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# Where is the Beef?

## Prospects of a closer German-British Security Partnership

von *Robert J. Rider*

**In October 2015, during the course of a bilateral meeting with the German Defence Minister Dr. Ursula von der Leyen, the United Kingdom's Defence Minister Michael Fallon suggested that the UK and Germany work towards a closer and more intense Defence and Security partnership. This was more than an act of diplomatic politeness but foresaw a substantial and qualitative step forward in the cooperation of both countries, particularly given the significant threats of Russian recidivism and the rise of Da'esh. What is behind this proposal and what implications will it have?**

### The SDSR

The UK's Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) 2015 outlined the fact that the UK faces multiple, concurrent and diverse threats, including: terrorism and violent extremism such as Da'esh; the resurgence of state-based aggression (that means Russia for the foreseeable future, with its occupation of the Crimea and its intervention in the Donbass); and intensifying inter-state competition and the phenomenon of cyber warfare. Europe is less secure than it was; migration is being weaponised, undermining the cohesion of the EU and NATO. At the same time, we see a resurgent Russia on the Eastern flank, Da'esh to the South delighting in terror and using social media to spread hate, and the migration crisis testing Europe's commitment to free movement and stretching our security services and public services, as well as tolerance.

The SDSR was based on this strategic context. Its key tenet was to "Protect our People" and also on the fact that the UK's basic security is founded on the NATO Alliance, particularly the Article 5 commitment. So Germany and the UK have been working together on formulating good policy with their NATO Allies ahead of the Warsaw Summit in July 2016. This sees the Western community continually adapting the alliance and developing a 21<sup>st</sup> century doctrine of deterrence across the full spectrum. Moreover, whilst enhancing our resilience to hybrid warfare and threats such as cyber attacks or the so-called "Green Men," it requires sufficient force structures, the right balance between forward presence in the Baltics, Poland and Central Europe, and the ability to reinforce rapidly. Similarly, we must be resolute in our engagement with Russia but also remain open for a dialogue to avoid miscalculation. There is scope for a general convergence of policy here between the UK and Germany whilst noting there will be differences of interpretation or nuance.

Operationally, both countries also see the need for rapid deployment based either on the German-Dutch Framework Nation Concept (FNC) or the UK's Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), as well as the NATO Very

High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) for which both Germany and the UK took leading responsibility.<sup>1</sup> The UK believes that both the FNC and the JEF support Secretary General Stoltenberg's "Continuous Adaptation Plan" and both provide the basis for each country's force generation. The UK's SDSR also reinforced the commitment made at the NATO Wales Summit in September 2014 to a Defence Investment Pledge (DIP) of meeting a two percent of GDP target for defence spending for the next five years. Germany has also reversed its previous plans to reduce defence spending and is looking to provide at least two divisions and six brigades fully equipped and manned for its NATO commitments.

### **The SDSR main headlines and "international by design"**

The SDSR was a cross-government consultative paper. Overall, it is typically British, is very practical, and sets out a sound level of ambition matched by capabilities and resources. The UK's Cabinet Office led the process with a team from the Foreign Office, Department for International Development, Ministry of Defence and from the Intelligence Services. The UK consulted closely with key allies such as the US, France, and Germany. It is worth mentioning that the cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Defence and the German White Book Team was hugely encouraging and the team also consulted with the German Chancellery and the Federal Foreign Office extensively. Apart from the elements listed above, the UK also committed to retaining the nuclear deterrent; combating extremism and terrorism; investing £1 billion each year in cyber defence with allies and partners; strengthening the rules-based international order; and tackling conflict and building stability overseas.

One of the most exciting elements was the expression of a strengthened defence and security relationship with Germany as a Tier 1 country along with the US and France. The paper stressed that:

"Germany is an essential partner, given its economic power and growing influence on international security. It plays a major role in Afghanistan, has helped lead the European response to Russia's actions in Ukraine, and has missions delivering security in the Middle East, Balkans, and Africa. We strongly support Germany's bid to become a permanent member of an expanded United Nations Security Council.

We will work to intensify our security and defence relationship with Germany. We will deepen our intelligence sharing and collaboration on tackling terrorist threats, and work more closely on energy security, military support to humanitarian and development work, cyber and capacity building in countries outside Europe. We will also work more closely together to strengthen NATO, including the capabilities of its European members. We will strengthen our cooperation on operations, missions and training as well as enhance interoperability, such as between our navies and armies. We will work to deepen our cooperation on equipment, enhancing capabilities and reducing the support costs of common aircraft (Typhoon and A400M). We are also exploring future equipment collaboration – and there are other fruitful areas. While we still intend to withdraw our forces from Germany by 2020, we will continue to seek opportunities to train alongside the German Armed Forces, and here we are looking at retaining a training footprint around the Sennelager area."

This is the first time that the UK has emphasised its security relationship with Germany in these terms. The UK Minister of Defence Michael Fallon discussed this with the German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen during the drafting of the review to gauge German acceptance and received a very positive response. Of course this is the beginning of a narrative, and Germany, whilst welcoming, against the backdrop of the migration crisis and continued instability of the Eurozone, understandably focuses on the imminent UK Referendum on the EU before it can take a firmer position. In addition, it has to be acknowledged that Germany has traditionally emphasised other security relationships like the Elysee Treaty with France or the Weimar Triangle within the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) – which the UK also strongly supports. As outlined, the UK

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<sup>1</sup> The Federal Republic led the VJTF in 2015.

rates Germany very highly and think that it will be in both countries' national interests to "Stay Close" from the short term till over the next 20 to 30 years. Both countries face a lot of common challenges in an era of significant volatility and instability. Hence the coordination of policy, capability development, and operational delivery make a lot of sense.

### **How to do this? – So where is the Beef?**

Apart from deepening the close ties between Germany and the UK—which already exist across defence policy, capability, and operations to promote international stability—we ought to look at a more concrete list of proposals that both countries can take forward to the end of 2016. These can provide the "Meat" of a mutually beneficial relationship set in its wider strategic context.

1. *Da'esh and counter terrorism*: Germany and the UK are working together in the fight against terrorism and the current Counter-Daesh Coalition including efforts against Daesh's infrastructure, lines of communication and supply routes.
2. *NATO*: Germany and the UK are working closely to strengthen NATO and to deepen their cooperation on operations, missions and training. The UK has joined the German-US Transatlantic Capability Enhancement and Training (TACET) initiative, will provide the lead for airfield defence and armoured infantry capabilities, and will work with Germany on the mine-countermeasures Maritime capability. This will help build resilience and deliver a robust military presence in the Eastern European states.
3. *Capabilities and platforms*: As part of closer collaboration on defence procurement, the German State Secretary for Procurement and the British Minister for Defence Procurement have agreed to establish a UK-Germany "Ministerial Dialogue on equipment and capability cooperation" (MECC). The area of capabilities is particularly important given the requirement for tight defence budgets and for increased capability integration both within NATO and within the EU's CSDP. This should lead to a conversation where we can reduce support costs on common aircraft, notably the A400M and Eurofighter (British "Typhoon"). We can also look at other aircraft issues: enhancing the Eurofighter's capability (i.e. weaponry) and air transport — especially given the delays to the A-400M programme, and heavy lift helicopters. On this latter point, the replacement for the CH-53GS/GA could be a good area. The UK believes that Germany will also be interested in some form of participation in the UK-France Future Combat Aircraft System Programme (FCAS).

In the maritime environment, we believe that the UK will focus on carrier strike operations (based on its new Queen Elizabeth Class Carriers), on its independent nuclear deterrent, and regional responsibilities. Here we see the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean, as well as the general security of shipping lanes and access globally as being important. We note that the German Navy has a strong interest in mine-countermeasures capabilities and submarines, particularly as a Framework Nation in the Baltic. It also has an interest in the Mediterranean with surface vessels and, given Germany's status as a trade nation, also in shipping lane security around the globe. This means that the UK and Germany should certainly find fruitful areas for cooperation in the future naval environment within the 2020–30 timeframe, including surface vessels and rotary wing aircraft. They should also be able to cooperate in the conceptual and physical development of amphibious/amphibious operations. The recent announcement of the German-Dutch amphibious initiative gives a certain momentum to these discussions.

In the land (army) environment also exist several areas of cooperation such as developing future tank, bridging or active defence Systems. There is also room for cooperation in the area of medical evacuation (MERT) capability. There are also significant areas for exploiting future innovation, research and development, science and technology and testing and evaluation. Inevitably the British are great capitalists, but working closely with their German industrial partners, we think that both countries should be able to save money, or generate sales to make money. We feel that European defence industries should be reference partners to other smaller countries, and that by acting together we can drive down operating

costs for example by establishing a European hub for Boeing's service support for Chinook helicopters if the Bundeswehr took the decision to procure the Chinook as a replacement for the CH-53. This is the sort of innovative thinking, cooperation and creativity needed in the new strategic context.

*4. Operationalising the relationship:* Given the myriad of threats, the UK and Germany ought to be able to work more closely together in areas from tackling terrorist threats, increasing military support to humanitarian work, developing cyber capabilities (including an exchange between the UK's Cyber Command and the emerging German Cyber and Reconnaissance Command), and enhancing our capacity building in countries outside Europe. Geographically, these could be operationalised from Afghanistan (particularly around a future footprint in Kabul on train, advise and assist missions), to Mali, and even to potential capacity building missions for the future Libyan security forces. There is also plenty of scope for coordination with the other German-proposed "train and equip"-missions in Jordan, Northern Iraq and Nigeria. The UK is also working with Germany on migration orientated missions such as the new NATO mission in the Aegean and Operation Sophia off the coast of Libya.

*5. An example of tactical delivery – the land environment:* If one looks into further detail, the Chief of the British General Staff and the German Inspekteur des Heeres recently signed a Joint Vision document which sees progression of mutual training opportunities and exchange officers at headquarters level and also between the German 1. Panzerdivision and the United Kingdom's 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. The UK is also considering retaining a continental posture for its Army equipment at Mönchengladbach beyond 2023, as well as keeping a training and experimentation presence at the Sennelager training area near Paderborn. This latter initiative might combine the operational delivery of NATO readiness plans with tactical progress in experimentation and training through retaining a base to conduct Experimentation, counter hybrid warfare training as well as the practice of real time logistics, through the use of rail, road convoys and ports to circumvent Russian anti-area access denial initiatives (A2/AD). Here we see the Russians using the Kaliningrad bastion to prevent NATO reinforcement of the Baltic States and Poland in times of tension. These potential future facilities in Germany also offer a super jumping off point for participation in NATO, TACET or other bilateral exercises in Poland.

## **Conclusion**

The UK believes it is intensifying a vital defence and security relationship with Germany precisely at the right time because it works in the best interests of NATO, the EU, and the transatlantic partnership. It should also serve to enhance Germany's other defence and security partnerships, particularly with France. The UK-France Lancaster House Treaty of November 2010 outlined a future strategic defence and security cooperation between UK and France for the first time in their history. Lancaster House was a milestone in defence cooperation between two countries going beyond everything that had existed before. In this way the SDSR 2015 could mark the beginning of an Anglo-German narrative, and this requires further analysis in both countries. The announcement may be something of a surprise in Germany, for Germany has traditionally focussed on expressing its multinationality within the NATO and the EU, and may not have seen the UK as an obvious bilateral partner. Yet, there has been a "Stille Allianz" for years between the countries, so perhaps there could be a continuation and even an intensification of that special relationship today. As outlined above, there is nothing forced or artificial in the potential areas of activity, and there is scope to look at areas which will benefit from the bilateral relationship until summer 2016. Then we should see how we can take the relationship forward. The pressing threats and volatile strategic context should provide grounds for surprising innovation and creativity between these two key allies and security partners.

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