



## Bridging the Channel: How Europe and the UK can work together in foreign policy

by Luigi Scazzieri

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Since Brexit, the UK has been reluctant to engage with the EU in foreign and security policy. The EU-UK Trade and Co-operation Agreement of December 2020 does not cover provisions for working together in foreign policy. While the EU had wanted to include them, the UK thought that most foreign and defence co-operation took place outside EU framework and rejected the EU's proposal.

In this Centre for European Reform policy brief, '[Bridging the Channel: How Europe and the UK can work together in foreign policy](#)', kindly supported by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Luigi Scazzieri, research fellow at the CER, considers how the UK and its European partners can continue to work together in foreign policy even without a formal agreement.

EU countries and the UK both recognise they will have to develop new ways of working together. These will include intensified bilateral interactions, small groups like the E3 (France, Germany and the UK) and existing institutions like NATO. However, there are limits to what these formats can achieve, and they can also create friction. EU member-states are wary of dealing with the UK outside of the EU framework for fear of undermining EU unity, and the Union is an important actor in its own right in sanctions and all areas of foreign policy that have an economic dimension.

Working together would be easier with an EU-UK foreign policy agreement, although the lack of a formal agreement does not in itself preclude substantial consultations between the EU and the UK. Much will depend on the state of broader relations. The author argues that, as long as there is no foreign policy agreement, EU member-states and the UK should involve EU institutions in their discussions. For Europeans this would guard against the risk of undermining the EU's internal cohesion, but it would also be to the UK's advantage because involving the EU institutions will make the UK's European partners less worried about undermining the Union's cohesion and more willing to work together.

The author of the paper, Luigi Scazzieri said: "*By working together bilaterally, in small groups, and in institutions of which they are members, EU member-states and the UK can continue to co-operate in foreign policy. But the UK's reluctance to deal with the EU directly is complicating matters. It will be particularly hard to tackle challenges that have an economic dimension without involving the EU, as the Union is the forum where member-states agree and implement economic policies.*"

### Note for editors:

For further information on the new research and to request an interview with Luigi Scazzieri [@LScazzieri](#), please contact Rosie Giorgi in the CER press office on [pressoffice@cer.eu](mailto:pressoffice@cer.eu) or +44 (0) 20 7233 1199.

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