

UK National Security Decision-Making in Context: The Ukraine Crisis and NATO's Warsaw Summit Meeting

Joe Devanny

Director (Security), Ridgeway Information LTD

Introduction

The impact of generational change on the politics and government of any state is as difficult to measure precisely as it is undeniable and indelible. For complex organizations, such as governments, the differences exerted by generational change involve the intricate interplay between different groups of participants, inhabiting different institutional roles and degrees of influence. In generational terms, the most senior UK political leaders during the NATO summits of September 2014 (Wales) and July 2016 (Warsaw) had fewer adult memories than their predecessors of the Soviet Union and NATO's collective defence mission in Europe. The UK government's two most senior figures at this time were David Cameron (prime minister, 2010-16) and George Osborne (chancellor of the exchequer, 2010-16). They had both started their careers working for the Conservative party, respectively shortly before and shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, continuing to do so throughout the 1990s, when the UK was executing 'peace dividend' defence reductions and reforms. Neither Cameron nor Osborne participated in the John Major administration's (1990-97) defence and foreign policy-making, but the relevant policy debates focused on how the UK could help Russian President Boris Yeltsin to foster the growth of Russian democracy and free markets, how NATO should approach expansion into central and eastern Europe, and what NATO's role might be following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Whilst these were the major Russia- and NATO-related events during the formative political years of the most senior members of the Cameron administration, it is important to recognise that the UK government is bigger and more diverse than its elite political cohort. In determining and coordinating cross-Whitehall efforts during the Ukraine crisis, ministers were advised and supported by officials, some of whom had longer and deeper experience with NATO and Russia issues. Generational differences, distribution of relevant experience within Whitehall, and displacement of collective defence by 'out of area' operations and counter-terrorism as the UK's dominant security priorities over the previous 20 years, all shaped the UK's national security decision-making during the Ukraine crisis.

The UK's approach to the Ukraine crisis is a good case-study to explore its national security strategy and decision-making process, because the crisis is widely perceived as a significant moment (subject to contested interpretations) in the way that the UK and its NATO allies addressed major international security challenges. One former US practitioner described NATO's response to the Ukraine crisis as the 'most significant shift in the transatlantic security relationship since NATO's entry into Afghanistan after 9/11.' (Chollet 2016, 167) Other, academic experts warned about a considerable risk

inherent in the West's response, that it fed into a dangerous, post-Cold War Russian security dilemma, according to which, from the 1990s onwards, 'NATO's existence became justified by the need to manage the security threats provoked by its enlargement.' (Sakwa 2016, 4)

Searching for an analytical model to illuminate the structural factors shaping UK national security decision-making, it is helpful to borrow from US accounts of foreign policy decision-making. Alexander George describes the search for high-quality decisions as being subject to a number of trade-offs, including the need for decisions to secure sufficient support externally, and sufficient consensus within the administration, and with the need for efficient management of the time and other policy-making resources at the executive's disposal. (George 1980, 2) This typology can usefully be applied to the UK context, in which the relevant elite actors are the prime minister and the National Security Council (NSC). (Devanny 2015)

The UK government's decisions about the NATO summit meetings in 2014 and 2016 can be studied from the public statements made by ministers and officials, and inferred from observable outcomes (summit communiqués) and the stated views of UK legislators, foreign officials and others commenting on the UK's approach. This article also draws on research interviews with current and former UK officials, conducted between late 2016 and September 2017.

At least three caveats must be applied to near-contemporaneous assessments of national security decision-making. First, high-classification of government deliberations means that documentary evidence comprising the official record is inaccessible for several decades. This is a considerable obstacle to effective analysis: without access to official records, it is difficult to identify specific moments of decision, determine key actors, and so to produce a comprehensive assessment.

Second, analysis of the UK's approach must address the complexity of decision-making in a multi-national organisation, NATO, highlighting a general insight about organisational decision-making: 'The idea of "decision" can be elusive...Defining what a decision is, when it is made, and who makes it have all, at times, turned out to be problematic.' (March and Simon 1993, 3) This is a particularly apt observation about NATO, in which 29 member states (or 28 during the 2014 and 2016 summit meetings) negotiate ahead of agreed public statements about the organisation's decisions. Multinational organizations not only comprise an organisational secretariat and group of member states, but also, below this level, an intricate set of inter-institutional relationships within each member state's government, creating a complex adaptive system that presents a formidable challenge for analysts to comprehend.

A third caveat is the near impossibility of early assessments incorporating the covert dimensions of state action. The Ukraine crisis evidently involved covert or semi-covert Russian activities in Ukraine. The UK has contributed to the overt NATO response, e.g. in the form of enhanced collective defence, and to complementary decisions in other forums, most notably the European Union (EU), but it is worthwhile to reflect on the likelihood that certain NATO member states, including the UK, have

supplemented such overt responses with a range of covert activities. This is an important limiting factor for any appraisal of the totality of the UK's response, especially in light of the high salience of contemporary narratives about states' capabilities for hybrid warfare, cyber-attacks, 'fake news,' and information operations.

Most of the Western debate about such activities has been framed defensively, regarding how the UK and its allies can counter Russian covert action. Estonia, for example, suffered a significant cyber-attack in April 2007 and part of NATO's response was the 2008 creation of a collaborative centre for cyber defence, based in Estonia. (Herzog 2011) Whilst similar defensive collaborations were effected following the start of the Ukraine crisis, one must concede that scholars remain in the dark regarding possible covert dimensions of UK and allied activities. It has been argued that 'covert action, due to its unique element of secret sponsorship,' affords governments a greater range of options to 'escape from the security dilemma.' (Anderson 1998, 405) In addition, covert communication can play an important role in foreign policy, so it is important to recognise the limits of assessments, such as this one, that proceed solely on the basis of publicly-avowed actions and decisions. (Carson and Yarhi-Milo 2017)

This article proceeds in four parts. Its first section briefly introduces the Ukraine crisis as the major issue that dominated both the 4-5 September 2014 (Wales) and 8-9 July 2016 (Warsaw) summit meetings. The next section outlines the decisions taken at the Wales and Warsaw summit meetings, identifying the differences of opinion between Alliance member states. This section contextualises NATO actions as part of a wider series of connected measures involving its member states' activities in other forums, including the EU, in which the UK government also played an important role. The third section describes the major features of the UK approach to intra-Alliance and wider Western negotiations since 2014, exploring the role perceptions and political contingencies that have shaped it. Finally, the fourth section provides a closing assessment, addressing several potentially consequential factors that could re-shape the direction of UK policy.

1. The Ukraine Crisis

The Ukraine crisis was precipitated in November 2013, when, under pressure from Russia, the then-president of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich rejected Ukraine's EU Association Agreement. This put in motion an increasingly bitter, violent contest between Yanukovich and protesters against his regime, leading ultimately to Yanukovich's decision to flee from Ukraine to Russia in February 2014. After Yanukovich's flight, Ukraine's plight intensified: Russia seized and annexed Crimea in March, and the Donbas area of eastern Ukraine has been engulfed in conflict from 2014 to the present day, despite on-going international diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis, most notably in the two Minsk agreements. (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee 2017, 24)

Placing this episode in historical context, Richard Sakwa describes it as an amalgam of two connected but distinct crises: 'the "Ukrainian" crisis [that] has emerged out of the contradictions of the

country's nation- and state-building since independence in 1991, [and] the "Ukraine" crisis [that] is the sharpest manifestation of the instability of the post-Cold War international system.' (Sakwa 2016, 3) The UK government, apart from its general role as a member state of NATO and the EU, and as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, had a more specific standing in relation to the Ukraine crisis. The UK was a signatory of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, which had provided international reassurance about Ukraine's territorial integrity in exchange for Ukraine's voluntarily relinquishing the nuclear arsenal it had inherited following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The annexation of Crimea exposed the unreliability of the Budapest assurances. More broadly, the UK was obliged, alongside its NATO and EU allies, to address the impact of the Ukraine crisis on the threat perceptions of NATO's eastern member states: if Russia could intervene notionally in support of Russian-speakers in Ukraine, what was to stop such action in, for example, Estonia?

The Ukraine crisis has placed renewed emphasis on a neuralgic historiographical debate in which scholars have argued about the impact of NATO's post-Cold War eastward expansion on European security. This debate goes back as far as controversy about what assurances were made to Soviet leaders at the end of the Cold War concerning limits to NATO expansion. (Shiffrinson 2016) One Clinton administration memoir notes that Russian diplomats emphasised from the outset that US insistence on NATO expansion could 'blow up the circuits' of the US-Russia bilateral relationship. (Talbot 2002, 97) The UK and other NATO member states tried to assuage Russian anxieties during the first round of post-Cold War expansion in the late 1990s (Portillo 1997), but there was already speculation that Russia would respond assertively when it once again became better able to project its national interests. (Averre 1998) This view has been articulated more recently, noting the Western error in perceiving Yeltsin's acquiescence to NATO expansion as a 'strategic decision' and not an indication of the weakness that Yeltsin's successor, President Vladimir Putin has been willing and able to rectify, whatever the economic cost from Western sanctions. (Hill and Gaddy 2015, 396) More broadly, several scholars have noted domestic political drivers for Russian intervention in Ukraine (Allison 2014, 1297) and the deep incompatibility between Western promotion of 'democracy and liberal markets abroad' and a Russian political system 'that thrives as a closed one-boy network and an economic protection racket.' (Hill and Gaddy 2015, 392)

Despite these evident tensions between Russia and the West, the UK was apparently as surprised as other states by the sudden escalation in the Ukraine crisis. (Hague 2014) Addressing this issue in mid-May 2014, David Cameron said 'you can never, in your horizon scanning or security planning, predict where the next problem will come from. Ukraine, Georgia and other countries have been discussing partnership agreements with the EU for many, many years without these sorts of problems occurring.' (House of Commons Liaison Committee 2014, 18) Given the 2008 Russia-Georgia war and long-running concerns about the security of Crimea, it is reasonable to treat Cameron's claim with some scepticism. (Asmus 2008) Notwithstanding UK-Russian bilateral tensions caused by the 2006 murder

of Alexander Litvinenko in London, UK policies towards Russia up to the Ukraine crisis largely reflected a wider Western focus less on the possible threat Russia posed to Europe and more on transactional cooperation – as seen in the Barack Obama’s first term ‘reset.’ (Ratti 2013) In the 1990s and 2000s, NATO had also moved away from its European collective defence mission, focusing on ‘stability operations and confronting low-end threats’ and not ‘paying enough attention to its old nemesis to the east: Russia, which was working to reassert its influence in many of the areas the Soviet Union had once dominated.’ (Breedlove 2016, 97)

The Ukraine crisis put the Russia question emphatically back at the top of NATO’s agenda, raising concerns about collective defence and more discursive or nebulous issues such as the contest of different geopolitical narratives, hybrid and information warfare. (Bechev 2015) The primary institutional mechanisms used by NATO to address these newly-recognised threats were the NATO summit meetings of 2014 and 2016, but the wider effort also encompassed parallel steps taken in other forums, most notably the EU.

2. Two NATO Summit Meetings in the Shadow of the Ukraine Crisis

The Ukraine crisis created and re-opened tensions in the Alliance. NATO’s eastern member states were anxious that more influential members of the Alliance would oppose substantial eastern military deployments because of commitments under the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act. (Whitmore 2014) In contrast, Czech President Miloš Zeman reportedly said during the Wales summit that he was unpersuaded of claims about Russian intervention in Ukraine. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia were all reportedly wary of proposed EU economic sanctions against Russia, lest such measures exert an adverse impact on their respective national economic interests. (Coalson 2014) These diplomatic disagreements arguably limited the efficacy of EU economic measures that complemented decisions at the Alliance summits of 2014 and 2016. (Hunter Christie 2016, 54)

Jeffrey Larsen has traced four distinct viewpoints amongst NATO member states, shaping debates between the Wales and Warsaw summits: (1) states bordering Russia ‘fear any appearance of weakness’; (2) states in NATO’s southern region are more preoccupied with issues such as maritime security, immigration, and ‘ungoverned spaces’ in the Middle East and North Africa; (3) some states favoured a ‘balanced approach with a 360-degree threat assessment’ rather than an *ad hoc* response to Russian belligerence; and (4) some states were simply unsure what was the best option for NATO to adopt. (Larsen 2017) The Wales summit declaration should be read as an effort to satisfy these different views within the Alliance, but which manifestly put the Ukraine crisis at the front of the agenda.

The declaration’s first 31 (of 113) paragraphs specified measures to address the Ukraine crisis.¹

¹ Emphasising the contrast with the ‘out-of-area’ focus on previous NATO summit meetings, and heralding the December 2014 end of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission, Afghanistan merited only four of the subsequent paragraphs (41-44).

It agreed a ‘commitment to fulfil all three core tasks set out in our Strategic Concept: collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security.’ (NATO 2014) The Readiness Action Plan (RAP) agreed at the summit included a commitment to a ‘continuous’ and ‘meaningful’ military presence in eastern member states, ‘on a rotational basis’ to ‘provide the fundamental baseline requirement for assurance and deterrence...flexible and scalable in response to the evolving security situation.’ (NATO 2014) Another prominent feature of the RAP was a commitment to ‘establish a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), a new Allied joint force that will be able to deploy within a few days to respond to challenges that arise, particularly at the periphery of NATO's territory.’ The summit meeting also agreed a defence investment pledge that member states should either maintain or work towards over the course of a decade the twin targets of a minimum of 2 per cent of gross domestic product in defence expenditure and the allocation of more than 20 per cent of their respective defence expenditures on major equipment. The summit agreed to ‘an enhanced exercise programme with an increased focus on exercising collective defence including practising comprehensive responses to complex civil-military scenarios.’ In addition, the summit also agreed to work towards improved NATO capabilities to defend against hybrid warfare and relatedly improve strategic communications, noting the early September NATO accreditation of the recently-established, Latvia-based Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.²

The official statement also explicitly endorsed (para 67) two capacity-building measures: the German ‘framework nation concept’ and the UK-facilitated, seven-nation collaboration in a joint expeditionary force. Reflecting close coordination between NATO and the EU, the Wales summit officially noted the complementarity of economic sanctions imposed by the EU (and Canada, Norway and the US), the EU decision to establish a mission in Ukraine to assist with civilian security sector reforms, and the ‘swift deployment’ of the OSCE’s special monitoring mission.

3. The Warsaw Summit meeting

The 2016 Warsaw summit communique contextualised the Ukraine crisis as part of an ‘arc of insecurity and instability along NATO's periphery and beyond.’ Much of the early part of the communique addressed the Ukraine crisis and the ‘illegal,’ ‘illegitimate’ and ‘destabilising’ actions of Russia, noting the adverse impact on both Baltic and Black Sea littoral states, and reiterating NATO’s support for complementary activities by the EU and OSCE. (NATO 2016) For example, the communique noted NATO’s support for EU counter-refugee smuggling operation in the Mediterranean (para 93) and for wider, deeper cooperative efforts between the two organisations (paras 121-22), ‘including countering hybrid threats, enhancing resilience, defence capacity building, cyber defence, maritime security, and exercises.’ (NATO 2016)

² It is interesting to note the north-eastern European locations of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre for Excellence (Latvia), Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (Estonia), and the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Finland).

The Warsaw communique noted progress made in 2015 to establish the VJTF agreed at the Wales summit, including the role of the UK as one of the VJTF's seven framework nations (para 37b). One of the communique's most significant announcements was the decision (para 40) to 'establish an enhanced forward presence in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland to unambiguously demonstrate, as part of our overall posture, Allies' solidarity, determination, and ability to act by triggering an immediate Allied response to any aggression.' (NATO 2016) The enhanced forward presence (EFP) was to begin in early 2017 and build substantively on collective defence provisions agreed at the Wales summit. The 'four [multinational] battalion-sized battlegroups' comprising the EFP would be led by the framework nations of Canada, Germany, the UK and the US, and would be rotational but 'present at all times' and 'underpinned by a viable reinforcement strategy.'

The communique clearly aimed to strike a balanced tone. It juxtaposed commitment to deterrence with recognition that dialogue must continue (para 39): 'to prevent conflict and war, credible deterrence and defence is essential...[but] deterrence has to be complemented by meaningful dialogue and engagement with Russia, to seek reciprocal transparency and risk reduction.' Pursuant to this commitment to dialogue, the NATO-Russia Council was reactivated after the summit, subsequently meeting three times in 2016. The EFP initiative in the east was also explicitly balanced in the next paragraph (para 41) with a commitment to develop a 'forward presence in the southeast part of the Alliance territory...tailored to the Black Sea region and including the Romanian initiative to establish a multinational framework brigade.' The communique further balanced its focus with prominent consideration of other issues, most notably the security situation in the Middle East and North Africa, and NATO's resolve to fulfil obligations under the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, including in light of 'the ongoing crisis in Syria, which has direct ramifications for regional stability and for the security of NATO's south-eastern border.' (NATO 2016)

The Warsaw summit's major, headline-grabbing measures related to enhanced forward presence and conventional deterrence, but these formed part of a broader, composite effort, involving other activities pursued by both NATO and the EU, separately and in tandem. One of the other major planks of Western policy since 2014 was the imposition of economic sanctions, the efficacy of which as a tool to change behaviour has been questioned. (Ashford 2016) Other measures included the improvement of defence against hybrid threats and cyber-attacks. Independent recommendations have included better cooperation in counter-intelligence and the investigation of illicit finances that can be used to fund Russian active measures. (Galeotti 2016)

4. The UK Role at the Wales and Warsaw Summit Meetings

National strategy shapes both policy goals and choices about the means used to deliver them. There is a considerable academic literature that explores various ways of conceiving UK strategy – from metaphorical conceptions of the UK as a 'balancing' or 'bridging' power between mainland Europe and

America (W. Wallace 2005), to 'interpretivist' attempts to excavate continuities between administrations, such as a 'bounded liberalism', (Daddow and Schnapper 2013) encompassing the governments of both Tony Blair (Prime Minister, 1997-2007) and David Cameron, to the use of 'role theory' to explore the 'domestic self-identities and political pressures' that have constrained successive UK governments in shaping national strategy. (Gaskarth 2014, 561).

Surveying post-Cold War relations between the UK and Russia, Maxine David noted that 'the UK has tried to position itself as interlocutor between Russia and others, notably the USA, rather than rely on the EU or others to perform that role on its behalf.' (David 2011, 201) The UK's approach to the Wales and Warsaw summit meetings, and its wider response to the Ukraine crisis, reflects these overarching conceptions of the UK's international role. Cameron had reportedly fought hard for the privilege of hosting the 2014 NATO summit meeting, but in early 2014 the agenda for the September summit meeting was still embryonic, not thought likely to be preoccupied with collective defence, and feared by some NATO member states to be at risk of being dominated by existential questions following the Afghan drawdown. (Chollet 2016, 168) The Ukraine crisis then transformed the circumstances in which the summit would take place.

Given the need to react quickly to the emerging Ukraine crisis, it was unsurprising that some of the building blocks of the UK's contribution at Wales would essentially appropriate initiatives already in development. For example, plans for a joint expeditionary force, which had originally been conceived as a vehicle for shorter, 'out of area' deployments, but which were now repurposed as a vehicle for larger 'in-area' deployments. Between the Wales and Warsaw summits, the 2015 UK Strategic Defence and Security Review also placed renewed emphasis on enhancing collective defence and addressing state-based threats. (Saxi 2017, 18)

Ahead of the Wales summit, Whitehall was reportedly more focused on what became the defence investment pledge than it was on emerging plans for the VJTF. The intra-Alliance negotiations to secure the defence pledge were reportedly intensely contested, comprising a concerted US-UK effort to persuade other member states to sign up. On other issues, Cameron was reportedly less closely involved, with line departments (FCO and MoD) taking the lead. Cameron was reportedly more personally involved in preparations for the 2014 than the 2016 summit meeting, but this is unsurprising given the UK's 2014 role as host.

According to several interviewees, there was no agreement within the Alliance until very close to the September summit meeting on the central question of what military response the Alliance would consider to Russia's seizure of Crimea and aggression in eastern Ukraine. This was a primarily US-led process, with relatively limited UK input. The Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Philip Breedlove, reportedly approached this issue shrewdly, delaying the release of his proposals (which ultimately became the VJTF) until early August, in order to reduce the opportunity for disagreement between member states prior to the September summit meeting.

One interviewee, a former senior UK official, described the Wales summit meeting as ‘just enough for NATO to look respectable’ – hitting a sweet spot between the minimum that the Baltic states were prepared to accept and the maximum that the Germans and French were prepared to endorse. In negotiations for both the Wales and Warsaw summits, the UK had a role supporting the US in ‘building bridges’ between other member states, *e.g.* between the Polish and German governments regarding Russia policy, and between the Baltic states, on the one hand, and France and Italy on the other, over the emerging EFP and the need to find a formula to advance both eastern collective defence and southern efforts to address immigration and the security of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. With its global outlook, the UK shared the concerns of both groups of member states, so it tried – reportedly with some success – to play an effective role negotiating with both groups, and to assuage fears in southern member states that Baltic states were ‘over-playing’ the Russian threat. On this account, the UK was able to help to ‘paper over the cracks’ and build a consensus.

According to several UK officials interviewed for this article, the major difference between the Wales and Warsaw summit meetings was the necessarily reactive, more hurried preparations for Wales, as compared with the longer preparation time for Warsaw. According to one of these accounts, the UK and NATO allies were ‘behind the curve’ in preparations for Wales, with few substantive plans conceived early to address the Ukraine crisis. Whilst the decision had been taken at the April 2014 foreign ministers’ meeting to suspend cooperation with their Russian counterpart, it also appeared that NATO was playing a less prominent role than the EU: an early decision had been taken to prioritise economic sanctions. To one interviewee, this appeared to amount to a decision, tacit or otherwise, to ‘muddle through’ the Wales summit meeting. In contrast, the major lines of debate at the Warsaw summit meeting were clear much earlier and afforded officials a much longer period of preparation.

For example, several interviewees described the influential impact within the Alliance of a ‘non-paper’ drafted by the UK Delegation to NATO in late 2015, which reportedly helped to shape the thinking that resulted in ‘modern deterrence’ measures, agreed at the early February 2016 defence ministerial meeting, and which fed into the Warsaw summit. (NATO 2016) It was, however, noted by one former official that these UK activities were less closely coordinated with the US government’s plans for the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) than outsiders might have supposed, given the strength of the bilateral US-UK relationship. The UK was also reportedly active in helping to improve NATO’s intelligence and cyber capabilities.

On a different level, some interviewees claimed that cross-Whitehall discussions between the Wales and Warsaw summits were complicated by a perceived lack of understanding about deterrence issues. This is consistent with broader assessments of ‘deterrence literacy’ gaps in NATO and individual member states, amongst politicians, civilian officials and armed forces, after a generation of ‘expeditionary warfare and counterinsurgency’. (Kulesa and Frear 2017, 4) According to a UK parliamentary inquiry, further structural constraints on the UK’s response to the Ukraine crisis included

severe post-Cold War reduction in Whitehall's analytical expertise on Russia and a perceived restriction of research analysts' access to senior decision-makers, especially if experts' views conflicted with those of career policy officials. (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee 2017, 54-55) Similar criticisms have been made about the adverse impact on cross-Whitehall working of the limited military footprint in the central coordinating national security secretariat. (Richards 2014, 309)

Patrick Keller has claimed that the UK was less influential in negotiations leading up to the Warsaw summit because it was distracted by the June referendum vote to leave the EU. (Keller 2017) This claim is contested, but it is undeniable that the EU referendum was then one of Cameron's biggest priorities. It was therefore unsurprising for him to prioritise it. Keller's juxtaposition of the referendum and preparations for Warsaw imply that, absent the referendum, Cameron's NATO engagements would have increased, but none of the officials I interviewed agreed, disputing Keller's either/or formulation and insisting that UK officials had indeed been active in persuading allies to come to agreement at Warsaw. Similarly, Cameron's defenders might credibly mirror Derek Chollet's defence of Obama against similar claims, emphasising the logic of a German diplomatic lead on the Ukraine crisis, the limits of finite executive 'bandwidth,' and the corresponding need to prioritise consideration of other significant international security issues, e.g. the fight against ISIL in Iraq and Syria. (Chollet 2016, 178)

5. Assessment and Future Prospects

Throughout NATO's and the wider West's response to the Ukraine crisis, the UK government played an important role within the Alliance and other influential international forums. At the Warsaw summit meeting, it committed to leading one of the four EFP multinational battlegroups; since 2014, it has pushed at the hardest end of the EU sanctions debate; and it coordinated closely throughout with the US government. As a state that self-defines as a leading member of NATO and other multilateral institutions, the UK government appears content that it has achieved constructive outcomes (as much as the market would bear, at any rate) regarding collective defence and the wider Western response to the Ukraine crisis.

The UK provided strong support to the US in the intra-Alliance negotiations to agree the defence investment pledge, but there has been some criticism both of the pledge's practical value to the Alliance (Risso 2015) and of the accounting formula by which the UK government intends to implement that pledge itself, albeit undeniably following NATO guidelines. (Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy 2016) Similarly, the narrative of the UK's 'leading role' in NATO should be nuanced with recognition that other NATO/EU member states also played important roles. In some cases, these states led to a greater extent than did the UK, e.g. Germany and France on diplomacy during the Ukraine crisis. This can be accounted for by a number of contingent factors, ranging from the logic of a German diplomatic lead, to the prioritisation of limited UK prime ministerial bandwidth to address other important international issues.

The UK's approach as a NATO member state is developed alongside a series of other international roles, including: that of a strong or 'special' bilateral ally of the US; member of the 5 EYES intelligence partnership; permanent member of the UN Security Council; G20 member state; and (for the moment at least) EU member state. Role identities of Britain as a 'leading' global power and transatlantic 'bridge' are deeply entrenched, but Brexit will create new circumstances in which these roles are acted out.

Facing the future, the UK has previously tried to limit duplication of effort between the EU and NATO, but with the advent of Brexit it is currently unclear what kind of influence the UK will have on the direction of the EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy and related defence initiatives, e.g. Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence (PESCO). (EU External Action Service 2017) It is, however, clear that NATO and the EU have embarked on several joint or complementary initiatives, e.g. in the field of countering hybrid warfare. (Hybrid CoE 2017) In the most plausible post-Brexit scenarios, the UK would continue to be able to influence proceedings from within NATO, as well as bilaterally with EU member states, but it is difficult to conceive of collaboration as close as would have been possible within the EU, unless the UK were to formally 'opt-in' to PESCO. (Onyszkiewicz 2017)

Finally, since 2010 the UK has had either a Conservative government or a Conservative-led coalition. The major lines of foreign policy decision-making have been relatively consistent, but were the Conservatives to lose a general election, the UK government could adopt a markedly different conception of the UK's global role. The current leader of the opposition Labour party, Jeremy Corbyn, has an ambivalent record of statements about NATO and Russia. If Corbyn were to become prime minister, this might have an impact on the UK's perception of its collective defence commitment, and indeed on other governments' perceptions of the credibility of that commitment. (Stewart 2017) Over four decades, Corbyn and senior members of his team have demonstrated a sharp divergence from the traditional lines of UK foreign policy. Forecasts about the future UK approach to Alliance issues must therefore treat the prospect of a Corbyn premiership as a high-impact variable.

Bibliography

- Allison, Roy. 2014. "Russian 'deniable' intervention in Ukraine: how and why Russia broke the rules ." *International Affairs* 90 (6): 1255-1297.
- Anderson, Elizabeth E. 1998. "The Security Dilemma and Covert Action: The Truman Years." *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 11 (4): 403-427.
- Ashford, Emma. 2016. "Not-so-smart Sanctions: The Failure of Western Restrictions Against Russia." *Foreign Affairs* 95: 114-123.
- Asmus, Ronald. 2008. *A War the West must stop*. 15 July. Accessed November 07, 2017. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/14/AR2008071401845.html>.
- Averre, Derek. 1998. "NATO expansion and Russian national interests." *European Security* 7 (1): 10-54.
- Bechev, Dimitar. 2015. "Understanding the Contest Between the EU and Russia in Their Shared Neighborhood." *Problems of Post-Communism* 62 (6): 340-349.
- Breedlove, Philip. 2016. "NATO's Next Act: How to Handle Russia and Other Threats." *Foreign Affairs* (96) 96-105.
- Carson, Austen, and Keren Yarhi-Milo. 2017. "Covert Communication: The Intelligibility and Credibility of Signaling in Secret." *Security Studies* 26 (1): 124-156.
- Chollet, Derek. 2016. *The Long Game: How Obama Defied Washington and Redefined America's Role in the World*. New York: PublicAffairs.
- Coalson, Robert. 2014. *Nato's Eastern Countries Fractured Over Response to Russia*. 06 September. Accessed November 07, 2017. <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-europe-divisions-ukraine-czech-hungary-poland-slovakia/26569958.html>.
- Daddow, Oliver, and Pauline Schnapper. 2013. "Liberal Intervention in the Foreign Policy Thinking of Tony Blair and David Cameron." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26 (2): 330-349.
- David, Maxine. 2011. "A Less than Special Relationship: The UK's Russia Experience." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 19 (2): 201-212.
- Devanny, Joe. 2015. "Co-ordinating UK Foreign and Security Policy." *RUSI Journal* 160 (6): 20-26.
- EU External Action Service. 2017. *Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) - Factsheet*. 19 October. Accessed November 07, 2017. [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/34226/Permanent%20Structured%20Cooperation%20\(PESCO\)%20-%20Factsheet](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/34226/Permanent%20Structured%20Cooperation%20(PESCO)%20-%20Factsheet).
- Galeotti, Mark. 2016. "Putin's Hydra: Inside Russia's Intelligence Services." *European Council on Foreign Relations*. 11 May. Accessed November 07, 2017. http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/putins_hydra_inside_russias_intelligence_services.

- Gaskarth, Jamie. 2014. "Strategizing Britain's Role in the World." *International Affairs* 90 (3): 559-581.
- George, Alexander L. 1980. *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Hague, William. 2014. *House of Commons Debates 24 February 2014: Ukraine, Syria and Iran*. 24 February. Accessed November 07, 2017.
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140224/debtext/140224-0001.htm>.
- Herzog, Stephen. 2011. "Revisiting the Estonian Cyber Attacks: Digital Threats and Multinational Responses." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4 (2): 49-60.
- Hill, Fiona, and Clifford Gaddy. 2015. *Comrade Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee. 2017. *The UK's Relations with Russia*. Parliamentary, UK House of Commons, London: UK Parliament.
- House of Commons Liaison Committee. 2014. *Oral Evidence: Evidence from the Prime Minister, HC1254*. 13 May. Accessed November 07, 2017.
<https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/liaison/liaison-committee-pm-13-may-2014.pdf>.
- Hunter Christie, Edward. 2016. "The design and impact of Western economic sanctions against Russia." *RUSI Journal* (RUSI) 161 (3): 52-64.
- Hybrid CoE. 2017. *About US: European Centre of Excellence*. Accessed November 07, 2017.
<https://www.hybridcoe.fi/about-us/>.
- Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy. 2016. *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015*. Parliamentary, UK Houses of Parliament, London: UK Parliament, 51.
- Keller, Patrick. 2017. "Divided by geography? NATO's internal debate about the eastern and southern flanks." In *NATO and Collective Defence in the 21st Century*, by Karsten Friis, 52-62. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kulesa, Łukasz, and Thomas Frear. 2017. *NATO's Evolving Modern Deterrence Posture: Challenges and Risks*. May. Accessed November 07, 2017.
<https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/NATOs-Evolving-Deterrence-Posture-ELN.pdf>.
- Larsen, Jeffrey A. 2017. "NATO's responses to Russian belligerence: an overview." In *NATO and Collective Defence in the 21st Century*, by Karsten Friis, 8-15. Abingdon: Routledge.
- March, James, and Herbert Simon. 1993. *Organizations*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Blackwell.

- NATO. 2016. *NATO Boosts its Defence and Deterrence Posture*. 10 February. Accessed November 07, 2017. https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/news_127834.htm.
- . 2014. *Wales Summit Declaration*. 05 September. Accessed November 07, 2017. https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.
- . 2016. *Warsaw Summit Communiqué*. 09 July. Accessed November 07, 2017. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm.
- Onyszkiewicz, Janusz. 2017. *How Brexit is likely to impact European Security and Defence*. 17 July. Accessed November 07, 2017. <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/how-brexit-is-likely-to-impact-european-security-and-defence/>.
- Portillo, Michael. 1997. "Russia and international security: A UK perspective." *RUSI Journal* 142 (1): 5-8.
- Ratti, Luca. 2013. "'Resetting' NATO–Russia Relations: A Realist Appraisal Two Decades after the USSR." *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 26 (2): 141-161.
- Richards, General David. 2014. *Taking Command*. London: Headline.
- Risso, Linda. 2015. "Time to act: the UK in NATO." *RUSI Journal* (RUSI) 160 (5): 30-34.
- Sakwa, Richard. 2016. *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands*. London: IB Tauris.
- Saxi, Håkon Lunde. 2017. "British and German initiatives for defence cooperation: the Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nations Concept." *Defence Studies* 17 (2): 1-27.
- Shiffrinson, Joshua R. Itzkowitz. 2016. "Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit NATO Expansion." *International Security* 40 (4): 7-44.
- Stewart, Heather. 2017. *Corbyn pledges 'triple commitment' to defence, development and diplomacy*. 12 May. Accessed November 07, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/may/12/corbyn-sets-out-a-better-way-to-live-together-in-foreign-policy-revamp>.
- Talbott, Strobe. 2002. *The Russia Hand: a memoir of presidential diplomacy*. New York: Random House.
- Wallace, William. 2005. "The Collapse of British Foreign Policy." *International Affairs* 81 (1): 53-58.
- Whitmore, Brian. 2014. *News Analysis: NATO Upgrades By Going Back To Basics*. 05 September. Accessed November 07, 2017. <https://www.rferl.org/a/nato-goes-back-to-basics-russia-ukraine-analysis/26568937.html>.