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How Will BREXIT Effect the Development of the Next U.S. National Security Strategy?

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Abstract

On 24 June 2016 an event occurred that irreversibly changed the strategic direction of the European continent and its political identity. Through referendum over 30 million British citizens exercised their democratic right to determine their Nation's future. The outcome resulted in BREXIT (The British Exit from the European Union). Whilst, the effects of BREXIT span the social, economic, political, demographic and cultural continuum; this paper will focus on the impact on defense and the consequences for the development of a future U.S. National Security Strategy. There is little doubt that this paradigm shift in British political philosophy will alter the U.S.'s strategic stance in some way. A cursory analysis suggests that the effect may simply be limited to the U.S. use of the UK as an interlocutor within Europe. However, Britain's exit could influence broader security issues. These may include the ongoing UK involvement in support of operations against ISIS; the potential for a 'UK pivot' towards South East Asia and the maintenance of a comprehensive and holistic European response towards Russian expansion.

How Will BREXIT Effect the Development of the Next U.S. National Security Strategy?

The construction of a new National Security Strategy will be a complex issue for the Trump administration. In this globalized and unstable world the U.S. retains the international (albeit Western) lead for global security. So, irrespective of his personal views and political proclivities, the President will need to deliver a strategy which is feasible, acceptable and suitable - addressing the main security concerns of today's world. Traditionally, there are diplomatic, economic, social and military factors that influence the construction of all Executive plans. What the Trump administration faces is an additional problem – that being the impact of a monumental change in the European political system. It cannot be ignored and it will affect the structure and intent of his inaugural security strategy.

On 24 June 2016 an event occurred that irreversibly changed the strategic direction of the European continent and its political identity. It reverberated globally with its aftershocks continuing to create uncertainty and concern throughout the international political body. Through referendum over 30 million British citizens¹ exercised their democratic right to determine their Nation's future. The outcome resulted in BREXIT (The British Exit from the European Union (EU)). The significance of this momentous and unexpected choice, which broke a European status quo, was acknowledged as far afield as Nuuk to Hobart.

Whilst the effects of BREXIT span the social, economic, political, demographic and cultural continuum; this paper will focus on defense and security and specifically the consequences for the development of future U.S. strategies. There is little doubt that this paradigm shift in British political philosophy will alter the U.S. strategic stance in

some way. A cursory analysis suggests that the effect could simply be limited to the U.S. use of the UK as an interlocutor within Europe. However, Britain's exit could influence broader security issues. These may include the ongoing UK involvement in support of operations against ISIS; the potential for a 'UK pivot' towards South East Asia, and the maintenance of a comprehensive and holistic European response towards Russian expansion.

Whether Democrat or Republican, the 45th President would have had to tackle the U.S. / BREXIT conundrum. Arguably, a continuation of the established Democratic modus operandi would have made this easier. Even then, any Clinton strategy would have needed to re-evaluate how Obama had articulated his view toward Europe in the National Security Strategy of 2015 (NSS 2015).²

It is reasonable to expect that the Trump team will want to deliver an idea quantifiably different from that of the Obama tenure. They will wish to incorporate the President's own ideology, yet balance this with pragmatism. It difficult to assess how different this administration's generic philosophy will be from the key tenets within NSS 2015. Under most regimes a perspective may be gained from a leader's advisors. In this current case, it is more complex. Evidence suggests that the President's policy will be based upon a strong personal view, informed by the pragmatism and experience of Mattis, the intellect of McMaster, and the *Breitbart News* politics of Bannon and Miller. This has the potential to produce an extremely confused philosophy, which may be compounded by the obvious factures within the bureaucracy of the new administration. Indeed, a number of key positions in both the State and the Defense Department still remain unfilled, so it is unlikely that a coherent NSS will be revealed in the short term.

Nevertheless, there are some enduring strategic themes which this Executive will have to address and which this paper intends to analyze in the context of BREXIT.

After a brief discussion entitled, 'BREXIT what happened?' the paper will consider the U.S.- European security landscape, during and after BREXIT, and then review the implications BREXIT may have on three contemporary security challenges - the threat from ISIS, deterring and containing a revanchist Russia and managing a rising China. The paper will look to identify what strategic risks or benefits may exist as a result of BREXIT, and what may need to be done to mitigate their effects. In turn, the aim is to provide some context for the development of a NSS for the Republican administration.

BREXIT, What Happened? – Setting the Scene

The reasons for calling a referendum on membership of the European Union are far from straightforward. Fundamentally, it was method by which David Cameron sought to bring unity across the Conservative Party, to resolve a long standing internal conflict over the UK's position in Europe. It was done at time of political strength, with a weak opposition, and if successful would have created an excellent foundation for a further term in office. Cameron held an expectation of winning the 'Remain Vote.' But the political loyalty of his Party, the aggressiveness of the opposition campaign, and the will of the voters was sorely underestimated. In fact as Conservative grandee, Kenneth Clarke MP put it, "David [Cameron]'s chancer-like gamble, taken for tactical internal party-management reasons, turned out to be the worst political mistake made by any British prime minister in my lifetime."³ Irrespective of the personal dynamics of the story, it is generally accepted that there were three main reasons for the success of the leave campaign. These were a domestic perception of a broken European economic system,

a desire for a restoration of British sovereignty, and a populist reaction to an obdurate political establishment.

The leave campaign suggested that if the UK remained within this fractured and financially corpulent system, it was inevitable that it would go the same way as its Southern European partners - into an enduring and irrecoverable depression. Equally, most Britons regard the Nation's sovereignty to be an inalienable right. Whether this belief is based upon an irrelevant historic legacy or an immovable cultural dynamic is debatable. But the picture of faceless EU, imposing rules which threatened British security and identity, played into the hands of those wishing to exploit a Nationalist fervor for political ends. The message that the EU removes the right of members to make an individual choice rang true with the 'chattering classes,' and when tied to the immigration crisis this 'Nationalist Ticket' swung the vote in favor of the leave campaign. Finally, the main political parties (Conservative and Labour), whose members spanned both sides of the BREXIT debate, were rejected by the populous. The people wanted change and were prepared to take a risk as to the impact of voting to leave. Change came – resulting in the resignation of the Conservative Prime Minister and the Labour Party becoming institutionally impotent as a viable opposition. The transition to leave will take time, delayed further by the legal machinations surrounding the triggering of Article 50.⁴

The future Europe will be characterized by a wholly independent UK, a weakened EU, and a number of damaged national relationships which will take time to repair. In fact, the relationship between the UK and other EU members could worsen. It is generally accepted that the EU has no intention of letting the UK conduct a 'soft and

painless BREXIT.’ Rather it intends to make it as prohibitive as possible to deter any thoughts of independence from other members.⁵ This strategic picture of disunity could be very unhelpful to U.S. national interests,⁶ most notably in terms of the historical representation the UK has provided for the U.S. in European fora. Irrespective of the ongoing *realpolitik* Theresa May has said that Article 50 will be invoked by the end of March 2017. At this point two years of negotiations will begin and the UK will no longer be part of the EU by summer 2019.

In regard to this transition, the UK Government’s recent White Paper⁷ outlined twelve issues as being critical to delivering an effective BREXIT. Although it is notably upbeat, the paper carries little substantive detail in terms of defense. It does suggest that the UK will ensure that the EU’s role in defense is complementary to that of NATO.⁸ But with limited formal influence the reality of the UK being able to effect this proposition is questionable. There is also an acknowledgement of the existing UK contribution to the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), but no recognition as to whether Britain’s level of commitment will endure once its current responsibilities are fulfilled.

The White Paper is probably a necessary confidence building exercise targeting a domestic, European and international audience. But there is a reality that must be faced in terms of the UK’s ability to deliver a fully resourced security strategy. In fact, any BREXIT-induced growth penalty⁹ or revenue loss, may mean there is less investment for defense in general. Indeed, *The Economist* when commenting on a potential exit levy suggested that the “tab (was) eye watering,” with the bill reaching \$64Bn.¹⁰ Additionally, the UK Joint Committee on National Security Strategy reported in July 2016 that, “economic contraction caused by BREXIT could limit the ability of the

armed forces to fulfil their role effectively, as the UK's GDP might be reduced by between 2.1% and 3.5% by 2019.”¹¹ Furthermore, the National Audit Office stated in January 2017 that, “the UK's £178bn (\$223bn) (pre-BREXIT) defense equipment plan is vulnerable to currency fluctuations.”¹²

The delivery of an effective defense capability is predicated on the receipt of a guaranteed budget for the Services. The UK defense budget was due to increase by nearly £5bn to £39.7bn in 2020/21,¹³ this is no longer certain. Delegated financial authority within the UK Ministry of Defence means that the Service Chiefs have real choice as to how to spend their money. If funding is reduced, managing competing Service priorities against the necessity to back national aims will prove to be an interesting challenge; possibly affecting manpower, acquisition or readiness. For example, at the U.S.-UK land forces level, there remains a mutual intent for a UK division to operate within a U.S. Corps and a U.S. Division to work within the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps. Plans such as this may be under threat. Any future UK commitment to supporting U.S. security policy is unlikely to be limited by will, but it may be limited by resources.

The U.S – European Security Landscape

Even though a Republican strategy will differ from that of the Obama administration the importance of Europe and its security transcend any Presidential tenure. It seems fair to suggest that the overarching theme in NSS 2015 that, “the United States maintains a profound commitment to a Europe that is free, whole and at peace,”¹⁴ remains valid. Throughout its 75 year security commitment, the U.S. has attempted to facilitate stability in Europe for both economic and military purposes. But, in this period of uncertainty, stimulated by BREXIT, the threat associated with political

opportunism increases. This may be in the form of rising Nationalism, security related migration issues or terrorism - all with the potential to fracture existing democratic systems.

If the constancy of Europe is no longer guaranteed, what does this mean in terms of U.S. security interests? Partnerships and alliances will always feature as an unchanging aspect of any security strategy. Traditionally, the U.S. military bedfellow has been found within Europe and in particular the UK. A deep rooted, and occasionally confrontational, partnership founded during the Great Rapprochement,¹⁵ enhanced through the 20th Century and confirmed in the modern day, has produced a social, political and military convergence. In fact, the majority of European/U.S. military operations since 1945 have been predicated on mutual understanding and shared values. To some extent BREXIT has challenged this post - war tenet of unity and brotherhood. Outside of the 'special relationship,' the U.S. and other EU members cooperate on security matters on a limited scale.¹⁶ For example, the signing of the framework agreement on Crisis Management Operations in 2011.¹⁷ But the EU is not the operational framework of choice, at least not for the U.S. or UK – this remains NATO.

Currently the U.S. National Military Strategy 2015 states that, "in Europe we remain steadfast to our commitment to our NATO allies."¹⁸ However, the view of this Republican administration, both in terms of burden sharing and the delivery of collective security still remains uncertain. Trump's well-publicized interview in the *New York Times*¹⁹ suggested that if (when) he became President he would not necessarily be committed to meeting the requirements of NATO membership. Conversely, this same

paper reported that the NATO Secretary General was, “absolutely confident” that Trump would maintain the U.S. role in NATO.²⁰ And, since having termed NATO “obsolete—but very useful to me,”²¹ Trump has stated to Congress that, “we strongly support NATO,”²² with of course the standing caveats with respect to financial obligations.

It may be that, as the reality of being in the Oval Office becomes apparent, Trump is recognizing that the system of existing alliances is critical to the U.S. Even though he seems to vacillate when commenting on the Alliance and continues to press for a fair monetary contribution, the selection of his cabinet may go some way to providing a level of assurance to NATO allies. The Secretary of Defense did provide a level of surety in confirming that the, “alliance remains a fundamental bedrock for the U.S.”²³ But also implied, in support of POTUS policy, that America may moderate the level of its commitment should other NATO members fail to meet their fiscal obligations.

In terms of Europe funding its own defense, money itself does not seem to be the problem. The EU recently proposed, through its European Defense Action Plan, to increase its defense budget by \$5bn.²⁴ This declaration of intent could be an indication to Trump that Europe is prepared to pay their own way. It is interesting as to how this may affect NATO. Cash is finite and this \$5bn did not go into the NATO pot. The move is, no doubt, a direct reaction to BREXIT - and of course the UK will not be involved in discussing how this \$5bn is spent. The EU has also commented on strengthening ties with NATO.²⁵ This statement of identity is curious - it supports the argument that the EU is looking to establish itself as a separate defense entity who wishes to work with the U.S. This second order effect of BREXIT has created an interesting challenge for the U.S. as to how it engages with Europe in this new era.

The U.S. requires a forum to discuss EU defense issues, it cannot afford to be excluded. With the exception of the EU / U.S. Security and Development Dialogue²⁶ there seems to be little redundancy for discussion outside of NATO engagement. Whilst, most U.S. security requirements can be managed through NATO there are five EU members who are not part of the alliance.²⁷ In the absence of the UK a new, and possibly informal, partner is needed. Whilst the Obama / Merkel dynamic went some way to mitigating this, President Trump will need to develop fresh contacts. It is unlikely that Germany will be a starting point as Trump recently accused Merkel of being personally responsible for the immigration crisis due to her 'catastrophic' policy,²⁸ and did little to strengthen ties during her March 2017 visit to the U.S. This may become an even greater issue if Merkel is re-elected later this year.

His team seem to be a little more circumspect. Pence in his recent visit to the EU reaffirmed U.S. support for the organization – as a partner in its own right.²⁹ But as *Reuters* noted, "how far Trump's actions match his deputy's words," is to be seen. As previously suggested, unhelpful comments with regards to NATO prior to the campaign may have 'fueled the fire' of the EU members wishing to force the development of an independent security strategy. It is probable that this would be bounded within the parameters of an evolving CSDP - a construct in which the U.S. must have a voice to complement its own strategy and that of NATO.

In terms of how BREXIT may impact this development, the UK has always had a frustrating relationship with the CSDP. It is only the 5th largest contributor, deploying just 4% of the personnel contributed by participating states.³⁰ The UK's involvement has been more through a sense of loyalty to the EU than any perceived benefit. BREXIT will

allow the UK to draw back gracefully from this commitment without reneging on any moral obligation. Ironically, the CSDP was a British - French initiative, so with the UK withdrawal, as Faleg notes, “the first implication will be a political one.”³¹ Interestingly, the belligerence of the UK in terms of initiating this policy has frustrated its proponents. In this regard the French and Germans may breathe a sigh of relief as the UK departs.

If France and Germany decide to take the CSDP forward, which is likely, the transition should be smooth. The U.S. will retain an opportunity to engage and influence the forum positively as it develops. If however, the implementation of the CSDP is affected by this period of political instability, the U.S. may need to find another means of formally integrating with EU defense policy outside NATO. It is unclear what relative priority the lead CSDP members will place on the program against NATO. As such, the U.S. may need to consider whether to acknowledge the role of the CSDP in any future NSS. It seems that resolving the EU/NATO conundrum should be a priority for the President. It is highly unlikely that NATO will lose its pre-eminent role in delivering security to Europe, or indeed that the U.S. will depart. Nevertheless, solidarity at this time is critical, particularly in managing a resurgent Russia.

Deterring and Containing a Revanchist Russia

On 02 December 2016 Boris Johnson, the British Foreign Secretary, delivered a speech on UK foreign policy in the era of BREXIT.³² In reference to Russia he talked of, “the cult of the strongman,” and “democracy being in retreat”³³ and suggested that the, “post war liberal settlement is under unprecedented strain.”³⁴ He focused on the importance of European allies and the US/UK relationship. It was a message designed to reassure. Johnson sees the UK’s future role as a “flying buttress, supportive of the EU project but outside the main body of the church.”³⁵ Nevertheless, Britain will be

robust with Russia and will continue to endorse sanctions. It will also support President Trump's push to encourage NATO members to contribute appropriately - meeting at least the 2% of GDP commitment. As such, the UK's, "resolve to fulfill NATO's obligations will be unbreakable."³⁶ This is all good news for the U.S. But, Johnson makes a point of noting that, "Britain is not just a link, or a bridge between Europe and America."³⁷ This is interesting, as whilst Britain will likely remain as an interface for the U.S. on European issues, its loss of influence within the EU kirk will mean that, at least in formal political terms, the effectiveness of that bridge will be reduced. Johnson's statement also suggests that there is a desire of the UK to develop its trade and diplomatic relations outside of its traditional realm – possibly towards South East Asia. This aspect will be considered later.

Despite the UK's strong and consistent attitude toward Russia, BREXIT may have consequences that favor Putin. In the insightful *Atlantic Council* article, "*The Kremlin's Trojan Horses*," Neil Barnett notes that, "a fragmented Europe makes it far easier for Russia to dominate individual states and weaken the US-UK relationship."³⁸ The influence of Russia within the EU (including the UK) and how this may disturb future UK/EU/U.S. cooperation should not be ignored. Managing the tension that exists between developing Russian trade with European nations and countering Russian aggression will be a complex challenge. It is estimated that up to 75% of Foreign Direct Investment stocks in Russia come from EU member States.³⁹ In 2015, trade volume between Russia and the EU stood at 209.5 billion euros.⁴⁰ Whilst Russia believes that, "obsolete confrontational stereotypes from the times of the Cold War continue to linger,"⁴¹ it is equally keen to strengthen European – Eurasian economic ties. Arguably,

the EU may overlook elements of Russian revanchist intent in favor of bolstering an unstable continental economy. And, the UK can no longer directly influence any EU decision making with respect to Russia.

EU economic sanctions against Russia currently remain extant,⁴² but there is disunity amongst members. This is in terms of sanctions relating to Ukraine and Syria. Italy, Hungary and Spain have all publically called for the ending of restrictions and there may be further dissenters in the community who have yet to, 'rally to the call.' The oratory of individual countries within the EU is becoming stronger and more partisan.

There is evidence that BREXIT has given the weaker members of the EU a new voice and a will 'to buck the party line.' The UK EU referendum and the U.S. Presidential election demonstrated that the most powerful nation in the world and the most powerful in Europe remain subservient to the liberty of its people. If such a precedent can be set, who else in Europe may follow? Eyal argues that in 2017 Europe may see a rise in populist politicians aiming to capitalize on the "anti-establishment wave."⁴³

Since June 2016 the media has reported that political parties in Greece, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Sweden, Poland and most recently Eire⁴⁴ have mooted the idea of an EU membership referendum. Even though France, Germany and Italy remain committed to the European concept, it will require strong leadership to ensure that the partnership endures. Any new fractures in the Union will increasingly cause members to focus inwards; potentially ignoring external transnational threats such as Russia. To counter a 'leaving the club mindset' remaining EU members' will need to be confident that being part of this organization is in their interest. The U.S. can

play a key part in this and by extension support its own objectives. The Trump administration has the opportunity to further endorse the legitimacy of the EU both in terms of its economic contribution to the U.S. but also in terms of its ability to coordinate elements of collective security on behalf of the U.S. (and NATO). A future NSS which comments on the criticality of this union could go some way to negating any fear of a 'European Domino Theory' becoming reality.

At any level disunity is unhelpful. The U.S. should lead in maintaining unified support within Europe for any military strategy against Russia in the forthcoming years. Not least because Europe offers the infrastructure through which the U.S. can contain and deter. And whilst Donald Trump has 'praised' Putin, his incoming Defense Secretary does not share his view, considering the Russian leader to be, "possibly delusional."⁴⁵ Trump, certainly on military matters, will probably defer to Mattis. So it is a fair assertion that the U.S. military position in Europe and its military strategy toward Russia will, in the near term, remain relatively unchanged. As it stands, U.S. European Command, in support of current U.S. policy, is committed to the deterrence of further Russian revanchism.⁴⁶ This is the Combatant Commander's highest priority. The importance of resourcing this initiative is seen through Op ATLANTIC RESOLVE, which is the U.S. demonstration of its commitment to collective security in the light of Russian intervention in Ukraine.⁴⁷ In January 2017 additional U.S. troops, including an Armored Brigade Combat Team and a U.S. /UK Battalion deployed to Poland.⁴⁸ In the light of this enhancement, it would highly surprising if post BREXIT 'schoolboy quarrels' and any new EU security initiatives would undermine a coherent, if caveated, response to Russia.

There is, of course, the broader issue of the UK's ability to influence any future EU policy – often on behalf of the U.S. It is recognized that the Obama administration developed particularly good ties with the Merkel government in Germany, but the historical potency of the UK/U.S 'special relationship,' in the area of security and foreign policy, should not be dismissed lightly. Increasingly, the EU is being represented by High Representative Mogherini, who speaks on behalf of the Union. Generally, EU states will meet prior to UN meetings to determine a common approach, and EU ministers currently meet monthly. Whilst there is a precedent for non-EU nations to align themselves with the Union they have no input.⁴⁹ As noted, the U.S. has the ability to engage with the EU as a grouping on security issues, but this would be to the exclusion of Europe's primary nuclear power and notably the state which remains the most effective in terms of counter terrorism and intelligence.

The current EU counter terrorism strategy of 2016⁵⁰ was crafted pre-BREXIT. In the light of the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels, it focused strongly on the importance of information exchange. This included the establishment of a European Counter Terrorism Centre within Europol. The UK's Counter Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST)⁵¹ is comprehensive. There is reference in CONTEST to new EU focused Directives being written post referendum but information is limited. Of course the UK, whilst still in the EU, can both benefit and contribute to any broader strategy. Post BREXIT, this could cause a problem for the U.S. The relationship between the UK and U.S. intelligence services has been historically strong. Indeed, the UK's capability in this area has given it disproportionate influence within the EU both in terms of access, collection and analysis. The U.S. has benefitted from this bi-lateral relationship. It is

entirely feasible that in the future the UK's level of access may reduce with assessment and sharing becoming less comprehensive. Britain continues to invest heavily in this capability announcing in NSS 2015 a commitment of \$3Bn and 1900 additional staff to strengthen their counter terrorism network.⁵² So where may the U.S. turn in the future? Possibly, to the EU and rely on the UK to fill in the gaps? Or add another layer of intelligence gathering? It is an important issue that will need to be considered carefully. The reality is that commonality and openness are key to countering threats. The potential separation and dilution of this capability, as a result of BREXIT, will have an effect. The UK NSS states that, "our special relationship with the U.S. remains essential to our National Security. It is founded on shared values and our exceptionally close...intelligence cooperation."⁵³ In real terms, this capability is critical as one element in the battle against ISIS. As such will BREXIT impact upon the British contribution to defeating ISIS and by extension any U.S. strategy?

The Threat from ISIS

ISIS is recognized by the UK as a threat to international and domestic security. The UK will, "tackle the issue...using the full spectrum of capabilities."⁵⁴ Britain is currently contributing significantly to the 67 Nation coalition to counter ISIS. After the U.S. it is largest provider of offensive air capability. The UK Ministry of Defence recently acknowledged that, "the RAF has not operated at this sustained operational tempo in a single theatre of conflict for a quarter of a century."⁵⁵ Additionally, non-combat ground troops have a role to train, advise and assist Iraqi, Kurdish Peshmerga and Syrian opposition forces. Parliamentary approval exists to conduct offensive military action in Iraq and military action against ISIS in Syria.⁵⁶ Whilst there is an EU strategy for tackling ISIS⁵⁷ the UK contribution is independent of any EU commitment. Therefore, its political

and diplomatic support for the U.S. led coalition in Iraq and Syria is unlikely to change. The military posture is also relatively stable and it has a growth imperative.

In terms of political rhetoric the U.S. can remain confident with the UK as an ally. The UK Secretary of Defence was recently asked in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, 'what influence will BREXIT have on coordination of efforts to stop terrorist attacks in Europe? He replied, "We remain a leading member of NATO. We remain committed to our key partnerships and alliances, particularly with the United States. And we remain a key contributor to the fight against [Islamic State] in the Middle East. BREXIT has no effect, no impact, on that."⁵⁸ Irrespective of this confidence, the true economic impact of BREXIT is currently unquantifiable but, as previously noted, credible economic bodies such as the National Audit Office consider it to be potentially disastrous for defense. A degree of honesty and openness may be required as to what the UK defense contribution will actually be in forthcoming years.

Managing a Rising China

In December 2016 the British Ambassador to the U.S. commented on the UK's future defense posture. Whilst he acknowledged that the Middle East would remain the focus for investment, in the foreseeable future, he said that, "certainly, as we bring our two new aircraft carriers on-stream in 2020, and as we renew and update our defense forces, they will be seen in the Pacific. And we absolutely share the objective...to protect freedom of navigation and to keep sea routes and air routes open."⁵⁹ The response from China was predictable. The Chinese News Agency, *Xinhua*, commenting that, "British policymakers should be well aware that by copying provocative actions of Washington and Tokyo over the South China Sea, it stands to

lose on at least two sides: its credibility as a responsible global player and its relations with China.”⁶⁰

This places the UK with an interesting dilemma, and one that could affect U.S. strategy. Released from the constraints of EU focused trade agreements, the UK now sees itself as a global player, looking to exploit new markets and opportunities. The term ‘golden-era’ in relation to Sino-UK relations was coined by David Cameron, but the theme has continued under the new Prime Minister. Theresa May met with senior Chinese officials in London, in November 2016, to tempt investment into the UK worth billions of pounds.⁶¹ China sees the UK as a ‘safe bet’ and there is nothing to suggest that BREXIT has reduced their appetite for continued trade in the property, energy and financial markets. Of course, the UK will need to balance shrewd economic investment against a robust diplomatic line on the South China Sea. This is a skill in which the British Foreign Office have become particularly adept over time.

Clearly from a U.S. perspective the addition of two capital ships from a credible and capable nation would be welcomed by U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM); especially if tensions endure as the President and Secretary of State confront China over trade, operations in the South China Sea and the One China Policy. The UK intent is to acquire and man these platforms in line with current planning, but any reduction in defense expenditure will inevitably have a cross Service impact. In recent years, the U.S. has not relied on allies for support in the Pacific; but the military and diplomatic support of the UK would certainly provide credibility to any future security strategy.

Britain has no geographic claims which China could threaten; it merely recognizes the importance of free passage on the seas as a signatory to United Nations

Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). A requirement to demonstrate this belief through a military deployment would seem unwise. And whilst the UK will never formally support China's claims in the South China Sea; it is unlikely that, on a point of principle, it will risk foregoing much needed post-BREXIT Chinese investment. This course could place it in a difficult diplomatic situation with the U.S.

There is a further aspect worth noting. Both David Cameron and now Theresa May have sought to expand the UK-ASEAN relationship beyond China. Of course historical links endure but they sit in a bygone era. The UK is entering new partnerships based upon mutuality and cooperation. Trade with Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and Thailand over the past decade totals around \$25bn,⁶² and post-BREXIT this is highly likely to grow. The UK's aim to exploit the opportunity of free trade agreements, often with historical partners, is clearly outlined in the White Paper.⁶³ Securing new agreements with other countries exists as one of the twelve governmental priorities.

A foundational element of the UK NSS is based upon delivering economic security and prosperity. To deliver this securely, requires an element of protection. The UK presence, in South East Asia, is currently limited to the troops garrisoned in Brunei and the Naval Station at Sembawang, Singapore. Contextually, under the Five Powers Defence Agreement, in the event of an attack on Malaysia or Singapore, consultation will occur between the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore. Whilst there is no absolute requirement for military intervention it demonstrates the enduring commitment of the UK to the defense and stability of the region; contributing indirectly to the deterrence element of the USPACOM mission. It is certainly feasible that the UK will review its military posture in South East Asia in the next decade - changing the military

strategic laydown in support of its economic expansion. If this occurs, it is likely that the U.S. would welcome and encourage such a development.

Conclusions

This is era of significant change. Trump's policies, BREXIT's impact, Putin's posture, ISIS' damage and China's political will are adapting at a frightening pace. Only a robust, deliverable and resourced security strategy can mitigate the effects of these issues. This strategy must still be driven by the U.S.

BREXIT will have consequences for any U.S. strategy. It will also proffer benefits to both parties, in terms of relationship, which may not have been apparent had the Democrats remained in power. It is clear that the UK /U.S. relationship under Trump and May will remain strong. According to the UK ambassador to the U.S. they will, "build upon the legacy of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher."⁶⁴ The U.S. remains the key economic partner for the UK. A history of unparalleled cooperation in the fields of intelligence, nuclear strategy, diplomacy, military operations and interoperability means that the U.S. plays a role in delivering the UK security strategy.

The UK will fight to ensure this relationship remains. As such the U.S. can continue to rely on the benefits the UK brings to this reciprocal arrangement. Britain will continue to commit strategic assets to the defeat of ISIS. It is in their interest to do so. An increasing focus by the UK toward South East Asia is an interesting development and one that may create opportunities for the U.S. to exploit; but noting carefully the growing UK relationship with China. Britain will continue to condemn any form of Russian aggression and remains faithful to its Article 5 obligations. Of course its formal influence on traditional European allies has gone – here the U.S. must look to develop

its own ties. This will be critical in the short to medium term. Any perceived ambiguity and indecision could provide Putin with a window of opportunity to act.

EU/U.S alliances with an absent UK will need to be reviewed. Politically, the UK is in a slightly invidious position. Having caused the current crisis of confidence in the EU it is not well positioned, despite its strength, to comment with credibility on the impact of future centralized EU policy decisions. In terms of security, immigration, intelligence cooperation and counter terrorism, EU strategies will need to be monitored carefully by both the U.S. and UK. Interestingly, it is probably the informal aspect of the UK relationship with other European nations that will be impacted most significantly. The alienation of PM May seems to continue. It is recognized that much work in the political sphere is conducted informally during other engagements. The UK will no longer be privy to this exclusive group. Being outside this 'circle of trust' will limit the strategic influence and environmental understanding of the UK.

Even without considering the impact of the BREXIT on future U.S. strategy the format and content of NSS 2017 is still unclear. The President's priorities are ambiguous. As an example, a leaked Department of Defense memo⁶⁵ suggested that Russia did not feature as a focus, whereas the defeat of ISIS did. By extension, the future role of Europe in delivering collective security, supported by the U.S. in a post-BREXIT world, is equally vague.

Whether the President is wholly cognizant of the potential implications and opportunities that BREXIT creates and offers, in the security realm, is difficult to determine. Wisdom would suggest that they should not be ignored. The U.S. may need

to recognize the EU aspiration to develop an independent defense strategy but also reinforce the criticality of NATO in conducting military operations.

As discussed, the impact of BREXIT is beyond the economic field and its consequences must be factored into the building of any new philosophy. The President made it clear in his acceptance speech that he is a businessman who prides himself on making a deal which delivers a return on his investment. Unfortunately, the international order does not operate that way. He wishes to focus on partnership not conflict, dealing fairly with everyone. He is willing to, “get along with nations willing to get along with us” – security remains an issue and trade is not a given.⁶⁶ A simple analysis suggests that Trump will engage, if to do so is in the U.S. interest, or it threatens the principles he espouses for his America. Respectfully, this paper suggests that a business model coupled with latent isolationism and diplomatic exclusivity is not the way to manage this BREXIT induced Europe. To deliver global security and protect U.S. interests, the President must engage and lead strongly in Europe – as the world still expects.

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