



Library Note

Leaving the European Union: UK Armed Forces and Diplomatic Service

On 8 December 2016, the House of Lords will debate the following motion, tabled by Lord Sterling of Plaistow (Conservative):

To move that this House takes note of the impact of the withdrawal from the European Union on the United Kingdom's armed forces and diplomatic service.

Following the referendum in June, the Prime Minister, Theresa May, outlined a “vision of Global Britain” in which the UK would play its “full part in promoting peace and prosperity around the world”, and would “with our brilliant armed forces and intelligence services—protect our national interests, our national security and the security of our allies”. Mrs May explained that in negotiating the UK's exit from the European Union she would seek to reach a deal that would “reflect the kind of mature, cooperative relationship that close friends and allies enjoy”. She added that the UK's new relationship with the EU would “make us think about our role in the wider world”, and give the country the “self-confidence and freedom to look beyond the continent of Europe and to the economic and diplomatic opportunities of the wider world”.

The UK has participated in a number of military and civilian missions as part of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) since 2003. Sir Michael Fallon, the Defence Secretary, has said that the UK's withdrawal from the EU should not inhibit future cooperation with missions that are in the national interest, although he has not elaborated on what form such cooperation would take. The UK could continue its defence cooperation with European partners through NATO, through continued participation in EU structures and operations as a third country nation, or through bilateral relations with EU partners. The importance of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, both during negotiations and after the UK's withdrawal from the EU, has also been emphasised, although questions have been raised in regard to its resourcing and how it will work with the new departments, the Department for Exiting the European Union and the Department for International Trade.

This briefing examines current defence capabilities and cooperation between the UK and the EU. It then explores the possible future prospects for UK defence, particularly the role of the armed forces. The latter part of this briefing examines the UK's diplomatic service, highlighting some of the issues that have arisen about the UK's diplomatic relationship with the EU and its global role following the UK's withdrawal. For reasons of brevity, this briefing does not examine the implications of the UK's withdrawal on wider external relations, such as the UK's future trade relationships with other countries in and outside the EU, or the impact on overseas development policy. Further reading on these subjects is identified in section 3.

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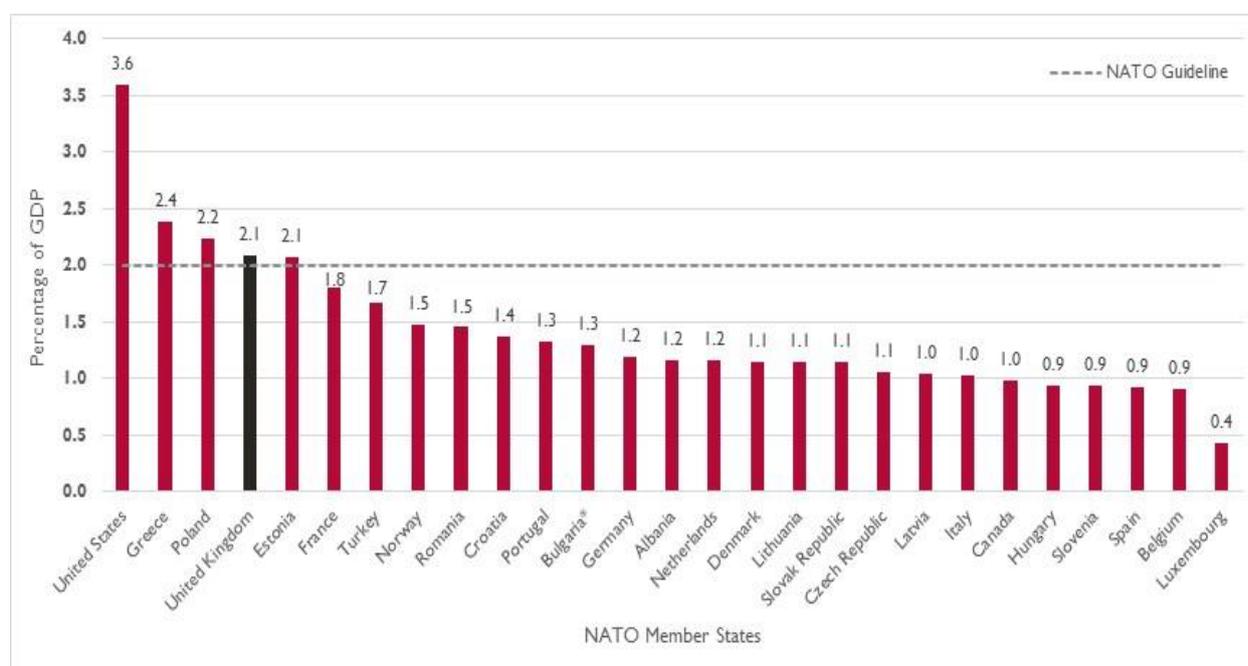
I. UK Armed Forces

I.1 Background

Funding

The UK is the fifth largest defence spender in the world, behind the United States, China, Saudi Arabia and Russia.¹ In 2015/16, total UK defence expenditure was £35.1 billion. The percentage of GDP spent on UK defence in 2015 was 2.1 percent—the fourth highest defence expenditure of all NATO member countries in that year. The United States was the highest spender at 3.6 percent, followed by Greece (2.4 percent) and Poland (2.2 percent). Luxembourg had the lowest defence expenditure at 0.4 percent.² The chart below shows how UK defence expenditure compared to all NATO member countries in 2015.

Figure I: Defence Expenditure in 2015 as a Percentage of Gross Domestic Product GDP (based on 2010 prices and exchange rates):



* Defence expenditure for Bulgaria does not include pensions.

Source: NATO, [Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries: 2009–2016](#), 4 July 2016, p 5.

The Government has committed to meeting the NATO target of spending 2 percent of GDP on defence, until 2020/21. In 2015, the Government committed to continue funding the equipment budget at 1 percent above inflation until the end of this Parliament, as provided for in the 2015 Autumn Statement.³

¹ Ministry of Defence, [UK Defence in Numbers](#), September 2016, p 3.

² *ibid*, p 4.

³ HM Treasury, [Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015](#), November 2015, Cm 9162, p 80.

Equipment

In the year ending 2015/16, the UK spent £7.6 billion on investment in new equipment and infrastructure. As provided for in the 2015 *Strategic Defence and Security Review* (SDSR), the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is designated to spend £178 billion on defence equipment over the next ten years to 2025.⁴ The MOD has said that this will include “some of the largest industrial projects being undertaken by the UK”.⁵ MOD figures show that the UK armed forces holds the following equipment:

Maritime

- At 1 April 2016 there were 11 submarines and 76 vessels in the UK Armed Forces (64 vessels in the Royal Navy Surface Fleet; 12 vessels in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary). The number of submarines is in line with Joint Force 2025 commitments set out in the Ministry of Defence 2015 *Strategic Defence and Security Review*.

Land

- In the UK Armed Forces, there were a total of 4137 Key Land Platforms at 1 April 2016, consisting of: 1945 Protected Mobility Vehicles; 1764 Armoured Personnel Carriers; 428 Armoured Fighting Vehicles.
- There were also 250 Artillery pieces and 168 pieces of Engineering Equipment.
- At 1 April 2016, there were 31 Regular Army Battalions in the Infantry and 14 Army Reserves Battalions.

Air

- At 1 April 2016 there were 724 Fixed-wing and 372 Rotary-wing aircraft in the UK Armed Forces.
- There were 443 Unmanned Aircraft Systems as at 1 April 2016, the majority of which are Desert Hawk-III (221).⁶

According to the House of Commons Library, the UK is one of only five EU countries capable of deploying an operational HQ, and therefore of taking command of a mission, along with France, Germany, Greece, and Italy.⁷

Service Personnel

As at 1 October 2016, the current strength of the UK service personnel is 197,120, comprised of UK Regular and Gurkha personnel, the Volunteer Reserve and other personnel.⁸ The Naval Service had 38,300 service personnel, the Army had 121,870 and the Royal Air Force had

⁴ Ministry of Defence, '[Strategic Defence and Security Review: £178bn of Equipment Spending](#)', 23 November 2015.

⁵ Ministry of Defence, [Annual Report and Accounts 2015/2016](#), July 2016, HC 342 of session 2016–17.

⁶ Ministry of Defence, [UK Armed Forces Equipment and Formations 2016](#), 6 September 2016.

⁷ House of Commons Library, [Brexit: Impact Across Policy Areas](#), 26 August 2016.

⁸ Ministry of Defence, [UK Armed Forces Monthly Service Personnel Statistics: 1 October 2016](#), 17 November 2016, p 4.

36,950.⁹ The tri-service full-time trained strength was 144,180 (Royal Navy and the Royal Marines: 29,520; Army: 83,770; Royal Air Force: 30,900).¹⁰

The table below shows figures for service personnel for the last three years.

Table I: UK Forces Strength by Service¹¹

| Strength | I Oct 2014 | I Oct 2015 | I Oct 2016 | Numbers Increase/Decrease I Oct 15–I Oct 16 | Percentage Increase/Decrease I Oct 15–I Oct 16 |
|-----------------|---------------|------------|------------|---|--|
| | Naval Service | 38,020 | 38,220 | 38,300 | +80 |
| Army | 120,830 | 121,370 | 121,870 | +500 | 0.4 |
| Royal Air Force | 37,170 | 36,920 | 36,950 | +30 | 0.1 |

Source: Ministry of Defence, [UK Armed Forces Monthly Service Personnel Statistics: 1 October 2016](#), 17 November 2016.

The Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) programme aims to increase the size of the Reserve Forces to 3,100 for the Maritime Reserves, 30,000 for the Army Reserves and 1,800 for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.¹² For the year 2014/15, the MOD enrolled 14,200 new apprentices: 9,060 with the Army; 2,810 with the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines; 1,980 with the RAF; and 350 civilian apprentices.

National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review

The proposed future direction of the UK Armed Forces was set out in the 2015 *Strategic Defence and Security Review* (SDSR), which stated that the UK was “strengthening our armed forces so that they remain the most capable in Europe”.¹³ Following the publication of the SDSR, the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, made a statement to the House of Commons which highlighted key commitments including: increasing the size of deployable armed forces; increasing the number of an expeditionary force of 30,000 to 50,000 by 2025; maintaining the UK’s “ultimate insurance policy” of continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent, and replacing its four ballistic missile submarines; major additional investment in world-class intelligence agencies to “detect and foil plots from wherever they emanate in the world”; and more than double spending on aviation security around the world.¹⁴

⁹ Ministry of Defence, [UK Armed Forces Monthly Service Personnel Statistics: 1 October 2016](#), 17 November 2016, p 4.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p 5. The *Statistics* state that “From 1 October 2016, UK Regular and Gurkha personnel in the Army who have completed Phase 1 training (basic Service training) but not Phase 2 training (trade training), are now considered Trained personnel. This change will enable the Army to meet the SDSR 15 commitment to improve support to UK resilience. Previously, only personnel who had completed Phase 2 training were considered trained”.

¹¹ UK Forces comprises all UK Regular, Gurkha, Volunteer Reserve and Other personnel.

¹² Ministry of Defence, [Reserves in the Future Force 2020: Valuable and Valued](#), July 2013, Cm 8655, p 10. Further information on the growth of the Reserves can be found in the ‘Policy Background’ section of previous [Monthly Service Personnel Statistics publications](#).

¹³ HM Government, [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#), 23 November 2015, Cm 9161, p 24.

¹⁴ *ibid*.

Other Developments

On 21 November 2016, Lord Touhig (Labour), asked whether the Government “was intending to review the *Strategic Defence and Security Review* in relation to maintaining the size of the army at 82,000 personnel and increasing the size of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force”.¹⁵ Earl Howe, Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence, replied:

The Government have no plans to reopen the strategic defence and security review. The national security strategy established clear national security objectives and the SDSR set out a funded plan to achieve them, all based on a clear-eyed assessment of the risks and threats that we face. Our energy is now devoted to its delivery, including the desired size of each of the armed services.¹⁶

Immediately prior to the 2015 SDSR, the House of Commons Defence Committee published a report which included noting a particular vulnerability with a “lack of numbers in UK Armed Forces and gaps in capabilities”. It said:

Unforeseen crises and conflicts are likely to test the adaptability and capability of UK Armed Forces in the future, as in the past. We are particularly concerned that poor recruitment and retention of service personnel will prove an early and dangerous vulnerability to our defence and security, particularly in the context of a growing economy and public-sector pay restraint. [...] We are also concerned that certain critical capability gaps—military and political vulnerabilities—are addressed, amongst which the provision of maritime patrol and the ability to (re-)generate mass (including the necessary industrial capacity) for different strategic circumstances are paramount.¹⁷

In March 2016, Sir John Parker, was asked to provide independent leadership for a Shipbuilding Strategy to drive “required changes” in the naval shipbuilding sector.¹⁸ Sir John’s report was published on 29 November 2016, six days after the Autumn Statement, and will inform the National Shipbuilding Strategy.¹⁹ In a letter to the Defence Secretary on the report’s publication, Sir John summarised that “the procurement of naval ships takes too long from concept to delivery compared with other complex industries”.²⁰ Among his findings he noted that the procurement of Navy ships were affected by “a lack of pace with time and cost impacted by a non-assured capital budget (ie subject to annual change)”.²¹ Among his conclusions and recommendations was that government and industry needed to “govern the design and specification of Royal Navy ships to a target cost within an assured capital budget and inject pace to contract on time”.²²

Concerns have also been raised with regard to the UK’s 2 percent contribution to NATO. In a House of Commons debate on defence expenditure, Madeleine Moon (Labour MP for Bridgend) and a member of the House of Commons Defence Committee, highlighted that

¹⁵ [HL Hansard, 21 November 2016, col 1721](#).

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ House of Commons Defence Committee, [Flexible Response? An SDSR Checklist of Potential Threats and Vulnerabilities](#), 21 November 2015, HC 493 of session 2015–16.

¹⁸ Ministry of Defence, [An Independent Report to Inform the UK National Shipbuilding Strategy: Sir John Parker GBE FREng](#), 29 November 2016.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Sir John Parker, [Summary of Recommendations and Findings From My Independent Report to Inform the National Ship Building Strategy](#), 3 November 2016.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*

“although the Committee found that the Government’s accounting criteria ‘fell firmly’ within the NATO guidelines”, it had also found that “those criteria had been amended to include several significant items that had not previously been included when the UK calculated its defence expenditure” such as pensions.²³ With regard to ensuring necessary levels of defence, she noted that the Committee was “concerned that the inclusion of such items, which were critical in attaining the 2 percent defence spend, could undermine the promises in the SDSR of new money for defence”. The Committee, she added, highlighted that 2 percent should be a minimum, not a target, and should not be seen as an indicator of capability or capacity.

At defence questions on 7 November 2016, Nick Smith (Labour MP for Blaenau Gwent) noted that the pound had “dropped nearly 20 percent in value” and the price of “vital military kit that we buy abroad” was set “to sky-rocket”. He asked whether the Government would “confirm that we have enough contingency to pay for the F-35 fighters planned for the new aircraft carriers”.²⁴ Harriet Baldwin, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence, noted that there was a double lock in terms of the budget, which was “not based just on 2 percent of the economy”, and a lock in terms of a rise of 0.5 percent above inflation every year to 2020.

I.2 Cooperation with the EU

Common Security and Defence Policy

In December 1998, the British and French Governments agreed bilaterally to create the European Security and Defence Policy. This was later renamed the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the aim of which was to enable EU member states to prevent or intervene in conflict situations, where NATO chose not to become involved. At the June 1999 European Council meeting in Cologne, EU heads of state and government agreed that the EU must “have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises without prejudice to NATO”.²⁵ It was agreed that deployable forces would be drawn either from NATO assets, or from a pool of national or multinational contributions by EU member states. In 2003, the Berlin Plus Agreement was finalised, setting out arrangements to allow the EU to make use of NATO assets and capabilities for EU-led crisis management operations.²⁶

The CSDP is an integral part of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which forms the basis for intergovernmental cooperation among the EU’s member states on a range of foreign and security policy issues.²⁷ In general under the CSDP, decision-making is by unanimity in the European Council.²⁸ Such a requirement for unanimity to launch CSDP

²³ [HC Hansard, 27 October 2016, col 184WH.](#)

²⁴ [HC Hansard, 7 November 2016, col 184WH.](#)

²⁵ European External Action Service, ‘[Shaping of a Common Security and Defence Policy](#)’, 8 July 2016.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ In 1992, the Maastricht Treaty established a three-pillar system for the European Union. The second pillar, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), provided a basis, for the first time, for intergovernmental cooperation among the EU’s member states on a range of foreign and security policy issues. It gave member states, voting by unanimity, the ability to adopt common positions and take joint actions in the field of common foreign and security policy. The Lisbon Treaty, which came into force in December 2009, abolished the EU’s pillar structure, and the EU’s competence to act externally in the area of CFSP is now set out in Title V of the Treaty on European Union. For further information regarding the history of CFSP, see: House of Lords Library, [Leaving the European Union: Foreign and Security Policy Cooperation](#), 13 October 2016.

²⁸ HM Government, [Review of the Balance of Competences between the United Kingdom and the European Union: Foreign Policy](#), 22 July 2013, p 18.

missions or operations, and to determine their mandate, means that the UK (and other European nations) currently have an effective right of veto.²⁹ The Lisbon Treaty allowed for the possibility of 'permanent structured cooperation', where a decision can be taken by qualified majority for a group of willing member states to undertake closer defence cooperation by aiming to achieve certain levels of defence spending; aligning their equipment and force interoperability; filling capability gaps; and undertaking joint procurement. Member states do not have a veto over permanent structured cooperation, but unwilling member states would not be required to take part.

The CSDP covers the EU's military operations and civilian missions. In relation to operations and missions under CSDP, Article 43(1) of the Treaty on European Union states that the EU may use military means for joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks and peacekeeping tasks, among other tasks.³⁰ This includes the capacity to draw on member states' military assets for peacekeeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security.³¹

EU Military Institutional Arrangements

At the Cologne meeting in 1999, EU member states agreed on the need to set up institutional arrangements for the analysis, planning and conduct of military operations on behalf of EU member states, which remain in use today. These include the Political and Security Committee (PSC), which consists of ambassador-level representatives with political or military experience, and specific defence-related functions. These have been summarised as follows on the EU External Action website:

- **EU Military Committee (EUMC):** the highest military body set up within the Council. It is composed of the Chiefs of Defence of the Member States, who are regularly represented by their permanent military representatives. The EUMC provides the PSC with advice and recommendations on all military matters within the EU.
- **European Union Military Staff (EUMS):** the source of collective (multi-disciplinary) military expertise within the European External Action Service (EEAS). As an integral component of the EEAS's Comprehensive Approach, the EUMS coordinates the military instrument, with particular focus on operations/missions (both military and those requiring military support) and the creation of military capability. Enabling activity in support of this output includes: early warning (via the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity, SIAC), situation assessment, strategic planning, Communications and Information Systems, concept development, training and education, and support of partnerships through military-military relationships.
- **Politico-Military Group (PMG):** carries out preparatory work in the field of CSDP for the Political and Security Committee. It covers the political aspects of EU military and civil-military issues, including concepts, capabilities and operations and missions. It prepares Council Conclusions, provides

²⁹ HM Government, [The UK's Cooperation with the EU on Justice and Home Affairs, and on Foreign Policy and Security Issues](#), 9 May 2016, p 9.

³⁰ EUR-Lex, '[Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union](#)', accessed 18 November 2016.

³¹ HM Government, [Review of the Balance of Competencies between the United Kingdom and the European Union: Foreign Policy](#), 22 July 2013, p 20.

Recommendations for PSC, and monitors their effective implementation. It contributes to the development of (horizontal) policy and facilitates exchanges of information. It has a particular responsibility regarding partnerships with third states and other organisations, including EU-NATO relations, as well as exercises.³²

Military Missions and Operations

There are six ongoing military CSDP missions/operations across the globe of which the UK is part.³³ As of 2014, the UK was providing 323 military personnel in support of CSDP military operations.³⁴

As of June 2016, the UK had around 120 service personnel deployed on five of the six EU missions (military and civilian), the largest of which is Operation Sophia, the EU's naval operation countering migrant smugglers in the central Mediterranean.³⁵ HMS Enterprise has been deployed since 4 July 2015, with a Merlin helicopter between July and October 2015, and she was joined by HMS Richmond for October and November 2015.³⁶ The UK also contributed five staff officers in the Operational Headquarters. Earl Howe, Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence, said in May 2016 that UK ships had picked up almost a third of the total number of migrants rescued under Operation Sophia; by July 2016, more than 16,400 lives in total had been saved by the operation.³⁷

The UK has also made a significant contribution to Operation Atalanta, a counter-piracy operation off the coast of Somalia, providing the Operation Commander, Operation Headquarters Facilities (OHQ) at Northwood, and on average 70 members of OHQ staff (approximately 60 percent of the total at the OHQ).³⁸ In addition, the UK provided a frigate for five months in both 2009 and 2011 and two Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels for a month each in 2013. The Government has described the mission as “successful”—between 2008 and 2011 over 130 vessels were taken by pirates and many more attacked in the area, but since May 2012 there has not been a successful pirate attack.³⁹

Battlegroups

The UK has participated in initiatives within the CSDP intended to improve the military assets and capabilities of EU member states, such as EU Battlegroups. In 2004, the UK and France, supported by Germany, suggested the ‘Battlegroup Concept’, intended to ensure the EU had

³² European Union External Action, ‘[CSDP Structure, Instruments, and Agencies](#)’, 8 July 2016

³³ The EU has also completed six military missions, see: European External Action Service, ‘[Military and Civilian Missions and Operations](#)’, 3 May 2016.

³⁴ House of Commons, ‘[Written Question: EU Common Foreign and Security Policy](#)’, 1 December 2014, 214602. The officer deployed to the Central African Republic mission was based at the mission headquarters in Greece.

³⁵ House of Commons, ‘[Written Question: Armed Forces: Deployment](#)’, 6 June 2016, 38800.

³⁶ House of Lords, ‘[Written Question: Mediterranean Sea: Human Trafficking](#)’, 9 May 2016, HL 7998.

³⁷ *ibid*; and [HC Hansard, 12 July 2016, col 158](#).

³⁸ HM Government, [The UK's Cooperation with the EU on Justice and Home Affairs, and on Foreign Policy and Security Issues](#), 9 May 2016, p 10.

³⁹ *ibid*. Further details of the UK's contributions of personnel, resourcing and funding to military and civilian CSDP missions between 2007 and 2015 are given in Appendix 5 of the House of Lords European Union Committee's report, [Europe in the World: Towards a More Effective EU Foreign and Security Strategy](#), 16 February 2016, HL Paper 97 of session 2015–16.

the capability to deploy forces rapidly.⁴⁰ The concept provides for two Battlegroups at a time to be on stand-by for deployment as a rapid reaction force. Each Battlegroup consists of around 1,500 personnel combined from multinational forces.⁴¹ They are intended for rapid deployment in response to a UN request to provide robust peace enforcement on a limited scale, complementing the capabilities of NATO's Response Force to undertake a wider range of missions with a larger number of personnel.⁴² A Battlegroup is led by a Lead Nation on stand-by for six month periods. The UK was a Lead Nation from July to December 2013, and is currently on rotation as Lead Nation from July to December 2016.⁴³ The total number of UK personnel involved is 2,330; they remain under national control and direction at all times. When on the EU Battlegroup roster, the UK uses multipurpose stand-by forces.⁴⁴ In answer to a parliamentary question, the Ministry of Defence stated that it had not provided any funding specifically for EU Battlegroups in any year since 2010.⁴⁵

Although the Battlegroup Concept has been fully operational since January 2007, an EU Battlegroup has never been deployed. In a paper for the European Union Institute for Security Studies, Anna Barcikowska summarised criticisms of the implementation of the Battlegroup Concept, arguing that the lack of a deployment raised "serious doubts about the viability of the overall initiative and its future usefulness".⁴⁶ She continued:

While the BG concept per se offered the potential to spur the development of European expeditionary capabilities (and improved interoperability through joint planning, training and exercises, and ultimately, deployment), it quickly ran into stumbling blocks which have considerably hindered its successful execution. If the EU member states really want the Battlegroups to be Europe's flagship military rapid response tool, they may have to address the challenges—particularly resource constraints and lack of political will and commitment—that continue to plague the BGs' credibility and effectiveness.⁴⁷

European Defence Agency

The UK has also participated in the European Defence Agency (EDA) within the framework of CSDP, with a view to improving the military assets and capabilities of EU member states. The EDA was established in 2004 as an agency of the Council of the European Union. All EU member states, except Denmark, participate. Its mission, as set out in the 2004 founding Council Decision, is to "support the member states and the Council in their effort to improve European defence capabilities in the field of crisis management and to sustain the European Security and Defence Policy as it now stands and develops in the future".⁴⁸ As part of this, the EDA seeks to promote defence research and technology; foster armaments cooperation; and

⁴⁰ Anna Barcikowska, [EU Battlegroups—Ready to Go?](#), European Union Institute for Security Studies, November 2013, p 1.

⁴¹ HM Government, [Review of the Balance of Competences between the United Kingdom and the European Union: Foreign Policy](#), 22 July 2013, p 61.

⁴² Anna Barcikowska, [EU Battlegroups—Ready to Go?](#), European Union Institute for Security Studies, November 2013, p 2.

⁴³ House of Commons, '[Written Question: EU Battlegroups](#)', 28 June 2016, 40712.

⁴⁴ HM Government, [Review of the Balance of Competences between the United Kingdom and the European Union: Foreign Policy](#), 22 July 2013, p 62.

⁴⁵ House of Commons, '[Written Question: EU Battlegroups: Finance](#)', 26 May 2016, 37739.

⁴⁶ Anna Barcikowska, [EU Battlegroups—Ready to Go?](#), European Union Institute for Security Studies, November 2013, p 2.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ European Defence Agency, '[Mission](#)', accessed 10 October 2016.

to create a competitive European Defence Equipment Market as well as to strengthen the European Defence, Technological and Industrial Base.⁴⁹ The EDA has four major capability programmes, endorsed by the European Council in December 2013, aimed at “addressing critical shortfalls and at supporting the European defence industry”.⁵⁰ These are: air-to-air refuelling, remotely piloted aircraft systems; cyber defence; and governmental satellite communications.

The EDA’s general budget for 2016 is €30.5 million, unchanged from 2015.⁵¹ Member states contribute to the budget according to a formula based on their gross national product.⁵² The UK’s contribution in 2014–15 was £3.319 million.⁵³ The EDA describes itself as operating an “à la carte approach”, meaning that member states can decide whether or not to participate in EDA projects according to national needs.⁵⁴ The Conservative Government under David Cameron stated that the UK has “long pressed the Agency to ensure that its activities lead to tangible improvements to what the member states’ armed forces can do”, rather than being “too thinly spread, too ambitious or too bureaucratic”.⁵⁵

1.3 Future of UK and EU Defence Cooperation

On 21 July 2016, Sir Michael Fallon, the Secretary of State for Defence, laid out the three key themes of the Government’s approach to defence under Theresa May’s leadership in the wake of the EU referendum result: defending the UK’s values of democracy, the rule of law and freedom; ensuring a stronger NATO for a stronger defence; and the US-UK partnership.⁵⁶ He said that leaving the EU meant the UK would be “working harder to commit to NATO and our key allies”. In his speech to the Conservative Party conference in early October 2016, Sir Michael suggested that the UK would remain a key player in European defence, but through the prism of NATO:

Leaving the EU does not mean we are stepping back from our commitment to the security of our continent. We will continue to have the biggest defence budget in Europe—meeting the 2 percent NATO spending target. And we will lead in NATO—the cornerstone of our defence—putting troops on to its eastern border next year. But we will go on blocking an EU army, which would simply undermine NATO. We will step up, not away from, our global responsibilities.⁵⁷

Sir Michael also explained to the House of Commons Defence Committee in mid-July 2016 that there was “no reason” why the UK leaving the EU should “inhibit” cooperation bilaterally with key allies in Europe—“the northern group, the EU members that are members of the Joint Expeditionary Force, or the key alliances with France and Germany”—and noted “no reason” why leaving the EU should “inhibit future cooperation with missions that are in our direct

⁴⁹ European Union External Action, ‘[CSDP Structure, Instruments, and Agencies](#)’, 8 July 2016.

⁵⁰ European Defence Agency, ‘[Capability Programmes](#)’, accessed 10 October 2016.

⁵¹ European Defence Agency, ‘[Finance](#)’, accessed 10 October 2016.

⁵² European Defence Agency, ‘[Member States](#)’, accessed 10 October 2016.

⁵³ House of Commons, ‘[Written Question: European Defence Agency](#)’, 18 December 2015, 20110.

⁵⁴ European Defence Agency, ‘[Member States](#)’, accessed 10 October 2016.

⁵⁵ HM Government, *Review of the Balance of Competences Between the United Kingdom and the European Union: Foreign Policy*, 22 July 2013, p 18.

⁵⁶ Ministry of Defence, ‘[Speech: Britain’s Global Role: Stepping Up](#)’, 22 July 2016.

⁵⁷ Conservative Party, ‘[Fallon: Our Armed Forces—Delivering Security and Opportunity](#)’, 4 October 2016.

interest”.⁵⁸ He added that he would not, however, “speculate now on whether we [the UK] are going to join particular CSDP missions”.

How much benefit the UK has derived from participation in the CSDP has been a matter of on-going debate. In 2013, the Coalition Government conducted a review of the balance of competences between the UK and the European Union. The review stated that there was “unanimous” evidence that the delivery of CSDP could be improved, with many contributors to the review being of the opinion that EU member states lacked sufficient political will to deploy their personnel and to invest in capabilities.⁵⁹ The Coalition Government concluded that “a majority of the evidence submitted argued that the UK, on balance, gets more out than it puts in, although the achievements are often modest”.⁶⁰

Although the UK could continue to participate in CSDP missions as a non-EU country, the contributions of troops from non-member states are only sought after plans have been established. As a non-EU state, the UK would therefore potentially have little influence over the mandate or the objectives of a mission.⁶¹ Dr Hylke Dijkstra, Editor-in-Chief of Contemporary Security Policy at Maastricht University, has suggested, rather than aligning itself with missions after they have been established, that it would be better for the UK, and the EFTA countries, to be given a formal seat (without a formal veto) on the Political and Security Committee at ambassador level when CSDP missions are discussed. He has contended that this “would provide the UK with significant input and would allow the UK to contribute more extensively” prior to collaborating in missions and, consequently, prior to committing military resources to a mission.⁶²

On the 2 December 2016, Boris Johnson, the Foreign Secretary, suggested in a speech to Chatham House that whilst the UK sought “a new European partnership” it would be one “where we continue to develop our work on things that matter to all of us in Europe”. In his remarks, he suggested that the UK would continue to participate in CSDP operations:

We are there with our EU friends—I’ve just been to a conference in Rome—in the fight against piracy off the horn of Africa and in dealing with the migration crisis in the Mediterranean. Because we know that in keeping Britain safe our security depends on stabilizing Europe’s wider neighbourhood. The southern Mediterranean and the ungoverned expanses of the Middle East and along the eastern borders of NATO. There we find British troops already set to deploy in our enhanced forward presence in the Baltic states.⁶³

⁵⁸ House of Commons Defence Committee, [Oral Evidence: Warsaw NATO Summit and Chilcot Report](#), 19 July 2016, HC 579 of session 2016–17, Q22 and Q23.

⁵⁹ HM Government, [Review of the Balance of Competencies between the United Kingdom and the European Union: Foreign Policy](#), 22 July 2013, p 76.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ Non-member states are also unable to take command roles—which mean that the EU would lose access to the UK military headquarters in Northwood (Dr Hylke Dijkstra, ‘[UK and EU Foreign Policy Cooperation after Brexit](#)’, RUSI *Newsbrief*, 5 September 2016).

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘[Speech: Beyond Brexit—A Global Britain](#)’, 2 December 2016

In an article published before the referendum, the EU-CIVCAP project, led by the Global Insecurities Centre based at Bristol University,⁶⁴ suggested that the UK's withdrawal from the EU presented the CSDP with two scenarios:

First, the policy area may crumble with the lack of UK input and participation. Participating in CSDP operations (or 'missions' as they are called) is a matter for each member state to determine. There have been CSDP missions without the UK, often under French aegis. But, over-reliance upon one power for much of the political initiative and military wherewithal would introduce an even more overt bias into the issue of when and whether to intervene overseas. Brexit would damage, and maybe even cripple, the EU's ability to address often complex and demanding conflicts in our littoral (such as the Western Balkans) as well as further afield (like Somalia). The EU would still be able to offer 'carrots' in its foreign and security policy but, without the UK, the 'sticks' would be weaker and less credible, as would be the EU in its entirety. There is the more general possibility that Brexit would not only lead to the demise of CSDP, but may also prompt other EU members to exit.

Second, Brexit may strengthen CSDP. The remaining powers may be forced to think more seriously about pooling, sharing and joint procurement as a way of both enhancing capabilities and achieving economies of scale. It may lead not only to closer security integration but also to deeper defence industrial alignment. Closer UK alignment with US defence industries has often been suggested and, in some instances, has occurred through mergers. Notwithstanding this, the US remains deeply reluctant to share key defence industrial technologies, even with close allies. It could also be argued that a number of recent military actions, like the Anglo-French military operations in Libya in 2011, occurred outside the EU and 'coalitions of the willing' have been frequently used and even preferred by Washington. There is some truth to this, but part of the UK's security attraction to the US lies in its ability to operate with other key European allies and not just because it is Britain. If the US has a 'special relationship' in military terms, it has increasingly been in France, just as economically and politically it has been with Germany. A UK that is increasingly absent from international security challenges, whose falling defence spending has caused public concern from Washington, and who is ambivalent towards the EU, is unlikely to appeal to any post-Obama presidency. Intelligence sharing is hardly enough for a solid bilateral, let alone special, relationship.⁶⁵

Establishment of a Common EU Military Force

In 2015, the European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, called for the creation of a European army, in order to "help us [the EU] design a common foreign and security policy".⁶⁶ He also stated that such an army would "enable Europeans to react credibly to any threat to peace in a country abutting on a member state of the EU".⁶⁷ The UK Government has continued to oppose the idea.

⁶⁴ EU-CIVCAP is a project which seeks to provide analysis of the EU's capabilities in conflict prevention and peacebuilding in order to identify existing shortfalls. It has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme.

⁶⁵ EU-CIVCAP, '[The Brexit Debate: What Would Brexit Mean for the UK and EU's Ability to Deal with Conflict?](#)', 30 May 2016.

⁶⁶ Andrew Sparrow, '[Jean-Claude Juncker Calls for EU Army](#)', *Guardian*, 8 March 2015.

⁶⁷ European Parliament, '[European Defence Cooperation: State of Play and Thoughts on an EU Army](#)', March 2015.

On 16 September 2016, EU heads of state, with the exception of the UK, held a summit in Bratislava to discuss the EU's future, particularly in terms of foreign policy and security. In a joint declaration, they agreed that in order to “strengthen EU cooperation on external security and defence”, they would use the European Council meeting in December to “decide on a concrete implementation plan on security and defence”.⁶⁸ According to press who were covering the summit, this included French and German heads of state drawing up a timetable to create a common military force.⁶⁹ Duncan Robinson, writing in the *Financial Times*, said that EU officials were “sensitive to concerns” to emphasise that it was not “an EU army”. He noted that while the plan may “trample on the remit normally filled by NATO” it was also clear that “anything that undermined NATO was a ‘no-no’ while Britain [was] still at the table”, although with the UK's withdrawal from the EU this was no longer a “long-term consideration”.⁷⁰ According to the think tank the Centre for European Policy Studies, once the UK leaves the EU there would “likely to be less opposition to the establishment of permanent structured cooperation, or to the setting-up of EU military headquarters”.⁷¹ Professor Anand Menon, has observed that, without the UK, the EU “might find ways to work better” in responding to security crises.⁷² He contended that without the UK, “one could imagine the remaining members establishing the operational headquarters that they have long lobbied for and which Britain has systematically blocked”.⁷³

On 22 November 2016, a resolution was passed by the European Parliament which, although not binding, proposed that: all EU member states should aim to spend 2 percent of GDP on defence; multinational forces and EU headquarters be established to plan and command crisis management operations; and the EU be enabled to act where NATO is unwilling to do so. A press release by the European Parliament noted that MEPs “stress that the EU and NATO should cooperate more”, but that “the EU should also be prepared to act autonomously in cases where NATO is not willing to take the lead”.⁷⁴ The proposals for which will be addressed at a European Council meeting in December.

At a speech at Chatham House on 2 December 2016, Boris Johnson, the Foreign Secretary, suggested that the Government had reversed its opposition to further European defence cooperation. The *Guardian* reported Mr Johnson as saying that: “There is a conversation going on now about the EU's desire to build a strong common security defence policy. If they want to do that, fine. Obviously it would be important to get 2 percent spending on defence. But we are not there to block or impede further steps towards further EU integration if that is what they so desire”.⁷⁵

Implications for NATO

Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, Frank J Cillufo and Sharon L Cardash warned that once the UK leaves the EU, “the potential for divergence between the two entities [EU and NATO] could be magnified”, with the UK having “long-served as a touchstone for the United States in its dealing

⁶⁸ European Council, [The Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap](#), 16 September 2016.

⁶⁹ Deborah Haynes and Bruno Waterfield, ‘Britain to Block EU Army’, *Times*, 17 September 2016.

⁷⁰ Duncan Robinson, ‘Not an EU Army’, *Financial Times* Brussels Blog, 8 September 2016.

⁷¹ Centre for European Policy Studies, [‘The Implications of Brexit for the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy’](#), 26 July 2016.

⁷² Professor Anand Menon, [‘Britain's Military Standing Would Not Suffer After Brexit’](#), UK in a Changing Europe Initiative, 25 April 2016.

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ European Parliament, [Defence: MEPs Push for More EU Cooperation to Better Protect Europe](#), European Parliament, 23 November 2016.

⁷⁵ Patrick Wintour, [‘UK Will Not Block Closer EU Defence Ties, Says Boris Johnson’](#), *Guardian*, 2 December 2016.

with Europe”.⁷⁶ They also noted that both entities “would be well served to think carefully through some of the critical strategic and tactical questions that will have to be addressed”, with Europe’s “fracturing” previously leading to Russia “testing the continental and transatlantic alliance by bringing difficult and potentially divisive issues to the fore”.⁷⁷

Concerns within the US have been raised regarding EU member states’ spending on NATO. Alongside the US, only four other members of both NATO and the EU (the UK, Estonia, Greece and Poland) meet the minimum contribution threshold of 2 percent of GDP.⁷⁸ Following a meeting with Theresa May in Downing Street, Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of NATO, stated that more EU countries needed to follow the UK’s example by spending at least 2 percent of their GDP on defence. In addition, he said that this was “important for the transatlantic bond, for fair burden-sharing between Europe and the United States”.⁷⁹ Tom Oliver and Michael John Williams, in an article for *International Affairs*, have argued that “long-running US unease at low levels of European defence spending” had “reached a point where US willingness to commit to Europe’s security has been thrown into doubt”.⁸⁰ Consequently “this has raised concerns about the viability of NATO”.⁸¹ In addition, US President-elect Donald Trump has previously described NATO as obsolete, with questions remaining as to its future.⁸²

Jed Babbin, who previously served as Deputy Under Secretary of Defence in George H W Bush’s administration, warned that President-elect Trump “may not get the chance [to abandon NATO] because the EU may beat him to it”, with their plans to establish a joint military force and permanent headquarters.⁸³ Former US Ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, has taken a different view, observing that the UK outside the EU, alongside a Trump-led US, “can restore NATO and the West”.⁸⁴ Writing in the *Telegraph*, Mr Bolton argued that a UK independent from the EU could “now be more effective with NATO’s central and eastern European members by not having to temper its security posture to suit Berlin and Paris”.⁸⁵

2. Diplomatic Service

2.1 Background

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) leads the UK Government’s foreign policy and represents the UK Government overseas.⁸⁶ As detailed below, the FCO has a global diplomatic network of embassies, high commissions, consulates and other offices which, according to the FCO, are “vital in helping the UK Government achieve its international objectives”.⁸⁷ In April

⁷⁶ Frank J Cillufo and Sharon L Cardash, ‘[NATO after Brexit](#)’, *Foreign Affairs*, 4 July 2016.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ NATO, [Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries \(2009–2016\)](#), 4 July 2016.

⁷⁹ Patrick Wintour, ‘[NATO Chief Tells EU: Spend More to Secure Trump’s Support](#)’, *Guardian*, 23 November 2016.

⁸⁰ Tim Oliver and Michael John Williams, ‘[Special Relationships in Flux: Brexit and the Future of the US-EU and US-UK Relationships](#)’, *International Affairs*, April 2016.

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² Demetri Sevastopulo, ‘Trump Brands NATO ‘Obsolete’ Ahead of Tough Wisconsin Primary’, *Financial Times*, 3 April 2016.

⁸³ Jed Babbin, ‘[Will EU Exit NATO after Brexit?](#)’, *Washington Times*, 3 July 2016.

⁸⁴ John Bolton, ‘[Together a Trump-led US and Brexit Britain Can Restore NATO and the West](#)’, *Telegraph*, 28 September 2016

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ No aspect of foreign and diplomatic policy is devolved in the UK.

⁸⁷ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Annual Report and Accounts: 2015–2016](#), 20 July 2016, HC 336 of session 2015–16, p 4.

2016, the FCO adopted the three strategic objectives in the 2015 *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review*. Its priorities for the current financial year are: to “protect our people”; “project our global influence”; and “promote our prosperity”.⁸⁸

In July 2016, the Prime Minister, Theresa May, announced the creation of two new departments: the Department for Exiting the European Union and the Department for International Trade. Sir Simon McDonald, Permanent Under Secretary and Head of the Diplomatic Service, said that part the FCO's role would be to “support” these two new departments and to “promote British interests in Europe and on the wider world stage, both during the negotiations [on leaving the EU] and afterwards”.⁸⁹ With regard to negotiations with the EU, Sir Simon noted that:

We are working together to advise the Prime Minister and her Cabinet on the UK's strategy for leaving the EU. Our diplomatic missions overseas are already using their established networks to report local reactions and explain the UK position. Staff in missions are best-placed to advise on what leverage we have with which countries—and how best to use it. Our established relationships will be crucial in supporting the negotiations, so we are considering how we can increase capacity in our European embassies.⁹⁰

The same month, he also gave evidence to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. With regard to Mrs May's stated aim of a “Global Britain”, Sir Simon explained that FCO's departmental transformation programme—Diplomacy 20:20—would give its workforce the “expertise and agility to advance UK interests in the new international context”.⁹¹ He added that “our global network is the platform for the whole of government's international work, projecting Global Britain with panache and impact”.⁹² He also stated that working with colleagues across government would be central to looking beyond EU membership and “projecting Britain's place in the world”.⁹³

Staffing

In the year 2015–16, the FCO had a worldwide network of 268 posts in 168 countries including in 9 multilateral organisations.⁹⁴ There were 29 other UK Government Partners that operated in its global platform (including the devolved administrations, UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) and the British Council) working to deliver UK-wide objectives overseas.

⁸⁸ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Future FCO](#), 9 May 2016, p 8.

⁸⁹ Sir Simon McDonald ‘[How FCO is Supporting the Government on Brexit](#)’, *Civil Service Quarterly Blog*, 1 November 2016.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Oral Evidence: FCO Budget and Capacity, and Annual Report, HC 836](#), 22 November 2016.

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Annual Report and Accounts: 2015–2016](#), 20 July 2016, HC 336 of session 2015–16, p 5.

The total FCO workforce as of 31 March 2016 was 12,563, comprising 4,295 FCO UK-based staff and 8,268 FCO staff based abroad, known as 'local staff'. This represented a reduction from 2014/15, when there were 4,469 UK-based staff and 9,288 local staff.⁹⁵ Local staff are part of the FCO global network overseas and made up 66 percent of the total FCO workforce in 2015/16. Local staff are based in FCO diplomatic offices around the network and deliver front-line foreign policy objectives, corporate management functions and support services. They also provide consular assistance, along with a range of services and support for British nationals abroad.

Funding

In the *Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015*, the Government's spending commitments included maintaining the FCO budget:

The Government will protect the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) budget in real terms. This will enable the FCO to support successful Economic and Financial Dialogues with China, India, Brazil and others. The FCO will increase its engagement in the Middle East and the Gulf to maximise the UK's influence on issues of security, stability and prosperity. The FCO will invest over £400 million in its estate, including new embassy buildings in Abuja and Budapest. This will open up global markets and safeguard British citizens overseas. The FCO's global network will be strengthened, supporting UK businesses access to global markets and safeguarding British citizens overseas.⁹⁶

The size of the FCO's budget recorded in the 2015 *Spending Review* was £1.1 billion, including both departmental and capital expenditure. In the *Autumn Statement 2016*, it was announced there would be additional resource "provided to strengthen trade policy capability in the Department for International Trade (DIT) and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, totalling £26 million a year by 2019–20".⁹⁷

2.2 Cooperation with the EU

As a member of the EU, the UK currently coordinates with other EU member states with regard to its foreign policy and is represented by the EU through the European External Action Service (EEAS). The Lisbon Treaty, which came into force in December 2009, established the EEAS and it became fully operational on 1 January 2011. The role of the EEAS is to implement the common decisions made by the Council of Ministers and operates the EU's 139 delegations in countries around the world. It is staffed by officials from the Commission and Council Secretariat, diplomats seconded from the 28 EU member states and local staff in countries around the world.⁹⁸ Since 2010, there have been 20 UK diplomats from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and eight UK civil servants from other government departments who have undertaken secondments to the EEAS.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ The reduction from last year reflects the removal of UKTI staff from core FCO headcount as of 1 April 2015, when UKTI became financially independent from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills and the FCO. For details regarding the numbers of staff at diplomatic offices overseas by country, see: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Annual Report and Accounts: 2015–2016*, 20 July 2016, HC 336 of session 2015–16, p 72.

⁹⁶ HM Treasury, *Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015*, November 2015, Cm 9162, p 29.

⁹⁷ HM Treasury, *Autumn Statement 2016*, November 2016, Cm 9362, p 31.

⁹⁸ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Annual Report and Accounts: 2015–2016*, 20 July 2016, HC 336 of session 2015–16, p 5; and European External Action Service, 'Who We Are', accessed 5 October 2016.

⁹⁹ House of Commons, 'Written Question: European External Action Service: Secondment', 6 June 2016, 38409.

The Lisbon Treaty also upgraded the post of High Representative for CFSP (originally created by the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam) to be both EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and a Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP). As High Representative, the office-holder oversees all CFSP activity, chairs the Foreign Affairs Council and represents CFSP externally.¹⁰⁰ As Commission Vice President, he or she oversees the Commission's activity in external relations.

The way that EU member states work together on external affairs depends on whether they are working in an intergovernmental way on CFSP matters (governed by the TEU), or whether the EU as an entity is acting internationally in areas where it has full or partial competence to do so, such as the common commercial policy (trade) or humanitarian aid (governed by the TFEU). The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee summarised the different modes of working as follows:

Decision-making in CFSP/CSDP is intergovernmental. This system applies primarily to 'traditional' aspects of foreign policy, such as adopting common positions and diplomatic approaches, undertaking joint actions, and dispatching military and civilian CSDP operations. Decisions in this field are made by unanimous agreement in the Council of Ministers, and are carried out by the HR/VP and EEAS according to a framework set by member states. The European Parliament is limited to a 'consultative role', and the European Court of Justice is also excluded. Because of the requirement for unanimity, the EU as a whole cannot undertake any actions in CFSP/CSDP if even one member state dissents. Member states are also free to pursue their own foreign policies outside the EU.¹⁰¹

2.3 Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Future Role

The Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, said in his speech at the Conservative Party conference on 2 October 2016 that the Government would "remain committed to all kinds of European cooperation—at an intergovernmental level", although he maintained that in future the UK would be able to "speak up more powerfully with our own distinctive voice".¹⁰² Giving evidence to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee in October 2016, Mr Johnson argued that:

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office [...] is more energetic and outward-looking and more engaged with the world than at any time in decades. That outward-looking spirit is present not just in the Gulf but across the world, and I think it is going to intensify as we extricate ourselves from the EU treaty and we forge a new identity, as the Prime Minister has said, as a global Britain—and I mean global.

Because it is vital to understand what Brexit is and what it is not. Yes, it means restoring our democracy and control of our laws and our borders and a fair bit of cash. But Brexit is emphatically not any kind of mandate for this country to turn in on itself, haul up the drawbridge or to detach itself from the international community. [...] There is absolutely no inconsistency between ending the supremacy of EU law in this country—

¹⁰⁰ HM Government, [Review of the Balance of Competences Between the United Kingdom and the European Union: Foreign Policy](#), 22 July 2013, p 24.

¹⁰¹ Policy and decision making processes are different in areas such as international trade and EU development policy.

¹⁰² Conservative Party, [Johnson: How British Values Help to Make the World Richer and Safer](#), 2 October 2016.

as we will—and being a major contributor to the security and stability and economic prosperity of the whole European region. We are leaving the EU; we are not leaving Europe.¹⁰³

On 2 December 2016, Boris Johnson, the Foreign Secretary, told an audience at Chatham House that the UK's vote to leave the EU was a “country taking back control of its democratic institutions. But not a nation hauling up the drawbridge or slamming the door”. He described the UK as “a country galvanised by new possibilities and a country that is politically and economically and morally fated”. He explained:

When I speak of Global Britain—and the need for us to commit ourselves to the peace and prosperity of the world. I know that there will be some who are wary that this sounds pretentious, in a nation that comprises less than one percent of the world's population. I know there will be cynics who say we can't afford it. I say we can't afford not to. To those who say we are now too small, too weak, too poor to have any influence on the world, I say in the words of Robert Burns: O wad some Power the giftie gie us To see oursels as ithers see us!¹⁰⁴

In November 2016, Sir Simon McDonald, also in evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, stated that the Government's policy was to “defend and promote British interests around the world, which is what we have been doing since 1782”. When asked if it could be described as “Global Britain” he responded:

I think it can because that phrase encapsulates the idea that, no matter the wiring with institutions on our continent, the United Kingdom's ambition and reach is around the world. It is our intention to play a role around the world.¹⁰⁵

In a [letter to the Committee on 21 July 2016](#), Sir Simon had stated that his priority in the coming months was to have the “staff and capability to promote a Global Britain post the referendum”. When asked by the Committee's chair, Crispin Blunt, whether the FCO had been “restored” to its place as the lead on foreign policy in government, Sir Simon noted that he had “always felt” that the FCO had that lead in the international space and that this remained his view despite there being other players which, he added, the FCO was working with. He explained that the three areas of “expertise”, “agility” and “platform” emphasised in the Diplomacy 20:20 implementation plan “are even more important after 23 June”. According to Sir Simon, the validity of the 20:20 programme was “reinforced by the referendum result” and that the FCO therefore would “stick” with that programme.

Mark Hendrick (Labour MP for Preston) asked Sir Simon about whether the FCO had been carrying out a global strategy prior to the referendum result. Sir Simon responded that:

We did ever more work with the European Union, but it is not true that the rest of the world principally saw us as part of the European Union. Our further-afield colleagues in organisations such as the United Nations said that we were still principally seen as the United Kingdom, but in some places the idea took root, so we need to do something about that. In future we will not be seen as a player on the wider international stage

¹⁰³ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Oral Evidence: Foreign Policy Developments: October 2016, HC 552](#), 13 October 2016, Q 101.

¹⁰⁴ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Speech: Beyond Brexit—A Global Britain](#), 2 December 2016.

¹⁰⁵ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Oral Evidence: FCO Budget and Capacity, and Annual Report, HC 836](#), 22 November 2016.

through Brussels. We will be acting on our own behalf, so Global Britain is a re-emphasis of what was there before.¹⁰⁶

Part of the challenge within which the debate regarding the future prospects of the diplomatic service sits has been summarised by the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, which noted on 20 July 2016 that the “absence of contingency planning” by the Government, in the event that the result of the referendum was to leave the EU, “inevitability” meant that the Government’s plans were “tentative and just emerging”. The Committee summarised the position of the new administration as having been “left to play catch-up”.

In September 2016, Emily Thornberry, the then Shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, argued that the Government’s “vision of Britain post-Brexit” was just a “pipe dream” and “rhetoric”.¹⁰⁷ She stated that MPs needed to be told “what deal the Government are working towards, how they plan to achieve it and whether other member states will accept it”. In October 2016, Kier Starmer, who had succeeded Emily Thornberry as the Shadow Secretary of State for Leaving the European Union, criticised the Government for wanting to draw up negotiating terms, negotiate and reach a deal “without any parliamentary approval”.¹⁰⁸ Jeremy Corbyn, the Leader of the Opposition, has also expressed concern, saying that the “message” he had received from European leaders was that Government’s approach had already “damaged our global reputation and lost us a lot of good will, not just in Europe but around the world”.¹⁰⁹

Future EU Relations

EU foreign ministers meet in the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels once per month, while ambassadors and diplomats meet daily in a range of permanent committees.¹¹⁰ European diplomats also participate in coordination meetings in countries and international organisations around the world, continually meeting in the offices of EU delegations.¹¹¹ For example, at the UN in New York, there are thousands of annual intra-EU meetings. Diplomats from EU member states often meet in the morning, before negotiating with their UN counterparts later in the day. Dr Hylke Dijkstra has explained that the UK is currently in a position to be able to shape key international diplomatic negotiations and has been able to input, provide formal control and be engaged in ongoing briefs relating to global affairs. He added that the UK has one of the best diplomatic networks in the world and occupies a privileged position:

[T]he process of sharing its information and views with the other member states enables the UK to canvass support for its positions, while British diplomats also benefit from hearing what the French, Germans and others have to say on any given topic.¹¹²

As well as exchanging views, EU member states adopt common positions and make joint statements on a wide range of international events. The EU currently allows non-EU states to ‘align’ themselves with EU positions, but non-EU states do not have any input into the EU position, and it remained unclear how the UK would relate to EU positions and statements

¹⁰⁶ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Oral Evidence: FCO Budget and Capacity, and Annual Report, HC 836](#), 22 November 2016, Q 29.

¹⁰⁷ [HC Hansard, 5 September 2016, col 42.](#)

¹⁰⁸ [HC Hansard, 10 October 2016, col 42.](#)

¹⁰⁹ [HC Hansard, 24 October 2016, col 28.](#)

¹¹⁰ Dr Hylke Dijkstra, ‘UK and EU Foreign Policy Cooperation after Brexit’, [RUSI Newsbrief](#), 5 September 2016.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² *ibid.*

after it had departed the EU. Dr Dijkstrahas also noted that “it would be strange if the UK, as a major diplomatic actor, were meekly to align itself post hoc with EU positions that had been debated and agreed in its absence”.¹¹³ He has suggested that the UK Foreign Secretary could continue to attend the EU Foreign Affairs Council, if not monthly, then perhaps four times a year:

To make this appear more palatable to both the EU and the UK, the council could meet in an ‘EU+ format’ with participants consisting of the EU, European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members and the UK. The foreign secretary (and the defence secretary) could also attend informal meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council (following what is referred to as the Gymnich format, where meetings have an agenda but no formal decisions) as well as those formal meetings where decisions are taken on security operations with British contributions.¹¹⁴

He argued that such arrangements would require political will on the part of both the EU and the UK.

During a debate on 20 October 2016, Lord Wallace of Saltaire (Liberal Democrat) expressed concern that the UK would withdraw from the “now extensive network of CFSP meetings, and to withdraw UK staff from the European External Action Service, as well as from the externally related directorates-general of the European Commission”.¹¹⁵ He noted that, if the UK were to do so, it would “become an outsider, a marginal participant in multilateral discussions on approaches to Russia, the Middle East, north Africa and beyond”.

Boris Johnson, the Foreign Secretary, said in his speech at Chatham House on 2 December 2016 that the UK would be a “protagonist” following its withdrawal from the EU, “a global Britain running a truly global foreign policy”. He explained:

[...] this global approach is in the interests both of Britain and the world. We work on security with our European friends—and as I have said before, our role is to be a flying buttress, supportive of the EU project, but outside the main body of the church. Now is the time to build a new and productive relationship, based on friendship and free trade [...]¹¹⁶

Funding

In its July 2016 report, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee highlighted that the FCO was “already one of Whitehall’s smallest Departments in terms of funding”. It said:

As Sir Simon Fraser told us, the entire annual FCO budget is only twice the sum spent every year on aid to Ethiopia alone. The decision to leave the EU provides both an opportunity and an obligation to re-consider the Government’s spending on the FCO and related activities.

We were deeply disappointed by the Government’s apparent unwillingness to recognise the urgency and importance of equipping the FCO to manage the most significant re-

¹¹³ Dr Hylke Dijkstra, ‘[UK and EU Foreign Policy Cooperation after Brexit](#)’, RUSI *Newsbrief*, 5 September 2016.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ [HL Hansard, 20 October 2016, col 2447](#).

¹¹⁶ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ‘[Speech: Beyond Brexit—A Global Britain](#)’, 2 December 2016.

adjustment of British foreign policy in over 50 years, including a period of intensive diplomacy. We recommend that the new Government commits to a substantial increase in the funding available to the FCO commensurate with the enormity of the task it now faces. The FCO should be able to use this additional funding wherever in the world it deems necessary, on the programmes or personnel it considers essential to support the country's reputation, security, values and prosperity through this period of transition.¹¹⁷

The Committee said that it had “unanimously” agreed in its April 2016 report¹¹⁸ that, in addition to the practical need to hire teams of skilled negotiators to manage the EU withdrawal process and pursue new international agreements, a “major injection of resources” was required for the FCO. It added that such resource would “send a strong signal of the UK's commitment to an outward-looking, globally engaged foreign policy, thereby helping to reassure our allies and to mitigate the reputational risk associated with EU withdrawal”.¹¹⁹ The Committee also considered that leaving the EU and its institutions would require the FCO to reverse the recent trend of down-sizing its European network as bilateral relations with EU member states would take on a new importance in the short, medium and long term.

At an evidence session with the Committee in November 2016, Boris Johnson, the Foreign Secretary, told MPs that the UK would “be going out again to places where perhaps people haven't seen so much of us in the past, and places where they thought we had forgotten about them”. He added:

We have a superb FCO network to help make it happen. We've more reach than our friends in France—a bigger network of embassies at only 70 percent of the cost. Finally, it has been one of the biggest privileges of my job in the last few months to meet our people who represent the UK to the world. They seem to me, at my advanced years, amazingly young, idealistic, very often intellectually brilliant [...] and I believe they are excited about the challenge of projecting global Britain. They have a confidence—a real confidence—and an optimism that I think comes with the knowledge that they are speaking for a soft power superpower.¹²⁰

The chair of the Committee, Crispin Blunt, sought clarification and reassurance from Mr Johnson on how the FCO intended to pay for “these splendid aspirations”. He said that a considerable proportion of the FCO budget appeared to be “constrained to areas that are ODA-able—in other words committed out of the 0.7 percent of development expenditure” and he noted “that the British Council budget is being cut”.¹²¹ Mr Johnson replied:

Obviously, we live in strained circumstances so we have to make our money go further than ever before, and we do [...] The overall budget of the FCO, as you know, is rising from £1.1 billion to £1.24 billion by 2019/20. [...] The game now [...] is to make sure UK ODA DAC-able funds are not just used to serve development goals, as they

¹¹⁷ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Equipping the Government for Brexit](#), 20 July 2016, HC 431 of session 2016–17, p 6.

¹¹⁸ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Implications of the Referendum on EU Membership for the UK's Role in the World](#), 26 April 2016, HC 545 of session 2015–16.

¹¹⁹ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Equipping the Government for Brexit](#), 20 July 2016, HC 431 of session 2016–17, p 4.

¹²⁰ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Oral Evidence: Foreign Policy Developments: October 2016, HC 552](#), 13 October 2016, Q 101.

¹²¹ *ibid*,

undoubtedly must, but to ensure they mesh and chime with our diplomatic and political objectives.¹²²

Mr Blunt asserted that it was the Committee's opinion that the FCO would "need to double or treble the resources available if we are to meet these aspirations post Brexit"—something which it had emphasised in its report earlier in the year.¹²³

Joint Departmental Working

Following the creation of the two new departments, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee commented that it was "essential" that they and the FCO form an "effective triumvirate as quickly as possible, with close working relations and clear delineation of responsibilities".¹²⁴ According to the Committee, much of the new departments' work would overlap with the existing work of the FCO, in particular with respect to supporting the UK's bilateral relationships with the EU and with its member states.¹²⁵ The leaders of the departments would represent the UK abroad in "different and at times overlapping" capacities. The extent of the potential overlap between the departments had been "underscored", the Committee thought, by the Prime Minister's decision to share the Foreign Secretary's official residence, Chevening, between the three Secretaries of State with all three needing to host foreign leaders and visitors.¹²⁶ Mr Johnson has recently stated that the UK's Representation in Brussels "will report jointly to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for Exiting the EU".¹²⁷

Staffing

The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee also emphasised that the FCO should be given the resources needed to back-fill positions left vacant by officials sent to other departments.¹²⁸ While the Committee acknowledged that it was "essential" that Whitehall officials with relevant expertise were identified and put at the centre of managing the exit process, it contended that this should not be at the expense of an "already-overstretched FCO", and thereby "threaten other aspects of the UK's bilateral relations with some of its most important partners".¹²⁹ Before the referendum, on 9 September 2015, the former Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, told the Committee that the FCO was at that point "pretty close to the irreducible minimum of UK-based staff on the network".¹³⁰

¹²² House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Oral Evidence: Foreign Policy Developments: October 2016, HC 552](#), 13 October 2016, Q 101.

¹²³ *ibid.* For further information, see: House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Implications of the Referendum on EU Membership for the UK's Role in the World](#), 26 April 2016, HC 545 of session 2015–16, p 11.

¹²⁴ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Implications of the Referendum on EU Membership for the UK's Role in the World](#), 26 April 2016, HC 545 of session 2015–16, p 7.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p 7.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, p 7.

¹²⁷ House of Commons, [Written Question, Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Staff](#), 13 September 2016, 46237.

¹²⁸ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Equipping the Government for Brexit](#), 20 July 2016, HC 431 of session 2016–17, p 10.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, p 7.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p 7.

In response to a question by Emily Thornberry, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, which asked the Government how many FCO staff had been seconded to, and directly recruited by, the Department for Exiting the European Union, Boris Johnson said:

The FCO had seconded 39 positions including 30 officials on loan to the Department for Exiting the EU and that this figure includes ten officials who were on loan to the FCO from other government departments. No staff have been directly recruited by the Department for Exiting the EU from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.¹³¹

The Committee also recommended that the Government ensure that officials who had been sent to other departments should then be re-integrated into the FCO or the Department for International Trade when the exit process was complete “to add their expertise and experience to the country’s overall representational capacity in the long term”.¹³²

3. Further Reading

This briefing has not examined the implications of UK withdrawal from the EU on issues such as the UK’s future trade relationships with other countries in and outside the EU, or the impact on overseas development policy.

The House of Commons Library briefing on [Brexit: Impact Across Policy Areas](#) (August 2016) and the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee report on [Implications of the Referendum on EU Membership for the UK’s Role in the World](#) (April 2016) cover these issues, as well as other aspects of defence and diplomatic service which are not discussed in this briefing—such as procurement.

For further detailed background and information on the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Common Security and Defence Policy and Security and Police Cooperation in relation as it relates to the EU, see House of Lords Library, [Leaving the European Union: Foreign and Security Policy Cooperation](#) (13 October 2016).

¹³¹ House of Commons, ‘[Written Question, Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Staff](#)’, 13 September 2016, 46237.

¹³² House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Equipping the Government for Brexit](#), 20 July 2016, HC 431 of session 2016–17, p 7.

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