European Movement International

Brexit, and now what?
Possible Scenarios for Security and Defence

Scenarios for Security and Defence

The United Kingdom and the European Union are preparing their divorce after 51.9% of the country's electorate voted to leave the Union. Now that Brexit negotiations have started, it is important to know what the options are for the future relationship between the two parties. This paper lays out some of the possible consequences of Brexit for the UK in the area of security and defence. The EMI evaluates which scenarios are the most advantageous for the UK by analysing what the country currently has access to as a member state and what it would lose in the case of a soft or hard Brexit.

EU membership

Being a member state of the EU has enabled the UK to increase its influence on the global stage. The Union has given it room to act independently or collaboratively when it has chosen to. Its role as a member of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is a good example of this; the UK has been able to remain independent in its diplomacy, without losing the option to act collectively when it has had common interests with other member states[1].

The collaboration and the information shared between member states are key tools in fighting crime and

terrorism across Europe. These include the European Arrest Warrant (EAW), the Schengen Information System and other databases, as well as EU agencies like Europol and Eurojust. Criminal justice measures such as the EAW have proven beneficial when dealing with suspected terrorists or criminals crossing borders[2]. Additionally, Europol acts as a support centre for law enforcement operations and expertise, as well as a hub for information on criminal activities. This tool allows the UK to work with other police forces and grants it access to different databases, such as the Schengen Information System. The Schengen Information System gathers data about missing vehicles, people, documents and criminal suspects[3]. Every year Britain carries out 250,000 searches of Europol databases per year[4].

British defence research facilities have also benefitted from the UK's

membership to the EU. According to RAND, the UK is one of the biggest spenders on research and development in Europe. The UK relies more on EU research funds than other member states; Britain has won one fifth of EU grants since 2007, a total of €8.04 billion - one fourth of all UK public research spending[5].

Soft Brexit

Regardless of the outcome of the negotiations, the UK is unlikely to retain the same access or status in the EAW, Europol or other European databases. If it wishes to continue co-operating with Schengen countries, it would have to accept European Court of Justice jurisdiction and contribute to the EU budget, as well as comply with the EU's privacy standards[6].
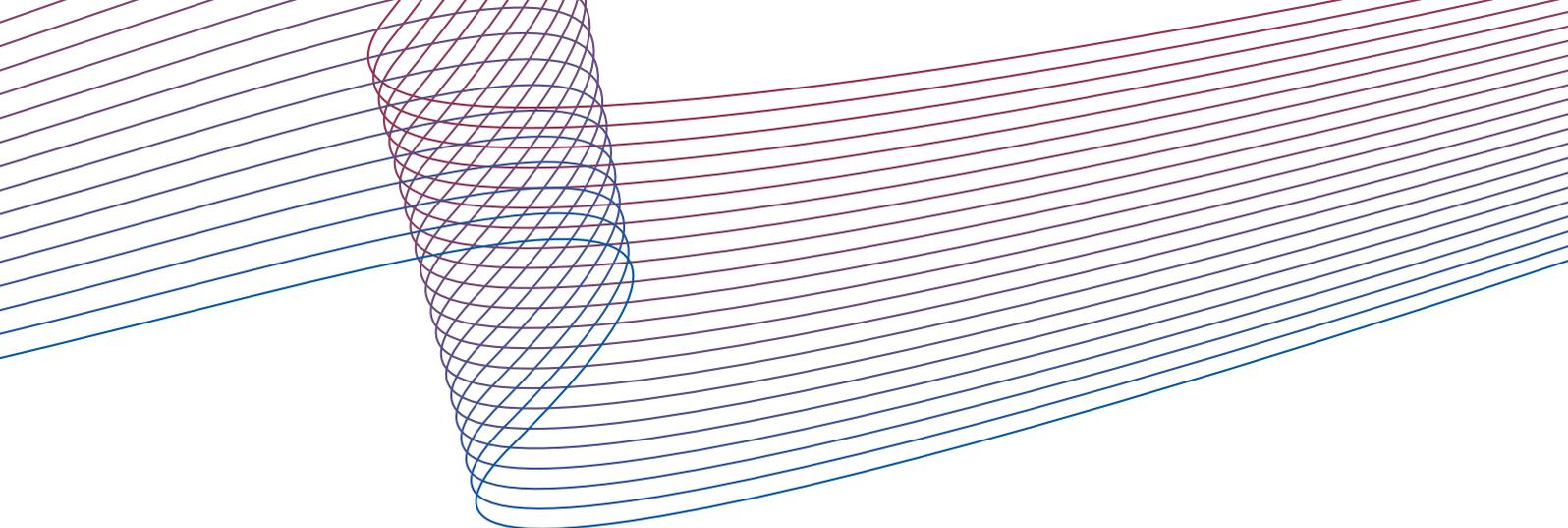
The UK and the EU could negotiate a deal in which Britain continues to have access the EU research funds in the field of R&D, but with limitations that the UK did not have as a member state. Britain would no longer be able to decide on the research agenda and would be obliged to accept free movement of people[7].

Leaving the EU would mean that the UK would no longer be part of the CSDP. An alternative could be

1 Whitman, R. 2016. The UK's foreign and security policy: what's at stake in the referendum? Egmont. http://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2016/05/SPB73.pdf?type=pdf

2 Black, J., Hall, A., Cox, K., Kepe, M. and Silfversten, E. 2017. Defence and security after Brexit: Understanding the possible implications of the UK's decision to leave the EU. RAND Europe.
3 Rankin, J. 2017. Britain 'will be less safe' without access to EU crime databases – peers. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/law/2017/jul/18/britain-will-be-less-safe-without-access-to-eu-databases-peers
4 Black, J., Hall, A., Cox, K., Kepe, M. and Silfversten, E. 2017. Defence and security after Brexit: Understanding the possible implications of the UK's decision to leave the EU. RAND Europe.

5 Idem
6 Mortera-Martinez, C. 2017. Hard Brexit, soft data: how to keep Britain plugged into EU databases. Centre for European Reform. http://www.cer.eu/insights/hard-brexit-soft-data-how-keep-britain-plugged-eu-databases
7 Black, J., Hall, A., Cox, K., Kepe, M. and Silfversten, E. 2017. Defence and security after Brexit: Understanding the possible implications of the UK's decision to leave the EU. RAND Europe

to conclude a Framework Participation Agreement (FPA), through which Britain could participate in CSDP missions but would lose decision-making power. Additionally, it would no longer have a formal role in the drafting of the concept of operations (CONOPS) or the operation plan (OPLAN), and would therefore have to accept the timeline and procedures decided by the EU. Another option that would not leave the UK out of the CSDP mission and operations could be to negotiate a partnership on a case-by-case basis. In this scenario, the UK would only be marginally involved in the CSDP and its influence would be reduced. It might also mean that the effectiveness of the missions could be compromised, since negotiating on a case-by-case basis would hamper quick responses[8].

Hard Brexit

Losing access to European databases could have a major impact on the security of UK citizens. Moreover, it is likely that if the UK does not reach an agreement granting it access to Europol, it would end up investing more in bilateral non-EU mechanisms to share information[9].

According to a report published by the House of Lords, the risk of information not flowing across borders between the UK and the EU after Brexit would undermine the police's ability to fight crime in Britain[10]. The UK would also suffer with regards to security by no longer having access to the EAW.

Hard Brexit would also have a strong negative impact on the R&D sector in the UK. It would mean that Britain would lose the power to influence the direction of the EU research fund, which would in turn have an important impact on Britain's defence industry[11]. Additionally, the EU has recently launched a European Defence Fund to increase, coordinate and complement national investments in defence research. The fund provides an initial €90 million

for projects between 2017-2019 and €500 million per year after 2020[12]. Lastly, leaving the EU would translate into losing 32,000 EU academics currently working in universities across the UK in the R&D field, which accounts for 17% of the teaching and research staff in the country[13].

Conclusion

It is clear that remaining a member of the EU is the most advantageous option for the UK. Britain currently has access to Europol and Eurojust, which police forces have been heavily relying on to keep citizens safe in the UK. It is also able to pursue criminals and terrorists who flee the country and hide in other member states having access to the EAW. Additionally, being in the Union has provided the country with €8.04 billion in EU research funding since 2007; thus leaving the EU would have significant consequences for the country's defence R&D and innovation.

8 Bakker, A., Drent, M. and Zandee, D. 2017. European defence: how to engage the UK after Brexit? Clingendael https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2017-07/Report_European_defence_after_Brexit.pdf
9 Black, J., Hall, A., Cox, K., Kepe, M. and Silfversten, E. 2017. Defence and security after Brexit: Understanding the possible implications of the

UK's decision to leave the EU. RAND Europe
10 Rankin, J. 2017. Britain 'will be less safe' without access to EU crime databases – peers. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/law/2017/jul/18/britain-will-be-less-safe-without-access-to-eu-databases-peers
11 Black, J., Hall, A., Cox, K., Kepe, M. and Silfversten, E. 2017. Defence and security after Brexit: Understanding the possible implications of the UK's decision to leave the EU. RAND Europe.

12 European Commission, 2017. A European Defence Fund : €5.5 billion per year to boost Europe's defence capabilities. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-1508_en.htm
13 Black, J., Hall, A., Cox, K., Kepe, M. and Silfversten, E. 2017. Defence and security after Brexit: Understanding the possible implications of the UK's decision to leave the EU. RAND Europe.

The European Movement

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