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The future of UK diplomacy in Europe

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The Foreign Affairs Committee

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Contents

Summary	3
1 Introduction	4
2 The UK and EU foreign, defence and security policy and Brexit	6
Introduction	6
The advantages and disadvantages of the CFSP and the CSDP	6
The importance of being “in the room”	7
Options for an institutionalised format for post-Brexit co-operation	7
Options for an informal format for post-Brexit co-operation	9
The Government’s position on participating in the CFSP/CSDP after Brexit	10
EU defence integration and the European Defence Fund	12
3 The UK’s future bilateral relationships with the EU27	15
Introduction	15
The FCO’s role in Europe after Brexit	16
The FCO’s resources in Europe	17
The UK’s Mission to the EU	20
4 UK-Ireland Relations and Brexit	22
Introduction	22
Positive momentum: UK-Ireland relations since 1998	22
The consequences of Brexit for UK-Ireland relations	22
UK-Ireland relations after Brexit	23
The FCO and UK-Ireland Relations	23
Conclusions and recommendations	25
Formal Minutes	29
Witnesses	30
Published written evidence	31
List of reports from the Committee during the current Parliament	32

Summary

As one of Europe's leading foreign policy actors, whatever the precise contours of our future relationship with the European Union (EU), it will always be in the interests of the UK to co-operate with the EU and its Member States (the EU27) on foreign policy, defence and security. Working closely together will help us to protect and project our shared values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law and to underpin the international rules-based order.

The Foreign Secretary told us that the Government has not yet decided what level of access to EU foreign, security and defence policy decision-making it aims to secure or what framework it would like to put in place. This must be clarified soon. The ultimate goal should be to secure automatic and institutionalised collaboration that respects the decision-making autonomy of both the UK and the EU. This should include a status on the EU's Political and Security Committee that allows the UK to have a representative in meetings with speaking (if not voting) rights and a UK-EU Strategic Partnership to facilitate enhanced dialogue on foreign, defence and security policy. In order to support European capability development that complements the work of NATO, the Government should remain open to the possibility of participation in some EU defence integration measures, on the understanding that national sovereignty over force deployment is preserved, that the UK's ability to co-operate with non-EU states is unconstrained and that the UK will not participate in programmes unless it is an equal partner with EU Member States in the formulation and running of them.

During this inquiry, we received mixed messages about the FCO's role in the Brexit process and beyond. The FCO should therefore publish a paper outlining the overall goals and the specific priorities of UK foreign policy in Europe after Brexit. This should include putting genuinely additional resources in place in its European network to ensure it can cope with the vital role it has to play in transmitting information to the UK Government, influencing the EU Member States and delivering the message that the UK is leaving the EU, but not leaving Europe. Increasing the UK's diplomatic presence in Europe, in Brussels, Paris and Berlin in particular, will also help to equip the FCO for the increased long term demands of exercising influence in the EU institutions and maintaining effective diplomatic relationships with the EU27, without the level of automatic and regular access that came with EU membership. This extra commitment should not remove resources from its network in non-European states, which would be to undermine the Government's stated policy of building a 'Global Britain'.

Close relations with Ireland are vital to the UK's national interest. We therefore welcome the Government's commitment to preserving the progress that has been made in UK-Ireland relations in recent years. We regret that recent tensions appeared to endanger this hard-won positive momentum. We welcome the progress made thus far in negotiations but much more needs to be done. In order to ensure that this relationship remains as strong as it can be through and beyond these negotiations, the FCO should increase its diplomatic presence in Ireland and produce an analysis of the UK-Ireland bilateral relationship, containing recommendations to improve it and options to revitalise existing, or create new, bilateral institutions.

1 Introduction

1. The UK is one of Europe's strongest foreign policy actors. It plays a vital role in underpinning European security and, along with its European allies, in protecting and projecting liberal values around the world. Leaving the European Union (EU) will not, of itself, change this. What would change, however, is the UK's relationship with the EU's foreign policy, defence and security mechanisms and this, in turn, has serious implications for the UK's bilateral foreign policy relationships with the EU Member States.

2. We launched our inquiry on 19 October with the following terms of reference:

- The UK's current bilateral relationships with the EU-27 and the FCO's recent record in managing those relationships;
- Which bilateral relationships the FCO should prioritise in Europe after Brexit, and the trade-offs that may be involved in such decisions;
- Potential institutional frameworks for a post-Brexit foreign and defence policy partnership including, but not limited to, continued UK participation in aspects of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP);
- Recent proposals to deepen EU foreign affairs and defence integration, and their implications for UK-EU co-operation;
- The funding, staffing and effectiveness of UK representations in Brussels and across Europe, including at regional level;
- Possible metrics for evaluating the performance of the existing structures of UK representation across Europe.

3. Drawing on the evidence we received, this report is divided into three chapters, each addressing a specific aspect of UK diplomacy in Europe:

- a) Whether the UK will continue to participate in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and what formats might be appropriate to ensure that the UK can continue to influence the principal CFSP/CSDP decision-making bodies, the Foreign Affairs Council and the Political and Security Committee;
- b) The level of contact UK ministers and officials will have with their EU and EU27 counterparts when the UK is a third country outside the EU and whether the FCO has the plans and the resources in place to replicate this level of contact elsewhere in Brussels and in the capitals of the EU27;
- c) The specific implications of Brexit for UK-Ireland relations and whether the FCO has the resources in place to ensure that this uniquely broad and deep bilateral relationship remains as strong as possible after Brexit.

4. In the course of this inquiry, we visited Ireland, where we met with our interlocutors in the Houses of the Oireachtas, representatives of the Irish Government, and business groups in Dublin, Cavan and Monaghan. The Committee is grateful to all of those who

met with us and to the UK Embassy in Ireland for helping to facilitate the visit. We would also like to thank those who participated in this inquiry and provided invaluable oral and written evidence.

5. It has not been possible in this report to cover all areas of post-Brexit UK-EU co-operation in foreign policy, defence and security. This is a complex and wide-ranging policy area and it will evolve as the UK moves closer to withdrawing from the EU. We may return to this topic in future inquiries.

2 The UK and EU foreign, defence and security policy and Brexit

Introduction

6. Within the EU, foreign, defence and security policy is a Member State competence. However, Member States agree common positions and authorise collective action through the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).¹ In September 2017, the UK Government published broad proposals for a “deep and special partnership” in areas including foreign policy, defence and security.² This was echoed in the Prime Minister’s speech in Florence later that month, in which she said that the UK is “unconditionally committed to maintaining Europe’s security”. The Prime Minister also proposed a “security partnership” that would govern how the UK and the EU “work together to promote our shared values and interests abroad”, including “co-operation on diplomacy, defence and security, and development”.³

7. Michel Barnier, the European Commission’s Brexit negotiator, spoke briefly about the possibilities for UK-EU co-operation in foreign policy, defence and security in November 2017 but the topic has received relatively little attention since the Prime Minister’s speech.⁴ However, the beginning of phase two talks means that it is now vital to consider a number of important questions:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages to the UK of participating in the CFSP/CSDP and should it seek participation in them after Brexit?
- If the UK does seek to participate in CFSP/CSDP decision-making, should it do so on a formal and institutionalised or an informal and ad-hoc basis?
- Should the UK seek to participate in some elements of EU defence integration after Brexit and, if so, how might this be structured?

The advantages and disadvantages of the CFSP and the CSDP

8. As many witnesses to this inquiry stressed, the UK is a European foreign policy heavyweight, independently of its EU membership. It is one of only two European countries with an independent nuclear deterrent and a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council; it has one of Europe’s largest diplomatic networks; it is a leading

1 The CFSP and the CSDP are driven by intergovernmental dialogue between EU Member States, with decisions governed by unanimity. The principal CFSP decision-making bodies are the Political and Security Committee (PSC), the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper), and the European Council. The PSC consists of Ambassadorial-level representatives from the Member States. It meets twice a week or more to monitor the implementation of the CFSP and CSDP and prepare the FAC’s agenda. The FAC generally meets once a month and is, for the most part, constituted by Member States’ foreign ministers. It oversees the CFSP and CSDP and escalates issues to the European Council. Coreper is a twice-weekly meeting of Member States’ Permanent Representatives, which prepares the agenda of the European Council, the (generally) quarterly meeting of Member States’ Heads of State and Government, which, among other things, sets the strategic direction of the EU’s external action and agrees joint positions.

2 [Future Partnership Paper on Foreign Policy, Defence and Development](#), HM Government, 16 September 2017.

3 [The Prime Minister’s Florence speech](#), 22 September 2017

4 Michel Barnier [speech](#) at the Berlin Security Conference, 29 November 2017

NATO member; and it is the only G7 member to spend both 2% of GDP on defence and 0.7% of GNI on development and aid. The UK will continue to carry significant weight in world affairs, whether or not it participates in the CFSP and the CSDP.

9. Several witnesses, however, told us that the CFSP/CSDP does help to amplify the UK's voice in the world. For example, former Foreign Secretary Lord Hague said that the UK has benefitted from working through the EU, pointing to the example of the Iran nuclear deal: "The fact that the whole EU was together on that, and that the UK could help co-ordinate the EU and the United States on it, greatly added to the impact of western policy overall and to bringing Iran to the negotiating table".⁵ Former Permanent Under Secretary at the FCO and Ambassador in Paris Lord Ricketts agreed that participating in the CFSP is an advantage to the UK, "not least because, usually, the British have been coming up with ideas and amplifying them through the EU and giving them greater impact in the world". Lord Ricketts pointed to the example of sanctions against Russia: "The UK individually taking sanctions on Russia would not have had a great deal of impact, but the EU collectively taking them and keeping them on Russia for years after the Crimea invasion has increased their impact."⁶

The importance of being "in the room"

10. Some of the evidence we received suggested that one of the principal benefits of the CFSP/CSDP is the opportunity it provides the UK to influence EU foreign policy by being present "in the room" throughout the decision-making process. Lord Hague told us that "[y]ou cannot beat being in the room. As we all know from being involved in politics or diplomacy, the way you influence a decision is by being in the room."⁷ In a written submission, Dr Nicholas Wright from University College London said that if the UK is not "in the room" it "loses access to the resources and international impact of the EU as a foreign policy actor, and its capacity to directly influence EU foreign policy-making".⁸ Lord Hague told us that the Political and Security Committee (PSC) is the most important of these rooms, that it "really is the driver", because "[i]f you are not in on the agenda and politics of the Political and Security Committee, it is very difficult to influence on a daily basis at least, rather than in broad themes, the foreign affairs approach of the European Union".⁹ Lord Ricketts similarly said that it would be helpful "to institutionalise regular discussions where the British ambassador went to the PSC once a week or once a fortnight and there were consultations at Foreign Minister level".¹⁰

Options for an institutionalised format for post-Brexit co-operation

11. While the majority of the evidence we received suggested that it was desirable for the UK to remain "in the room", particularly on the PSC, it also stressed that none of the current precedents for institutionalised co-operation with the CFSP/CSDP allow third countries to do so. These current models are:

5 Q1 [Lord Hague]
 6 Q1 [Lord Ricketts]
 7 Q39 [Lord Hague]
 8 Dr Nicholas Wright ([EUR0013](#)) paras 3 and 8
 9 Q4 [Lord Hague]
 10 Q38

- a) Participation in CFSP/CSDP meetings, without voting rights, is reserved for countries that have signed an Accession Agreement and will become an EU Member State. Candidate countries such as Albania, which are on a path towards signing Accession Agreements, can join bi-annual informal meetings of EU foreign ministers, known as Gymnich Meetings.
- b) Alignment with CFSP decisions on a case-by-case basis, often within 24–48 hours and with no option to amend the text, and invitation to participate in CSDP missions. This does not include access to the meetings in which decisions are taken and initial plans formulated. Countries that engage with the CFSP/CSDP in this way include Ukraine, which has signed an Association Agreement/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU, and heavily-integrated EEA Members, such as Norway, which has a bi-annual foreign policy dialogue with the EU.
- c) The EU has structured foreign policy dialogues with many countries, which include meetings between politicians, officials and experts. Those dialogues are most frequent and deep with “strategic partners” such as the United States.¹¹

12. As Thomas Raines and Professor Richard Whitman from Chatham House and the University of Kent noted in their written evidence, these models only allow EU Member States to be members of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) and the PSC and therefore present a “docking problem” for third countries. Raines and Whitman conclude that:

Non-member states have been granted a range of formats to share views and to facilitate collaboration on foreign policy issues and security missions outside of [the FAC and the PSC]. But none of these existing arrangements are likely to prove sufficiently attractive to the UK as they would not allow for sufficient influence on EU policy formation (via direct participation in key institutions). They only allow for signing up to EU foreign policy positions and security and defence operations after decisions on content, scope and action have already been determined. This is essentially participation and partnership on a ‘take it or leave it’ basis.¹²

13. In his written submission, Crispin Blunt MP, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the last Parliament, argued that, instead of following an existing model, the UK and the EU should agree a new model, under which:

- The UK would have PSC permanent observer status, with procedures “governing speaking rights, rights to place items on agendas, how UK positions might be recorded in minutes and documents and occasions calling for the UK representative to be absent.” The UK representative could signal in advance if the UK intends to align with CFSP positions.

11 Professor Karen E Smith ([EUR0001](#)) paras 3-5; Professor Paul James Cardwell ([EUR0006](#)) para 3; Dr Nicholas Wright ([EUR0013](#)) para 4; Mr Thomas Raines and Professor Richard Whitman ([EUR0016](#)) para 7; Dr Helene Sjurson ([EUR0021](#)) para 5. Professor Smith notes that in 2009, there were 33 expert-level meetings between the EU and the US.

12 Mr Thomas Raines and Professor Richard Whitman ([EUR0016](#)) para 7

- There would be regular high-level political meetings, such as half-yearly meetings between the Foreign Secretary, EU Foreign Ministers and the EU's High Representative/Vice President of the Commission.
- This would be part of an unprecedented special partnership that would recognise the UK's position as a former Member State and a global actor in world affairs and its pivotal position in European defence. This would allay concerns about creating precedents for other third countries.
- The special partnership would be complemented by an Enhanced Framework Participation Agreement, providing the UK with an automatic right of refusal to participate in CSDP missions, with a defined role in concept and mandate development and inclusion in force generation meetings, and with the possibility of hosting operational headquarters.¹³

In his written submission, Dr Wright similarly suggested that the UK could seek formal observer status, with speaking rights in the PSC, “perhaps relating to a clearly demarcated set of issue areas”. He concluded:

The UK could and should not expect formal rights in decision-making as a non-member—for example, it would no longer have its current ability to block decisions it opposes. However, the nature of CFSP decision-making is such that strength of argument, expertise and willingness to deploy resources bestow significant influence in policy decisions.¹⁴

14. In their written submission, Thomas Raines and Professor Whitman also stressed the advantages of a special partnership but pointed out the difficulties of preserving EU and UK decision-making autonomy. They concluded:

The principle that could form the basis of cooperation in the future is institutionalised non-binding collaboration. Under such an approach, the UK should seek to achieve a new status as a partner or associate (rather than member or observer) of the EU on CSFP [sic] and CSDP matters, present by default — unless there is a formal objection from a qualified majority of Member States — in both the PSC and FAC.¹⁵

Options for an informal format for post-Brexit co-operation

15. James Rogers of the Henry Jackson Society told us that he could see “no harm” in the UK having some sort of relationship with the CFSP, but did not see how this could involve membership of its institutions.¹⁶ In his written submission, Mr Rogers argued that the UK “should not seek to participate directly in EU policies or programmes, especially as a foreign country with no say over policy” and proposed instead a “Treaty of Mutual Association” leading to “An EU-UK Council, which would act—as a bilateral platform—as the foreign, development and security policy coordination mechanism between the two actors”.¹⁷

13 Mr Crispin Blunt MP ([EUR0002](#)) paras 8-15

14 Dr Nicholas Wright ([EUR0013](#)) paras 15-16

15 Mr Thomas Raines and Professor Richard Whitman ([EUR0016](#)) para 11

16 Q295

17 Mr James Rogers ([EUR0015](#)) para 6

16. In their written submission, former Foreign Secretary Lord Owen and former FCO official David Ludlow suggested that “[t]he UK and the EU will have to feel their way gradually to building a new relationship and it would be premature to look at putting in place any new structures”. They argued that the UK should be “extremely wary of seeing formalising EU foreign policy linkages as a priority”. Lord Owen and Mr Ludlow suggested that the UK should focus instead on NATO and the UN, and networks such as the G7 to “provide credible fora for continued UK involvement in wider European foreign policy”.¹⁸ Dr Nicholas Wright also suggested that the UK could engage Europe through NATO and the UN, where the UK has “an important leadership role”. He added that “continuing UK-EU alignment on many questions would seem likely”.¹⁹ Similarly, Professor Paul James Cardwell from the University of Strathclyde argued that “there is little doubt that foreign policy values between the UK and EU will continued [sic] to be shared”.²⁰

The Government’s position on participating in the CFSP/CSDP after Brexit

17. On 12 September 2017, the UK published a paper proposing that UK-EU co-operation in areas including foreign policy, defence and security should continue after Brexit through a partnership that is “deeper than any current third country partnership” and that the UK should continue to support the CSDP, including the possibility that it “could work with the EU during mandate development and detailed operational planning”.²¹ However, the paper did not offer precise detail about the mechanisms that might underpin this.

18. Several witnesses told us that this position paper and the Prime Minister’s Florence speech were well-received in Europe, but left important questions unanswered. Lord Hague said that the speech “set the right tone” but that “what we do not yet have are detailed proposals from either side about how to achieve [unprecedented co-operation]”.²² Dr Margriet Drent from Clingendael, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, said that the Prime Minister’s speech “created a bit more of a positive atmosphere” but that it “lacked some specificity on what it means”.²³

19. We asked the Foreign Secretary if the ambitions outlined in the UK position paper included observer status in the FAC or the PSC. He said that “there is no Government position—we have not decided what we want to seek” and that the precise format for co-operation was subject to negotiation.²⁴ He also said:

Whether we are going to be there in the room as observers or outside the room in some sort of Antici²⁵ group ... we will work it out. Whatever happens, we will come up with a mechanism by which we can show—this is the crucial point, which was made in the Florence speech and has gone down so well in other European capitals—our unconditional support for European security and defence. That is the crucial point that we need to

18 Lord David Owen and Mr David Ludlow ([EUR0018](#)) para 4

19 Dr Nicholas Wright ([EUR0013](#)) para 8

20 Professor Paul James Cardwell ([EUR0006](#)), para 16

21 [Future Partnership Paper on Foreign Policy, Defence and Development](#), HM Government, September 2017, pp. 18, 19

22 Q12 [Lord Hague], Q13 [Lord Hague]

23 Q122, Q123

24 [Oral evidence from the Foreign Secretary](#), 1 November 2017, Q20

25 The Antici Group is an informal group that meets to form an initial impression of the positions Member States will adopt at meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, which is itself the main preparatory body of the Council of the European Union.

get across. Exactly how we do it—exactly how the masonry of the buttress interlocks with the church—is for discussion, but we are going to be there and be supportive.²⁶

20. We asked the FCO Permanent Under Secretary (PUS), Sir Simon McDonald, about the Government’s position. He said that the FCO was “not making a pitch” for observer status in the FAC and the PSC and he concluded that “The mechanisms will emerge in the negotiations over the next 12 months. I do not think there is any need for us to pin all our hopes on one particular model”.²⁷ Asked whether he had advised the Foreign Secretary on a preferred course, the PUS told us that “this advice is still being developed” but that, ultimately,

The objective is continuous, transparent, automatic co-operation; we need to build up the networks—the links—that allow that to continue. Observer status is one, but it is not necessarily available; it is not necessarily the thing that is going to result at the end of this negotiation. I do not have a crystal ball; I do not know where we will be, but I will judge the model by whether we have continuous, automatic access.²⁸

21. The Minister for Europe told us that “we cannot state categorically which rooms we are going to be in” and that there was a “spectrum of possibility”, from an institutionalised format or “Brussels model” to a less structured format or “Washington model”. When asked whether the aim of automatic, continuous and transparent co-operation suggested “more of the structured Brussels end of the spectrum”, he said: “I would like to think that people will want to consult us, because of our significance as a large and strong country” but he did not say what end of the spectrum was appropriate in the light of this.²⁹

22. Similarly, in its written submission to this inquiry, the FCO stated that “the precise institutional frameworks to deliver [a] deep and special partnership will need to be discussed in negotiations” but that, in keeping with what the Prime Minister said in Florence, “[we] are working to ensure we have in place the network, structures and relationships that will allow us to intensify our influence in Europe—bilaterally and at an EU level”.³⁰

23. The UK will remain one of Europe’s most powerful foreign policy actors whether or not it has an institutionalised arrangement for foreign policy co-operation with the EU. While the UK can chart its own course in world affairs, it is in our interests to work closely with others. Co-operation with our nearest neighbours in the EU would help us to protect and project our shared values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law and to underpin the international rules-based order. We therefore welcome the ambition outlined in the Government’s position paper and in the Prime Minister’s Florence speech for an unprecedented UK-EU partnership, including the pledge of “unconditional support” for European security. It is essential that the negotiations reach a positive outcome because a bad deal that damages the economies of the UK and the EU will reduce the funding available to the security services that protect Europe.

26 [Oral evidence from the Foreign Secretary](#), 1 November 2017, Q32

27 [Oral evidence: FCO budget and resources](#), 15 November 2017, Q53, Q55

28 [Oral evidence: FCO budget and resources](#), 15 November 2017, Q56, Q60

29 Q136, Q139

30 Foreign and Commonwealth Office ([EUR0007](#)) paras 1.3, 4.5

24. We recognise that the precise contours of post-Brexit UK-EU co-operation in foreign policy, defence and security have yet to be negotiated. Some degree of institutionalised co-operation is, however, desirable and we therefore welcome the FCO Permanent Under Secretary's assurances to this Committee that the Government's objective is to secure continuous, transparent and automatic access to CFSP and CSDP decision-making mechanisms.

25. The Foreign Secretary told us that the Government has not yet decided what level of access to CFSP/CSDP decision-making it aims to secure or what framework it would like to put in place because to do so would put the UK "in the position of demandeurs". However, he also indicated that the UK may seek to participate in some EU initiatives after Brexit, suggesting that the UK has some specific objectives in mind. It is important that the Government clarify its preferred outcome soon, in order to facilitate the best result for both sides and to ensure adequate parliamentary and public scrutiny of this strategic relationship.

26. *We recommend that the Government publish an updated position paper within the next three months outlining in more detail its aims for the structures of post-Brexit UK-EU co-operation on foreign, defence and security policy. This should clearly set out the principles underpinning the proposed new structures. The ultimate goal should be to secure automatic and institutionalised collaboration that respects the decision-making autonomy of both the UK and the EU.*

27. *In order to facilitate an effective level of collaboration, we recommend that the Government should seek a status on the Political and Security Committee that allows the UK to have a representative in PSC meetings with speaking (if not voting) rights, except in circumstances agreed in advance by protocol.*

28. *We recommend that the Government should also seek to establish a UK-EU Strategic Partnership to facilitate enhanced dialogue on foreign, defence and security policy. This might include, for example, bi-annual summits of UK and EU27 foreign ministers and monthly meetings of Europe ministers, which could coincide with meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council.*

EU defence integration and the European Defence Fund

29. In June 2016, the EU published the Global Strategy, outlining a vision for an EU that is more active in world affairs.³¹ Dr Laura Chappell from the University of Surrey told us that one of its component parts is "the idea of strategic autonomy: that the EU should be capable of acting without US capabilities".³² Towards this end, some EU Member States triggered Permanent Structured Co-operation (PESCO), a Treaty of Lisbon provision designed to achieve greater defence co-operation among participating Member States.³³ In addition, in November 2016 the European Commission published plans for a European

31 The [Global Strategy](#) for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, June 2016

32 Q102

33 PESCO is a permanent framework for structured co-operation and coordination between participating Member States, who undertake binding commitments in support of joint capability development and inter-operability. See: European External Action Service, [PESCO factsheet](#), November 2017.

Defence Fund (EDF), an initiative intended to comprise a defence research strand to fund collaborative research in defence technologies, and a defence capability strand to fund joint capability development.³⁴

30. There was mixed opinion among the witnesses we spoke to on the question of whether the UK can and should support and participate in EU defence integration measures like the EDF. Lord Ricketts told us that the EU “is not the right forum for organising and commanding military forces” but he singled out the EDF as a measure that may achieve success and that the UK should consider participating in.³⁵ He said that “we should be encouraging any initiatives that produce improved capability” and that we should seek “an associate role in this European Defence Fund, so we can keep in touch with what is going on and ensure that British defence companies do not lose out”.³⁶

31. In his written submission, Crispin Blunt MP argued that “the UK should welcome these developments. Indeed, one of the consequences of leaving the EU is that the veto that the UK so often exercised on further EU defence integration ... leaves with us”.³⁷ Professor Alice Pannier from Johns Hopkins University said that it is not in the UK’s or the EU’s interests “that there be less cooperation in the field of defence and security in the future” and that “French officials are very keen to facilitate a British participation in the European Defence Fund”.³⁸ In contrast, James Rogers said that the UK should not “do anything that would allow any autonomous capability within the EU to grow” and that the UK should prevent this by removing our assets and capabilities.³⁹

32. We asked the Foreign Secretary about the Government’s position on participating in measures such as the EDF after Brexit. He said:

We will continue to participate in all such agencies as they may be useful to the UK. That is something for decision and negotiation. If it becomes impossible as a result of our ceasing to be on the European Defence Agency, if it becomes impossible as a result of our ceasing to be a member, what we will seek is for UK defence concerns to be properly treated.⁴⁰

33. In its written submission to the inquiry, the FCO said that the UK welcomes the EDF and that it is important that the legislation underpinning it—which is currently progressing through the Council and the European Parliament—“allows cooperation with third countries and that it does not lead to barriers to wider European industrial cooperation”.⁴¹

34. As a leading NATO power and EU Member, the UK has helped to underpin EU-NATO co-operation as envisaged in the EU-NATO Joint Declaration in July 2016. It will remain in the interests of the UK to work with leading non-EU NATO allies to encourage capability development within the EU. It is vital that the UK continues to argue that NATO should be the primary defence organisation protecting Europe, and that the EU should complement, not challenge, NATO. On this basis, the UK

34 European Commission, [European Defence Fund Factsheet](#), June 2017

35 Q2 [Lord Ricketts]

36 Q41, Q42

37 Mr Crispin Blunt MP ([EUR0002](#)) para 18

38 Professor Alice Pannier ([EUR0011](#)) para 7

39 Qs 298-299

40 [Oral evidence from the Foreign Secretary](#), 1 November 2017, Q23

41 [The Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(EUR0007\)](#), para 5.7

should remain open to the possibility of participation in some EU defence integration measures, on the understanding that national sovereignty over force deployment is preserved and that the UK's ability to co-operate with non-EU states is unconstrained.

35. It is important that the Government considers the future of UK access to the European defence industry and the potential implications for the UK defence industry of initiatives such as the European Defence Fund. If appropriate, this may include contributing to the EDF, on the understanding that the UK is an equal partner with EU Member States in the formulation and running of programmes in which it may choose to participate, and that the UK will retain the ability to act autonomously.

3 The UK's future bilateral relationships with the EU27

Introduction

36. Whatever format the UK and the EU agree for foreign policy, defence and security co-operation, UK diplomats in Europe will face a more challenging environment after Brexit. Currently, UK ministers and officials engage with the EU and the EU27 at all levels because they are embedded in policy-making in Brussels. This level of automatic contact between UK ministers and officials and their EU and Member State counterparts will not continue in the same way after Brexit. The FCO may therefore need to replicate those interactions bilaterally, both to influence outcomes in the capitals before decisions are made at the EU level and to ensure that bilateral relations with the EU27 do not suffer as a result of reduced contact in Brussels. As Thomas Raines and Professor Whitman wrote in their submission, “[m]embership of the EU has provided the UK with significant efficiencies in enabling it to address a wide range of policy issues via a multilateral format with 27 other European countries”. They concluded that the UK will therefore “need to broaden and deepen its bilateral links with the 27 member states” after Brexit.⁴²

37. The evidence we received suggests that the FCO will have to devote more resources than it currently deploys in both Brussels and the EU27 capitals, because the two are interdependent. The complexity of the EU’s policy-making process will require the UK to adopt a joined-up approach, with Posts working together to ensure the UK’s voice is heard both in the Brussels-based institutions and in the Member State capitals before key decisions are made. Such an approach will need to be underpinned by a broad, deep and long-term vision for UK diplomacy in Europe after Brexit. As Lord Ricketts told us:

One key thing that will be necessary after we leave is that we reinforce our effort in the capitals [...] because the FCO is now very, very thinly stretched across the EU capitals. We have got away with it partly because we have been able to do the work in Brussels in the Committees. When we are no longer in the Committees, we need to reinforce in the other 27.⁴³

Similarly, in her submission, Professor Karen Smith from the London School of Economics wrote that “The UK will need to invest considerably in diplomatic resources that are necessary to try to shape EU decisions from outside the decision-making process, both in Brussels and in national capitals”.⁴⁴

38. The evidence we received suggested that, if FCO resources remain roughly at current levels, some bilateral relationships may need to be prioritised over others. For example, Lord Ricketts pointed to the importance of UK-France relations, particularly in terms of bilateral defence co-operation under the 2010 Lancaster House Defence Co-operation Treaty:

We are the two [European] countries who are most active in the world, who have the most effective armed forces, who see the threats in much the

42 Mr Thomas Raines and Professor Richard Whitman ([EUR0016](#)) para 28

43 Q6

44 Professor Karen E Smith ([EUR0001](#)) para 2

same way. So the bilateral defence co-operation between Britain and France ought to become even more important after Brexit as a supplement or complement to [the] EU global strategy. To my mind, it is really important that we reinforce what we have achieved so far under this Lancaster House process to show that Britain and France are still two global countries with common, shared interests.

Similarly, Dr Drent said that the Lancaster House Treaty “is unprecedented in its scope and scale” and she predicted that, after Brexit, the UK and France will “still be able to find each other because they have a similar demand and outlook”.⁴⁵

39. In their written submission, Thomas Raines and Professor Whitman said that bilateral relations with France and Germany—and the triangulation of relations between London, Paris and Berlin—will be an essential part of UK diplomacy in Europe after Brexit.⁴⁶ Similarly, James Rogers singled out France and Germany in particular and argued that the UK needed a strong diplomatic presence in each, both in order to understand and influence their relationships with the EU and to engage each of them on areas of bilateral interest.⁴⁷

The FCO’s role in Europe after Brexit

40. The Foreign Secretary and the PUS told us that the Department’s role is to provide a platform for the whole of Her Majesty’s Government overseas. The Foreign Secretary said that, in general, the FCO “provides a platform” for as many as 29 Government departments and agencies but that “everybody on those platforms understands that it is the FCO that is responsible for the engagement with our domestic hosts”.⁴⁸ However, the PUS told us that there was room for improvement in this regard, particularly as Brexit approaches:

The Foreign Office is a strong institution, but there are some important ways in which it needs to change as we contemplate the task ahead. One is that we need to be the go-to Department for everything to do with overseas. Over the last period, our international policy has become more fragmented: with the creation of DFID, DIT and DExEU, there are now multiple players in international policy. After we leave the European Union, it all needs to be more joined up, and the Foreign Office should lead that.⁴⁹

Sir Simon went on to say that “there needs to be an overall foreign policy of this country, and having separate policies in different parts of Whitehall means that the overall effect is less than it could and should be”.⁵⁰

41. The Foreign Secretary told us that the FCO plays an “important role in making sure that we help our partners to understand what we want to achieve” in Brexit negotiations.⁵¹ The PUS said that “The FCO is not leading on Brexit, but we do do Brexit” and that the FCO had lead responsibility in negotiations on the Overseas Territories; sanctions; third-

45 Q60.

46 Dr Nicholas Wright (EUR0013) para 4

47 Mr James Rogers (EUR0015) para 4(i), 4(ii)

48 [Oral evidence from the Foreign Secretary](#), 1 November 2017, Q5

49 [Oral evidence: FCO budget and resources](#), 15 November 2017, Q42

50 [Oral evidence: FCO budget and resources](#), 15 November 2017, Q45

51 [Oral evidence from the Foreign Secretary](#), 1 November 2017, Q6

country agreements; and the CFSP.⁵² The Minister for Europe told us that he was not involved in negotiations and that his focus was on bilateral relations.⁵³ He also said that DExEU was doing most of the work on Brexit but that the FCO “will, in our bilateral engagement with all the 27, reinforce the [UK’s] stated and open positions”. He concluded that “most of what we are doing is not Brexit. In a way, that is the whole point: we have the whole rest of the world as well”.⁵⁴

42. During this inquiry, we received mixed messages from the Foreign Secretary, the Minister for Europe, and the FCO Permanent Under Secretary. On the one hand, we were told that the FCO was not “doing Brexit” and it was focussing its attention on the capitals of the EU27. However, we were also told that the FCO had a crucial role to play in Brexit and that it was leading on negotiations on CFSP/CSDP and on other issues such as Gibraltar and sanctions. While the FCO said that it provided a platform for HMG in Europe, including the Department for Exiting the EU, it is unclear what this means in practice.

43. We welcome the Government’s pledge that the UK will be more active than ever on the world stage after Brexit. However, we believe that close relations with our friends and allies in Europe, with whom we share values and interests, must be a necessary element of the Government’s vision for a ‘Global Britain’. We therefore recommend that the FCO publishes a paper outlining the overall goals and the specific priorities of UK foreign policy in Europe after Brexit. This should be published before the Western Balkans Summit in London in July 2018, so that the Government can use that occasion to assure the UK’s friends and partners across Europe that the UK will remain a cornerstone of European foreign policy and defence.

The FCO’s resources in Europe

44. The resources the FCO allocates to its European network are crucial to its ability to implement a coherent diplomatic strategy in Europe after Brexit. For several years prior to Brexit, however, the FCO moved resources away from Europe. Lord Hague told us that, when he was Foreign Secretary (2010–2014), he “oversaw what we called the network shift where we moved many diplomatic posts east and south in the world” and that “[q]uite a lot of that capacity came out of individual nations in the EU”.⁵⁵

45. Lord Hague pointed out that the FCO “did not have Brexit in mind” when these changes were made but he said that that “needs some revision now”.⁵⁶ Lord Ricketts compared Paris, where the FCO had “substantial staff”, to “some of the smaller capitals”, where there might be “two UK-based diplomats and the capacity to engage across the spectrum is very much less”. He concluded that in “EU capitals, when the load falls on them to lobby for things that used to be done in Brussels, an absolute minimum of five or six UK-based staff would be necessary to cover that spectrum”.⁵⁷

46. In their written submission, Professor Anand Menon and Alan Wager from the UK in a Changing Europe programme said that the FCO needed to reverse “the trend towards

52 [Oral evidence: FCO budget and resources](#), 15 November 2017, Q49, Q50

53 Q147-148

54 Q188 [Sir Alan Duncan]

55 Q19 [Lord Hague]

56 Q19 [Lord Hague]

57 Q7, Q8

the downsizing of the European network” and that “[t]his means a significant increase in resources for diplomatic efforts at a bilateral level, as well as maintaining links with the EU institutions”.⁵⁸ Menon and Wager analysed the number of UK-based staff in Posts in the EU27 and showed that, in all but one, the number of UK-based staff declined between 2006 and 2017, in some cases considerably. Overall, 486 UK-based staff were deployed in the EU27 capitals in 2006, and 220 in 2017.⁵⁹ Professor Menon and Mr Wager also stated that the FCO particularly needed to improve its ability to recruit and retain Research Analysts with specialist knowledge of the EU27, if necessary by increasing their pay to compare with similar roles in academia.⁶⁰

47. Although we heard evidence from a range of FCO sources about additional UK staff deployed in the European network since the Brexit referendum, it remains unclear exactly how many additional staff have been or will be recruited, how many have been or will be redeployed from elsewhere, and where they have or will be redeployed from.

48. When the Foreign Secretary appeared before us on 1 November, he said that to “take account of Brexit and our priorities there, we are beefing up our bilateral diplomacy with our European friends, deploying 50 more diplomats with other EU members”.⁶¹ He framed this specifically in terms of prioritising bilateral relations with the EU27, in contrast to the FCO’s previous focus on Brussels:

We tended to put all our eggs in the Brussels basket. We tended to think that a lot of bilateral diplomacy, particularly with very important partners such as France and Germany, could be conducted through that prism and optic. The effect was even more deleterious perhaps with smaller EU countries, where we thought, ‘Oh well, we’ll see them at the FAC or at the Council meeting in Brussels; we don’t necessarily need to engage in their capitals in the way that we might.’ That is why we are putting in another 50 staff [...] this, I think, will give us the presence and the throw weight we need in those other European capitals, particularly ones that have felt a bit neglected⁶²

49. On 15 November, the PUS confirmed that 50 UK-based staff had been moved to Posts in the EU, including UKRep, as a “short term measure” for Brexit negotiations, though not all of them had yet been deployed.⁶³ He also said that that the FCO was “in very advanced conversations with the Treasury” about recruiting “over 100 extra people temporarily for the task in hand”.⁶⁴ However, on 28 November, the Minister for Europe and senior FCO officials appeared unsure if those additional 100 UK-based staff included the 50 already recruited.⁶⁵ The Minister subsequently clarified in writing that, as well as the 50 additional UK-based staff recruited since the referendum, the FCO was “planning to create over 100 additional new roles in London and our Europe network to support EU Exit work”.⁶⁶

58 Professor Anand Menon and Mr Alan Wager ([EUR0008](#)) paras 5, 14

59 Professor Anand Menon and Mr Alan Wager ([EUR0008](#)) table 1

60 Professor Anand Menon and Mr Alan Wager ([EUR0008](#)) paras 7, 9, 11

61 [Oral evidence from the Foreign Secretary](#), 1 November 2017, Q2

62 [Oral evidence from the Foreign Secretary](#), 1 November 2017, Q4

63 [Oral evidence: FCO budget and resources](#), 15 November 2017, Q89

64 [Oral evidence: FCO budget and resources](#), 15 November 2017, Q24

65 Q169-170

66 Letter to the Committee from Sir Alan Duncan, 13 December 2017 ([EUR0024](#))

50. On 15 November, the PUS told us that additional staff had been recruited for posts in the EU. However, on 28 November the Europe Director told us that this additional resource was “not just for the Europe network but to deal with the implications of Brexit on sanctions, on consular, on work across the board”.⁶⁷ She also told us that the initial 50 would be deployed across 33 Posts in Europe, including six outside the EU, and that they would “support our Embassies’ efforts to understand and influence our European partners’ positions on key exit issues [and] help identify and develop new opportunities for bilateral cooperation”. Sir Alan said that this additional deployment had been funded through “staff savings in Asia Pacific, South Asia and Afghanistan, Americas and Africa”.⁶⁸

51. More than 18 months after the referendum, the FCO has not yet put in place sufficient additional resources in its European network to manage the effects of Brexit. In the long-term, the FCO has been underfunded. Since 2010, moreover, it has deprioritised its European network in favour of its Asian network. This is no longer appropriate but as we aspire to a global role, both need extra resources. The FCO is now too thinly stretched in Europe at a time when it has a vital role to play in transmitting information to the UK Government, influencing the EU27 and delivering the message that the UK is leaving the EU, but not leaving Europe. By diverting FCO resources from other regions, and from Asia in particular, the UK’s influence outside Europe risks being undermined just as the UK will be relying more on relations with countries from these areas post-Brexit.

52. The FCO will need to work harder in the EU27 capitals after Brexit but we are not satisfied that it has sufficient resources to do so. We welcome the FCO’s decision to deploy an additional 50 UK-based staff in Europe, but it has taken too long to deploy them. Moreover, it remains unclear what specific roles they will play. It is also unclear what further steps the FCO is taking to ensure that its European network can cope with the increased demands of maintaining effective diplomatic relationships with the EU27, without the level of automatic and regular access to the EU27 governments that came with EU membership.

53. *The FCO must increase its diplomatic presence in EU27 capitals, focussing on Berlin and Paris, and prioritising political and economic staff and Research Analysts. In its response to this Report, the FCO should clarify where the 50 additional staff already recruited have come from; where they have been deployed; what they are doing; what training they received before being deployed; and how and when the FCO will measure their impact. Without that information, it is difficult to see how these are truly additional staff.*

54. *The FCO should commit to deploying the additional 100 UK-based staff that the Permanent Under Secretary mentioned when he appeared before this Committee. In its response to this Report, the FCO should provide us with a timeline for this additional deployment and set out how it will evaluate its overall impact. If these additional staff are recruited temporarily, as the PUS suggested, the FCO should provide us with a detailed explanation as to why they will not be needed permanently.*

67 Q177 [Caroline Wilson]

68 Letter to the Committee from Sir Alan Duncan, 13 December 2017 ([EUR0024](#)). The additional 50 slots will be in: Athens, Belgrade, Berlin, Berne, Bratislava, Brussels, Bucharest, Budapest, Copenhagen, Dublin, Helsinki, Istanbul, Lisbon, Ljubljana, Luxembourg, Madrid, Oslo, Paris, Prague, Riga, Rome, Skopje, Sofia, Stockholm, Tallinn, The Hague, Tirana, Valletta, Vienna, Vilnius, Warsaw, Zagreb, and UK Representative in Brussels

55. *If it has not done so already, the FCO should create a dedicated cadre of UK-based staff with a deep understanding of the EU institutions and the domestic politics and dynamics of its Member States and whose careers are anchored in the EU and its Member States. This could be modelled on the EECADRE, which was launched in 2015 and focuses on Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The FCO should also consider strengthening the practitioner and expert level training on the EU and its Member States that it provides in its Diplomatic Academy.*

The UK's Mission to the EU

56. The evidence we received suggested that the UK's mission to the EU will need to serve as a key hub for UK diplomacy in Europe after Brexit. For example, Lord Ricketts said:

In Brussels we are going to need, if not exactly the same resources we have now, then a large, well-staffed, well-resourced mission that can work with the various nations in Brussels in the run-up to decisions being taken and after. It will no doubt work in the European Parliament as well, so that, like other non-EU countries—such as Norway, Canada, Australia and many others—we are in the lobbying process in Brussels, and we will know very well how that works. In capitals upstream of discussions in Brussels, it will also need to be in not just foreign ministries, but right across governments [...] It has to be on both those prongs.⁶⁹

57. The importance Lord Ricketts attached to the mission in Brussels was echoed in much of the written evidence we received. Professor Karen Smith said:

Trying to shape EU decisions is resource-intensive: the third country has to invest a lot in diplomacy, with people on the ground in Brussels trying to keep track not only of the substance of foreign policy discussions, but where foreign policy discussions are taking place (in which committee, forum, venue, and so on) and who the most important players are.⁷⁰

58. The Foreign Secretary told us that the FCO has “no plans, as far as I understand it, at the moment to increase the permanent representation” in Brussels.⁷¹ The Minister for Europe told us that UKRep “will need to be a significant conduit or base”. We asked the Minister if the UK's post-Brexit representation in Brussels might look like the UK Embassy in Washington DC, with a core FCO staff supplemented by other Departments and Agencies, or if it would mimic the EU structures, with the bilateral focus in the EU27 capitals. He told us that it will likely be both, but that the idea of having a UK Minister Resident in Brussels has not been considered.⁷² The FCO's Europe Director said that:

We are of course looking at what third countries do in Brussels and how their representations or missions there are staffed. Much of it depends on

69 Q28 [Lord Ricketts]

70 Professor Karen E Smith ([EUR0001](#)) para 12. See also: Professor Anand Menon and Mr Alan Wager ([EUR0008](#)) para 14; Dr Nicholas Wright ([EUR0013](#)) para 8(ii); Mr James Rogers ([EUR0015](#)) para 6

71 [Oral evidence from the Foreign Secretary](#), 1 November 2017, Q15

72 Q200, Q202

the type of partnership we have with the European Union [...] assuming that there will still be some kinds of meetings where the EU and the UK are present. We are looking at that.⁷³

59. It is vital that the UK maintains a significant diplomatic presence in Brussels. The task of representing the UK's interests and exercising influence in the EU institutions will be more difficult when the UK is a third country. Considering the time it took the FCO to enhance its presence in Europe after the Brexit referendum, plans need to be put in place now for the UK's representation in Brussels after Brexit.

60. In its response to this Report, the FCO should provide us with the details of its recent analysis of third countries' missions to the EU. Using this evidence, the FCO should set out a detailed plan for what the UK's mission to the EU will look like after Brexit. Within this, the FCO should consider creating a dedicated Minister for Europe, who would focus solely on the UK's relationship with the EU and its Member States, and would be resident in Brussels, with lead responsibility for the FCO's European network.

4 UK-Ireland Relations and Brexit

Introduction

61. Ireland is the UK's nearest neighbour and one of its closest partners. As both the UK and the EU have made clear in Brexit negotiations, UK-Ireland relations will be a key element of the UK's overall relationship with the EU after Brexit. The UK-Ireland relationship is uniquely broad and deep and the UK co-operates with Ireland more than it does with almost any other partner. For these reasons the Committee's first visit was to Ireland. We travelled to Dublin and the border counties of Cavan and Monaghan to explore the implications of Brexit for UK-Ireland relations and, more particularly, what can be done to ensure that those relations remain as strong after Brexit as they were before.⁷⁴

Positive momentum: UK-Ireland relations since 1998

62. Many of those we met in Ireland stressed that UK-Ireland relations had gone from strength to strength since the signing of the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. This positive momentum was exemplified by the Queen's State Visit to Ireland in 2011 and the Irish President's State Visit to the UK in 2014. The breadth and depth of UK-Ireland relations is now evident in the range of areas in which the two countries co-operate closely. In her written submission to this inquiry, Dr Etain Tannam from Trinity College Dublin said that "Irish and UK governmental cooperation in the UN has been strong in global human rights and in development issues". She also said that in recent years the two countries have enhanced their co-operation on UN peacekeeping.⁷⁵

The consequences of Brexit for UK-Ireland relations

63. In its written submission to this inquiry, St. Mary's University, Twickenham said that common EU membership had contributed to the improvement in UK-Ireland relations because "At the height of the Troubles in Northern Ireland meetings in Brussels often provided a quiet space in which Dublin and London could talk".⁷⁶ On the bilateral level, "regular meetings across a spectrum of issues of mutual concern within the EU have kept Ireland and the UK strongly in each other's orbit" and this has been "an unmeasured but powerful source of growth in mutual understanding and mutual endeavour".⁷⁷ Similarly, Dr Tannam said that the bilateral relationship has benefited from "the EU's framework for corridor talks and increased communication".⁷⁸ Both St. Mary's University and Dr Tannam warned that losing this EU-based co-operation could undermine the foundations of the UK-Ireland bilateral relationship.

74 We note the work being done by other Select Committees on the specific circumstances of Brexit for Northern Ireland and Ireland, and the communities either side of the border in particular. See the inquiries being carried out by the [Exiting the EU Committee](#) and the [Northern Ireland Affairs Committee](#).

75 Dr Etain Tannam ([EUR0017](#)) para 18

76 This submission draws on contributions from Mary McAleese (President of Ireland, 1997–2011); Professor Sir Ivor Roberts (former UK Ambassador to Ireland, Italy and Yugoslavia); Professor Noel Fahey (former Irish Ambassador to the United States and the Holy See); and Professor Francis Campbell, Vice Chancellor of St Mary's University.

77 St. Mary's University Twickenham ([EUR0009](#)) para 2

78 Dr Etain Tannam ([EUR0017](#)) para 5

UK-Ireland relations after Brexit

64. Many in Ireland told us that good UK-Ireland relations would endure after Brexit. This was echoed in St. Mary's University's written submission:

The relationship between the UK and Ireland will continue to be very close after Brexit. The personal ties alone between the two islands and the large number of citizens of each resident in the other jurisdiction make this inevitable. So do the ties of language, culture, geography and history. There are huge economic and trade interests in common. And there is the joint and continuing concern with the preservation of the peace process in Northern Ireland.⁷⁹

However, both St. Mary's University and Dr Tannam stressed that bilateral co-operation must be enhanced to compensate for reduced contact in Brussels. Dr Tannam said that since 1998 the UK and Ireland had recognised each other as “kinship states” but that this depended on institutionalised and informal communication at all levels. She noted that between July 2016 and August 2017 there were only two joint prime ministerial meetings and that the UK-Ireland Permanent Secretaries and Secretaries General Group did not meet.⁸⁰ She concluded that “there is a clear need to revitalize, or create formal bilateral institutions to serve the relationship”.⁸¹ Similarly, St. Mary's University wrote that “substantial existing institutional contacts between Dublin and London [...] range from the level of officials through parliamentary and political contact up to the highest level” and that this “will have to evolve rapidly and with a much greater degree of coherence than has been evident hitherto”.⁸² They also said that the UK and Irish Embassies in Dublin and London would have to “assume a new significance” after Brexit.⁸³

The FCO and UK-Ireland Relations

65. In November 2017, the Foreign Secretary paid his first official visit to Ireland since assuming office. In an accompanying article in the *Irish Times*, he said: “Of the 52 countries I have visited as Foreign Secretary, Ireland is more closely tied to Britain by kinship and history than just about any other”.⁸⁴ Echoing this, the FCO's Europe Director told us that “an incredible level of shared understanding with Ireland” has been achieved in recent years, and that this has been combined with regular contact between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, the annual dialogue of permanent secretaries, and “a huge amount of other co-operation on defence, health, culture and many other areas”.⁸⁵ The Minister for Europe also told us that “there are good contacts between the Foreign Secretary and the [Irish] Foreign Minister, Mr Coveney. I think that the closeness of personal contacts is pretty strong”, but he added that the bilateral relationship is experiencing “a slightly bumpy period”.⁸⁶

79 St. Mary's University Twickenham (EUR0009) para 1

80 The Permanent Secretaries and Secretaries General Group was set up in 2012 to bring together senior Civil Servants from both jurisdictions to produce plans to intensify UK-Ireland co-operation.

81 Dr Etain Tannam (EUR0017) para 16

82 St. Mary's University Twickenham (EUR0009) para 6

83 St. Mary's University Twickenham (EUR0009) para 7

84 Boris Johnson, ‘UK and Ireland can strengthen ties via Brexit’, the *Irish Times*, 17 November 2017

85 Q208 [Caroline Wilson]

86 Q213

66. **Close relations with Ireland are vital to the UK's national interest. We therefore welcome the Government's commitment to preserving the progress that has been made in UK-Ireland relations in recent years and its pledge that there will be no return to the borders and the violence of the past. We regret that tensions in the period leading up to the European Council summit in December appeared to endanger the hard-won positive momentum in UK-Ireland relations. We welcome the progress made thus far, but recognise that much more needs to be done.**

67. In order to ensure that the foundations of UK-Ireland relations remain as strong as they can be, we recommend that the FCO increase its diplomatic presence in Ireland, both in terms of size and seniority, beyond the additional UK-based staff deployed in the Embassy in Dublin after the Brexit referendum. This additional deployment of UK-based staff should focus on public relations as well as inter-governmental relations.

68. By July 2018, the FCO, working as necessary with the British-Irish Council and the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, should produce an analysis of the UK-Ireland bilateral relationship, containing recommendations to improve it and options to revitalize existing, or create new, bilateral institutions.

Conclusions and recommendations

The UK and EU foreign, defence and security policy and Brexit

1. The UK will remain one of Europe's most powerful foreign policy actors whether or not it has an institutionalised arrangement for foreign policy co-operation with the EU. While the UK can chart its own course in world affairs, it is in our interests to work closely with others. Co-operation with our nearest neighbours in the EU would help us to protect and project our shared values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law and to underpin the international rules-based order. We therefore welcome the ambition outlined in the Government's position paper and in the Prime Minister's Florence speech for an unprecedented UK-EU partnership, including the pledge of "unconditional support" for European security. It is essential that the negotiations reach a positive outcome because a bad deal that damages the economies of the UK and the EU will reduce the funding available to the security services that protect Europe. (Paragraph 23)
2. We recognise that the precise contours of post-Brexit UK-EU co-operation in foreign policy, defence and security have yet to be negotiated. Some degree of institutionalised co-operation is, however, desirable and we therefore welcome the FCO Permanent Under Secretary's assurances to this Committee that the Government's objective is to secure continuous, transparent and automatic access to CFSP and CSDP decision-making mechanisms. (Paragraph 24)
3. The Foreign Secretary told us that the Government has not yet decided what level of access to CFSP/CSDP decision-making it aims to secure or what framework it would like to put in place because to do so would put the UK "in the position of demandeurs". However, he also indicated that the UK may seek to participate in some EU initiatives after Brexit, suggesting that the UK has some specific objectives in mind. It is important that the Government clarify its preferred outcome soon, in order to facilitate the best result for both sides and to ensure adequate parliamentary and public scrutiny of this strategic relationship. (Paragraph 25)
4. *We recommend that the Government publish an updated position paper within the next three months outlining in more detail its aims for the structures of post-Brexit UK-EU co-operation on foreign, defence and security policy. This should clearly set out the principles underpinning the proposed new structures. The ultimate goal should be to secure automatic and institutionalised collaboration that respects the decision-making autonomy of both the UK and the EU.* (Paragraph 26)
5. *In order to facilitate an effective level of collaboration, we recommend that the Government should seek a status on the Political and Security Committee that allows the UK to have a representative in PSC meetings with speaking (if not voting) rights, except in circumstances agreed in advance by protocol.* (Paragraph 27)
6. *We recommend that the Government should also seek to establish a UK-EU Strategic Partnership to facilitate enhanced dialogue on foreign, defence and security policy.*

This might include, for example, bi-annual summits of UK and EU27 foreign ministers and monthly meetings of Europe ministers, which could coincide with meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council. (Paragraph 28)

7. As a leading NATO power and EU Member, the UK has helped to underpin EU-NATO co-operation as envisaged in the EU-NATO Joint Declaration in July 2016. It will remain in the interests of the UK to work with leading non-EU NATO allies to encourage capability development within the EU. It is vital that the UK continues to argue that NATO should be the primary defence organisation protecting Europe, and that the EU should complement, not challenge, NATO. On this basis, the UK should remain open to the possibility of participation in some EU defence integration measures, on the understanding that national sovereignty over force deployment is preserved and that the UK's ability to co-operate with non-EU states is unconstrained. (Paragraph 34)
8. It is important that the Government considers the future of UK access to the European defence industry and the potential implications for the UK defence industry of initiatives such as the European Defence Fund. If appropriate, this may include contributing to the EDF, on the understanding that the UK is an equal partner with EU Member States in the formulation and running of programmes in which it may choose to participate, and that the UK will retain the ability to act autonomously. (Paragraph 35)

The UK's future bilateral relationships with the EU27

9. During this inquiry, we received mixed messages from the Foreign Secretary, the Minister for Europe, and the FCO Permanent Under Secretary. On the one hand, we were told that the FCO was not "doing Brexit" and it was focussing its attention on the capitals of the EU27. However, we were also told that the FCO had a crucial role to play in Brexit and that it was leading on negotiations on CFSP/CSDP and on other issues such as Gibraltar and sanctions. While the FCO said that it provided a platform for HMG in Europe, including the Department for Exiting the EU, it is unclear what this means in practice. (Paragraph 42)
10. *We welcome the Government's pledge that the UK will be more active than ever on the world stage after Brexit. However, we believe that close relations with our friends and allies in Europe, with whom we share values and interests, must be a necessary element of the Government's vision for a 'Global Britain'. We therefore recommend that the FCO publishes a paper outlining the overall goals and the specific priorities of UK foreign policy in Europe after Brexit. This should be published before the Western Balkans Summit in London in July 2018, so that the Government can use that occasion to assure the UK's friends and partners across Europe that the UK will remain a cornerstone of European foreign policy and defence. (Paragraph 43)*
11. More than 18 months after the referendum, the FCO has not yet put in place sufficient additional resources in its European network to manage the effects of Brexit. In the long-term, the FCO has been underfunded. Since 2010, moreover, it has deprioritised its European network in favour of its Asian network. This is no longer appropriate but as we aspire to a global role, both need extra resources. The FCO is now too thinly stretched in Europe at a time when it has a vital role to

play in transmitting information to the UK Government, influencing the EU27 and delivering the message that the UK is leaving the EU, but not leaving Europe. By diverting FCO resources from other regions, and from Asia in particular, the UK's influence outside Europe risks being undermined just as the UK will be relying more on relations with countries from these areas post-Brexit. (Paragraph 51)

12. The FCO will need to work harder in the EU27 capitals after Brexit but we are not satisfied that it has sufficient resources to do so. We welcome the FCO's decision to deploy an additional 50 UK-based staff in Europe, but it has taken too long to deploy them. Moreover, it remains unclear what specific roles they will play. It is also unclear what further steps the FCO is taking to ensure that its European network can cope with the increased demands of maintaining effective diplomatic relationships with the EU27, without the level of automatic and regular access to the EU27 governments that came with EU membership. (Paragraph 52)
13. *The FCO must increase its diplomatic presence in EU27 capitals, focussing on Berlin and Paris, and prioritising political and economic staff and Research Analysts. In its response to this Report, the FCO should clarify where the 50 additional staff already recruited have come from; where they have been deployed; what they are doing; what training they received before being deployed; and how and when the FCO will measure their impact. Without that information, it is difficult to see how these are truly additional staff.* (Paragraph 53)
14. *The FCO should commit to deploying the additional 100 UK-based staff that the Permanent Under Secretary mentioned when he appeared before this Committee. In its response to this Report, the FCO should provide us with a timeline for this additional deployment and set out how it will evaluate its overall impact. If these additional staff are recruited temporarily, as the PUS suggested, the FCO should provide us with a detailed explanation as to why they will not be needed permanently.* (Paragraph 54)
15. *If it has not done so already, the FCO should create a dedicated cadre of UK-based staff with a deep understanding of the EU institutions and the domestic politics and dynamics of its Member States and whose careers are anchored in the EU and its Member States. This could be modelled on the EECADRE, which was launched in 2015 and focuses on Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The FCO should also consider strengthening the practitioner and expert level training on the EU and its Member States that it provides in its Diplomatic Academy.* (Paragraph 55)
16. It is vital that the UK maintains a significant diplomatic presence in Brussels. The task of representing the UK's interests and exercising influence in the EU institutions will be more difficult when the UK is a third country. Considering the time it took the FCO to enhance its presence in Europe after the Brexit referendum, plans need to be put in place now for the UK's representation in Brussels after Brexit. (Paragraph 59)
17. *In its response to this Report, the FCO should provide us with the details of its recent analysis of third countries' missions to the EU. Using this evidence, the FCO should set out a detailed plan for what the UK's mission to the EU will look like after Brexit. Within this, the FCO should consider creating a dedicated Minister for Europe, who*

would focus solely on the UK's relationship with the EU and its Member States, and would be resident in Brussels, with lead responsibility for the FCO's European network. (Paragraph 60)

UK-Ireland Relations and Brexit

18. Close relations with Ireland are vital to the UK's national interest. We therefore welcome the Government's commitment to preserving the progress that has been made in UK-Ireland relations in recent years and its pledge that there will be no return to the borders and the violence of the past. We regret that tensions in the period leading up to the European Council summit in December appeared to endanger the hard-won positive momentum in UK-Ireland relations. We welcome the progress made thus far, but recognise that much more needs to be done. (Paragraph 66)
19. *In order to ensure that the foundations of UK-Ireland relations remain as strong as they can be, we recommend that the FCO increase its diplomatic presence in Ireland, both in terms of size and seniority, beyond the additional UK-based staff deployed in the Embassy in Dublin after the Brexit referendum. This additional deployment of UK-based staff should focus on public relations as well as inter-governmental relations. (Paragraph 67)*
20. *By July 2018, the FCO, working as necessary with the British-Irish Council and the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, should produce an analysis of the UK-Ireland bilateral relationship, containing recommendations to improve it and options to revitalize existing, or create new, bilateral institutions. (Paragraph 68)*

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 23 January 2018

Members present:

Tom Tugendhat, in the Chair

Ian Austin	Stephen Gethins
Chris Bryant	Ian Murray
Rt Hon Ann Clwyd	Andrew Rosindell
Mike Gapes	Royston Smith

Draft Report (*The future of UK diplomacy in Europe*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 68 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 30 January at 2.15pm]

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 31 October 2017

Question number

Rt Hon. Lord Hague of Richmond and Lord Ricketts GCMG, GCVO

[Q1–47](#)

Tuesday 7 November 2017

Dr Laura Chappell, University of Surrey, **Dr Margriet Drent**, Clingendael, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, and **Dr Charlotte Galpin**, University of Birmingham

[Q48–132](#)

Tuesday 28 November 2017

Rt Hon. Sir Alan Duncan KCMG MP, Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, **Mark Gooding**, Assistant Director Europe – North, and **Caroline Wilson**, Europe Director, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

[Q133–258](#)

Wednesday 29 November 2017

Professor Robert Tombs, University of Cambridge, and **James Rogers**, Henry Jackson Society

[Q259–342](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

EUR numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 African Solutions to African Migration ([EUR0014](#))
- 2 African Solutions to African Migration ([EUR0023](#))
- 3 Mr Crispin Blunt ([EUR0002](#))
- 4 British Council ([EUR0010](#))
- 5 Professor Paul James Cardwell ([EUR0006](#))
- 6 Centre for European Studies, Canterbury Christ Church University ([EUR0020](#))
- 7 Chatham House and University of Kent ([EUR0016](#))
- 8 City of London Corporation ([EUR0019](#))
- 9 Foreign and Commonwealth Office ([EUR0007](#))
- 10 Foreign and Commonwealth Office ([EUR0024](#))
- 11 Dr Charlotte Galpin ([EUR0003](#))
- 12 Professor James Ker-Lindsay ([EUR0012](#))
- 13 Lord David Owen and Mr David Ludlow ([EUR0018](#))
- 14 Professor Alice Pannier ([EUR0011](#))
- 15 Mr James Rogers ([EUR0015](#))
- 16 Dr Helene Sjursen ([EUR0021](#))
- 17 Professor Karen Smith ([EUR0001](#))
- 18 St Mary's University, Twickenham ([EUR0009](#))
- 19 Dr Etain Tannam ([EUR0017](#))
- 20 Professor Robert Tombs ([EUR0022](#))
- 21 UK in a Changing Europe ([EUR0008](#))
- 22 Dr Nicholas Wright ([EUR0013](#))

List of reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2017–19

First Report	Violence in Rakhine State and the UK's response	HC 435
First Special Report	The United Kingdom's relations with Russia: Government Response	HC 332
Second Special Report	The UK's relations with Turkey: Government Response	HC 333
Third Special Report	'Political Islam', and the Muslim Brotherhood Review: Government Response	HC 334