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“Security Brexit”: The Johnson-Trump Do-or-Die Alliance



*In aligning himself with US President Donald Trump with regard to policing the Gulf, the new British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has abandoned any pretence that his type of Brexit would exclude security and defence matters. This is in sharp contrast to the May government before him which has always insisted that it was willing and eager to pursue security matters with its European partners regardless of the UK's membership status in the EU, explains Dr. **Daniel WOKER**, Co-founder of [Share-an-Ambassador/Geopolitical coaching](#) and Former Swiss Ambassador to Kuwait, Singapore and Australia.*

It is evident that the EU as such, as well as its two remaining major military powers, Germany and France, will not, and cannot join the US in any kind of military action against Iran at this time. All three were actively involved in the negotiation and conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA or “nuclear deal”) severely limiting Iran’s capability of developing nuclear armament. The JCPOA, and the subsequent conclusion by the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) that Iran was fulfilling its obligations under the deal, was considered one of the rare successes of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and its spin-off, the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

The abrupt about-face by the Trump administration, cancelling the US participation in the JCPOA with reference to other unsavoury parts of Iranian foreign policy, which had been intentionally excluded from the deal as nuclear armament was considered the overriding concern, left Europe high and dry. Fully aware of the obvious mischief by Iranian and Iranian backed forces throughout the Middle East, the EU, as a main bastion of the defence of international law and the respective obligations by all parties, cannot

participate in any hostile action against Iran which would come as a direct consequence of the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and of Washington's subsequent export restrictions and boycotts.

This was made abundantly clear by both France and Germany already before the coming into office of the Johnson government in the UK. Consequently, then-UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt was always careful to call for a European, not Western or NATO centred mission in the Gulf. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian went on record saying that a European mission would be "the opposite of the US initiative about maximum pressure on Iran." Germany, after the difficult situation its participation in the Western alliance in Afghanistan has created for the governing CDU-SPD coalition in Berlin and traditionally reluctant of any foreign military entanglement, was even less inclined to join a US led force, more so under Trump.

Certainly, a part of the responsibility for the now hopelessly botched, all-European police force in the Gulf lies with the complicated procedures when invoking CFSP and CSDP measures. Full EU unanimity is still required for the first and basic decision to go ahead, majority votes are only allowed to set the operational details.

However, there were signs that French-German dynamism was developing towards an EU operation. German Defence Minister, and presumptive next Federal Chancellor, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (AKK) was unreservedly positive, while Heiko Maas, German Foreign Minister from the traditionally more pacifist coalition partner SPD was at least not negative. It would have taken some time, as decision-making always does within the loose confederation of states the EU is, but interests in the Gulf – Europe's near-abroad, particularly as regards security and refugees – are such that an all European approach to looming military conflict there should have been the obvious answer.

Johnson's premature choosing sides with Trump in the Gulf precluded that. The statement by Hunt's successor Dominic Raab that "we remain committed to working with Iran (....) to maintain the nuclear deal" must sound like pure irony not only in Teheran but also in Brussels. In the latter capital, based on its experience with Johnson as Foreign Secretary, nobody believes a single word Boris says. Except maybe that he will risk a no-deal Brexit. As this major security policy related example illustrates, coming even before Brexit, Johnson wants it all: insular sovereignty for the UK in Europe and a do-or-die alliance with Donald Trump in the wider world. He might well end up with none of the above.



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