing set of security and defence relationships with other EU member states which lie outside the framework of the EU. These include key strategic bilateral security relationships (notably with France) and bilateral operational military collaborations. The UK also has significant bilateral security and defence relationships driven by its NATO commitments (such as the JEF) and collaborations via coalitions of the willing (CJTF- Operation Inherent Resolve).

The network of security and defence relationships that the UK has with states outside the EU framework have already been targeted for enhancement since June 2016. In

these areas (and in development policy), there will likely be increased state-to-state bilateral, trilateral mini- and multi-lateral relationships. Beyond security policy the UK is likely to seek to influence the EU by favouring different depths of relationship with different member states across different issue areas in an attempt to maximise influence over the EU agenda issues.

As the Withdrawal phase of the Brexit negotiations have demonstrated the UK's political and diplomatic energy is far more preoccupied with Brexit than that of the EU institutions and the overwhelming majority of EU member states.

As the Brexit negotiations move into a focus on the future status of EU-UK relations this will require the EU's member states to clarify their own ambitions and expectations for their relationship with the UK. The knock-on effects of Brexit on the power, alliances and influence of other European states may start to become apparent. For the UK a major preoccupation in bilateral relations will be in seeking to influence the development and evolution of EU policies. The EFTA member states and especially Norway and Switzerland provide instructive examples of the degree to which Brussels and other member state capitals have significant diplomatic salience for a non-EU member state and provide an instructive basis for comparison with the post-Brexit EU-UK relationship.[41]

Conclusion

The UK's European foreign policy became progressively entwined with the EU through the decades following its accession to the EU. Alongside membership of NATO, and accompanied by the diplomatic and security relationship with the United States, the UK sought to balance EU membership with a strong commitment to transatlanticism. Brexit presents the challenge of replacing the UK's embeddedness with the EU with a new relationship with Europe. The preoccupation with the Brexit negotiations since June 2016 has demonstrated that the UK's European foreign policy will continue to have a predominant focus on the EU even as a non-member state. The road to a new European foreign policy (and a Global Britain) runs through Brussels.

The EU-UK relationship looks set to be central to the UK's post-Brexit European strategy. The UK's attempts to strengthen bilateral relationships with EU member

states suggest a push for a renewed polycentrism in the UK's European foreign policy. A primary purpose of this diplomacy since 2016 has been to seek support the UK's Brexit negotiations. The content of its post-Brexit agenda will likely be determined by the depth of the UK's connection to the EU's single market, customs union and trade policy and the EU's internal and external security policies, defence integration and foreign policy.

The work in determining that relationship appears to be a decade-long endeavour. From the referendum vote to departure from the EU has already taken over three years and (assuming a Withdrawal Agreement is ratified) the transition period will likely extend to at least 2022. Ratification of a new EU-UK relationship is likely to extend a final post-Brexit settlement before 2025. The UK's domestic politics (including a General Election that will take place no later than 2022) may throw up a range of challenges to the ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement and the negotiations on the future of the EU-UK relationship. Further, Brexit has the capacity for dislocation of the Union of the United Kingdom already giving rise to a new independence vote for Scotland campaign by the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the mooting of the idea of an Irish border poll.

With the departure from the EU the UK loses direct access to a multilateral arrangement that allowed for a very wide range of issues to be addressed with a significant number of European states. If the EU embarks on its planned future enlargements the UK will be a member of a diminishing group of European states not seeking membership. The extent to which the UK compensates for the loss of membership with bilateral and mini-lateral European diplomacy is partly conditional on the scale and scope of the trade, foreign and security relationship it strikes with the EU.

For EU member states cooperation with the UK will be circumscribed by the issue area and the degree to which competences are exercised exclusively or shared with the EU. This will place limits on bilateral relationships on trade and market-related issues; border, policing and criminal justice cooperation; international environmental and development policy issues; and aspects of foreign policy. It will also condition relationships with non-EU member states which are either EU membership candidate

states or members of the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland; and which have aligned themselves to the EU's single market rules, Schengen area or which collectively pursue trade agreements with third countries (EFTA countries). One key decision for the UK's future foreign economic policy is whether it will seek membership of EFTA or whether to pursue a FTA agreement with the EFTA states.

The extent and depth of the EU-UK relationship will also condition the UK's relationships with regional organisations in Europe, and with states and international organisations outside Europe. A key element here will be whether the UK has, as is current UK government policy, departed the EU's customs union and is pursuing new UK trade agreements with third countries. The UK will be challenged in maintaining strong bilateral relationships with all EU member states and simultaneously pursuing a Global Britain agenda outside Europe.

The broader UK strategic ambitions for the economic, diplomatic and security order for Europe do, however, remain to be settled. The UK will be a major European state with one of the continent's largest economies and with significant diplomatic, defence and soft power capabilities outside Europe's main political organisation. The UK's role as a leading member of NATO has been complementary arrangement rather than a binary choice with EU membership. Whether a UK view emerges that sees the EU as competitive to its European ambitions will be partly conditional on how Britain views its international position more broadly.

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