

# H-Diplo | ISSF

## POLICY Roundtable 1-2 (2016) on Brexit



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## Introduction by Joshua Rovner, Southern Methodist University

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When British voters chose to leave the European Union in a 23 June 2016 referendum, they unleashed an intense and ongoing national debate over the consequences. Not surprisingly, the debate has largely surrounded the economic, political, and social consequences of “Brexit.” Those in favour of leaving emphasized the benefits of independence from what they saw as a sclerotic and undemocratic EU. Those opposed warned about the economic consequences of withdrawing from a common market, and feared that the vote was evidence of creeping nativism in British society.

This forum focuses on how Brexit might affect British, European, and international security. Like the broader public, the commentators disagree on fundamental issues. **David Betz** argues that Brexit will benefit British security over the long term by inspiring necessary increases in defense spending. In his view, the United Kingdom will be able to reassert its “moderately outsized role in the world” once it is unshackled from a dubious political union. **Kathleen Burk** takes a more neutral stance, arguing that the major British security arrangements are not associated with the EU. The UK’s alliance with the United States, its membership in NATO, its military relationship with France, and its role in the Joint Expeditionary Force are not likely to be affected.

**Maria Rost Rublee** believes that one unforeseen result of Brexit might be unilateral nuclear disarmament. Because Scotland voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU, some believe it might now seek a second referendum on independence. A clean break would probably force London to fight new bases for its nuclear submarines, especially given overwhelming opposition to nuclear weapons among Scottish political leaders. For practical reasons this would not be an easy task. Rublee does not see this as a bad outcome, however, because other states that witness the end of Britain’s nuclear program might be convinced that nuclear weapons are of little value.

The other commentators, however, believe that Brexit might have serious and lasting consequences for British security. **David Blagden** warns that Brexit might lead to political disintegration in Britain if it destabilizes the tenuous balance in Northern Ireland and causes Scotland to reconsider independence. Meanwhile, the departure of Britain would remove the principal roadblock to the emergence of a “federal superpower” in Europe. Brexit might thus weaken British power and inadvertently create the kind of continental behemoth that it spent centuries trying to prevent through offshore balancing.

Finally, **Leslie Vinjamuri** argues that while the mechanics of Brexit are unclear, the results of the “Brexit era” are likely to be profound. Above all, the vote revealed the intensity of identity politics in modern British life. This will put the government in a difficult situation, balancing English nativism and a desire to restore sovereignty and control immigration against countervailing pressures to offset Brexit by investing more heavily in bilateral agreements and security alliances like NATO.

The Brexit debate will continue for some time, not least because we do not know when and how the UK and the EU will manage the divorce. The essays in this roundtable illustrate the broad security implications of Brexit, while political leaders wrestle over the details.

**Participants:**

**Joshua Rovner** is Co-Chair and Associate Editor at H-Diplo/ISSF. He is the John Goodwin Tower Distinguished Chair in International Politics and National Security at Southern Methodist University, where he also directs the Security and Strategy Program (SAS@SMU).

**David Betz** is a reader in the Department of War Studies at Kings College London. His main research interests are insurgency and counterinsurgency, information warfare and cyberwar, propaganda, also civil-military relations and strategy. Dr. Betz is head of the Insurgency Research Group and was the academic director of the War Studies Online MA for its first five years. His most recent book is *Carnage and Connectivity: Landmarks in the Decline of Conventional Military Power* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

**David Blagden** is a University Lecturer (Assistant Professor) at the Strategy and Security Institute, University of Exeter, UK. His research has been published in journals such as *International Security*, *International Studies Review*, and *International Affairs*, while his public affairs commentary has appeared with such outlets as *The Guardian*, the *New Statesman*, *The Spectator*, and on the BBC. He works on the causes and consequences of power transitions, UK foreign and defence policy, and deterrence.

**Kathleen Burk** is Professor Emerita of Modern and Contemporary History at University College London, columnist, and radio panellist. She is the author of several distinguished scholarly books on the U.S. and its interventions in the rest of the world, and a definitive biography of A J P Taylor. Dr. Burk's most recent book, a history of England and America from 1600 to the present, which covers political, social, and economic history, *Old World, New World* was published by Little Brown in 2009.

**Maria Rost Rublee** is a senior lecturer (associate professor) at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. She is currently finishing projects related to global nuclear governance and the strategies of anti-nuclear norm entrepreneurs. Her book, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why States Choose Nuclear Restraint* (University of Georgia Press, 2009), won the Alexander George Book Prize for best book in political psychology.

**Leslie Vinjamuri** is Director of the Centre on Conflict, Rights and Justice and a Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in International Relations at SOAS, University of London. Leslie is also Chair of the International Relations Speaker Series at SOAS. Her research areas include transatlantic relations, US foreign policy, the politics of international intervention, human rights and justice, and UN Security Council Diplomacy. She is currently working on a project on international responses to mass atrocities and violent conflict which, funded by the Leverhulme Trust (2015-2016). Dr. Vinjamuri is the co-editor of *Human Rights Futures* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

## Essay by David Betz, Kings College London

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On 23 June 2016, the United Kingdom voted in a national referendum by a margin of 52 to 48 per cent to leave the European Union sometime in the future after a period of negotiation, which has not yet formally begun. The vote caught much of the political and economic establishment along with most of the punditocracy by surprise. Although the contest was expected to be close, the feeling on the whole was that in the privacy of the polling booth that voters would choose the putatively 'safe course' of the status quo. During the campaign the government rolled out more or less all of the global heavy hitters, from the President of the United States and a bevy of other allied nations to the head of the IMF and other international organisations, to warn Britons of the dire economic consequences of departing from the European Project. Prime Minister David Cameron none too subtly invoked the spectre of a Third World War in the case of Brexit during a speech in which he lauded the role of the European Union in preserving peace in a historically highly fractured and belligerent continent.

In my view, people were right to choose as they did. The economic benefits to Britain of European Union membership are declining sharply while the political costs are climbing practically exponentially. Meanwhile, there is little achieved through the auspices of Brussels that cannot as well or better be accomplished in a more conventionally intergovernmental manner that recognises and does not actively seek to erode national sovereignty, let alone democracy.

Britain is not, nor has it ever been, as advocates of the Remain campaign liked to make out, some sort of spirit guide of the continentals gently steering the European Union by its wise counsel and stiff upper lipped-ness away from radical, importunate paths that it might otherwise pursue. Britain joined the European Union late, in 1973, by which time its institutional outlook had already been formed—an outlook, moreover, that was alien to its own centuries-long traditions. Ironically, it was France's President Charles de Gaulle, who foiled Britain's initial attempt to join and could never make sense of why it wanted to in the first place, who saw matters the most clearly. Since joining, Britain's role has been more that of an increasingly dismayed participant of a wild hunt, seated backward in the saddle, unable to bridle its own mount let alone those of others.

The truth is that the European Union is doomed by its own hand and not by Brexit. Monetary union is a contrived disaster that is materialising daily in the form of the penurization of the nations of southern Europe. The European Project cannot step back from the brink because that is deliberately not in its design. Yet neither can it go forward, towards full political union, for that would mean that Germany will have to pay for its empire, which it does not wish to do, while the satellite states of its periphery will need to accept major diminishment of their own local decision-making power in return, which they also do not wish. Brexit is no more the cause of this unsolvable push-me-pull-you conundrum than the launching of the lifeboats was the cause of the Titanic's sinking.

The first security implication of Brexit, therefore, is that Britain will have a chance of not going down with the SS Grand Europa. At root, I think that is what most Leave voters were opting for—they could see the trajectory of the status quo and did not perceive it as the safe route that it was made out to be. The second implication follows from the first. Britain will begin to do more for itself, specifically, it will need to increase defence spending from its current state of just about 2 per cent of GDP per annum, and not by creative accounting—piling on to the defence budget things which heretofore had their own lines in the national

budget or were the responsibility of other ministries, as did the Cameron government—independently of what happens in the larger economy.

Contrary to the way they were characterised by their opponents as comprising inward-looking ‘Little Englanders’ eager to cut themselves off from the world, Brexit supporters are acutely conscious of and keen to preserve Britain’s moderately outsized role in the world—its unique place at the centre of global networks of finance and trade, culture and language, education and politics, as was stressed in the foreword of the last security and defence review.<sup>1</sup> There is cross-party recognition that the capability of Britain’s armed forces is integral to that role, indicated most recently by the decision to renew the nuclear deterrent. Moreover, as Britain leaves the European Union it will seek at the same time to signal to the world—not least to its fellow European nations—that it has no intention of disengaging but rather to continue as an active global power. Its best asset for this is a strong military.

Brexit is good for Britain, which is capable of a happy, prosperous, and secure independent national existence. It is probably bad for the European Union, which is likely to be unable to effect its transformation into a United States of Europe that is happy, free, and safe—though the chances are somewhat less slim with Britain out than in. There is really no doubt that the global outlook from 2016 onwards for the foreseeable future looks tumultuous everywhere. None of this was caused by Brexit, however; and none of it, save the plausibility of the dubiously useful European Project, is directly affected by it.

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<sup>1</sup> HM Government, “A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy,” October 2010, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/61936/national-security-strategy.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61936/national-security-strategy.pdf).

Essay by David Blagden, University of Exeter

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It is an honour and a privilege to be invited to contribute to this H-Diplo/ISSF roundtable on the ramifications of Brexit. While I have much to say on the causes of the referendum outcome, I will focus – given length constraints – on six possible security implications for Britain.<sup>1</sup> The piece reflects a few first thoughts on the issue, many of which may subsequently be proven wrong by the emergence of empirical data, rather than any sort of considered final opinion. Before I am hit with rotten fruit (or worse) from all sides, I stress that the piece takes no view on the desirability or otherwise of Brexit in the round; it is merely attempting to parse some possible strategic consequences.

*Still a United Kingdom?*

First, and most fundamentally, a popular definition of security in International Relations (IR) focuses on state survival: the continued existence of the political entity that contains a certain territory and safeguards its inhabitants in an anarchic international system. Brexit increases the danger to the fabric of the United Kingdom, because of the different referendum results seen in Scotland and Northern Ireland compared to England and Wales.<sup>2</sup> Having closed the book on Scottish independence with the referendum of 2014, at least for a generation, the Remain vote north of the border has seen the separatist Scottish National Party (SNP) voice calls for a second such independence ballot.<sup>3</sup> Scotland's 62% Remain vote was hardly the crushing mandate for independence that the SNP depicts – given relatively low turnout (67.2%) compared to the rest of the UK, only 41.5% of the Scottish electorate actually voted to stay in the EU, which is itself not the same question as whether to leave the UK – and support for another 'IndyRef' reportedly remains muted thus far.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, it still creates the possibility of some of the 56% of Scots who voted to remain in the UK in 2014 being persuaded to switch sides in a second independence referendum if the SNP can contrive one.

While not currently seeing such an energised pro-independence movement as Scotland, related questions now also exist for pro-EU voting Northern Ireland, given the potential economic and social damage of reintroduced border controls with the southern Republic.<sup>5</sup> Anything that disrupts Northern Ireland's delicate political *status quo*, meanwhile, could yet prove the cue for a resurgence of dissident paramilitary activity. And

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<sup>1</sup> A much-expanded version discussing causation as well as consequence is forthcoming with *International Politics*; I am grateful to both IP and ISSF for allowing the overlap in content.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Macpherson, "The case for Scottish independence looks stronger post-Brexit," *Financial Times*, 8 July 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/1219f41c-4456-11e6-9b66-0712b3873ae1>.

<sup>3</sup> Paris Gourtsoyannis, "Nicola Sturgeon: Scottish independence referendum could come next year," *The Scotsman*, 17 July 2016, <http://www.scotsman.com/news/nicola-sturgeon-scottish-independence-referendum-could-come-next-year-1-4179442>.

<sup>4</sup> Severin Carrell, "Nicola Sturgeon to appoint Brexit minister," *The Guardian*, 23 August 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/aug/23/nicola-sturgeon-to-appoint-brexit-minister>.

<sup>5</sup> Conor Humphries and Amanda Ferguson, "How Brexit has suddenly made the prospect of a united Ireland thinkable," *The Independent*, 3 July 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-what-it-means-for-northern-ireland-united-eu-referendum-result-irish-passport-a7117166.html>.

whilst fervently pro-British, Remain-voting Gibraltar – a British Overseas Territory rather than a constituent part of the UK, constitutionally speaking<sup>6</sup> – must now seek to safeguard its economic future, which depends on continued free movement over its border with Spain.<sup>7</sup> Madrid could also yet seek to make sovereignty negotiations a precondition for continuing UK access to the Single Market.<sup>8</sup> In short, attempting to parse and refashion the relations between constituent nations and territories in the aftermath of Brexit in a state already as constitutionally complex and *ad hoc* as the UK promises the mother of all politico-legal tangles, with ample scope for disintegration.<sup>9</sup> It will be a cruel irony if pro-Brexit voters who believed that their ballot would increase the UK's standing in the world instead bring about its demise.<sup>10</sup>

More generally, the divisions between nations, regions, cities, districts, neighbours, and even families and friends that were exacerbated and solidified by June 23's acrimonious outcome may have harmed Britain's social compact in corrosive and long-lasting ways.<sup>11</sup> The post-Referendum classist sneering of Remain-voting Londoners at Leave-voting Northerners<sup>12</sup> – and conversely, the gloating triumphalism of many Leave campaigners at Remainers' expense, despite little comprehension of the possible socio-economic consequences or willingness to do the legwork necessary to make a success of the result<sup>13</sup> – are both cases in point.

Second, a more specific potential consequence of the previous general point could be the loss of the wider UK contribution to British defence. In the event of Scottish independence, this could manifest itself most obviously as the loss of existing basing facilities for Britain's nuclear deterrent submarine (SSBN) force (often

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<sup>6</sup> Britain still has fourteen such Overseas Territories, along with other Crown Dependencies – such as the Isle of Man and Channel Islands – that are similarly British but not constituent parts of the UK.

<sup>7</sup> Gabriel Gatehouse, "Brexit: Gibraltar in talks with Scotland to stay in EU," *BBC News*, 27 June 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36639770>.

<sup>8</sup> Jon Nazca, "Spain seeks to jointly govern Gibraltar after Brexit," *Reuters*, 24 June 2016, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-gibraltar-idUKKCN0ZA169>.

<sup>9</sup> Sarah Gordon, "Untangling Britain from Europe would cause constitutional 'havoc'," *Financial Times*, 20 June 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/d7ae7b70-361a-11e6-9a05-82a9b15a8ee7>.

<sup>10</sup> For a take on how Britons' views of their role in the world impact UK foreign policy, see David M. McCourt, *Britain and World Power since 1945: Constructing a Nation's Role in International Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> "The Brexit vote reveals a country split down the middle," *The Economist*, 24 June 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21701257-results-paint-picture-angry-country-divided-class-age-and-region-country-divided>.

<sup>12</sup> Matt Taibbi, "The reaction to Brexit is the reason Brexit happened," *Rolling Stone*, 27 June 2016, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-reaction-to-brexit-is-the-reason-brexit-happened-20160627>.

<sup>13</sup> Dan Bloom, "Gloating Nigel Farage booed and heckled during post-Brexit victory speech as he slams MEPs," *The Mirror*, 28 June 2016, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/gloating-nigel-farage-booed-heckled-8300346>.

collectively dubbed ‘Trident’, in reference to the missiles carried)<sup>14</sup> – another question that Unionists hoped had been put to bed for a generation by the pro-UK result in 2014’s Scottish independence referendum. The SSBNs themselves are based at Her Majesty’s Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde at Faslane, while warhead storage and loading takes place nearby at Royal Naval Armaments Depot (RNAD) Coulport. Taken together, this complex with its deep, protected waters and unfettered access to the North Atlantic represents a uniquely suitable base for submarine operations of all kinds, SSBNs included. Moving to an alternative location in England, Wales, or an Overseas Territory would, at best, be very expensive – and in the face of possibly limited governmental resolve, potentially infeasible given the political and fiscal costs involved.

Trident is not the only aspect of British defence that could be undermined by the UK’s fracturing, however. Scotland and Scottish bases form a crucial part of the UK’s air defence perimeter and maritime zone. Numerous major platforms (e.g. warships) and munitions (e.g. naval heavy weapons) are built and/or stored in Scotland. Scottish regiments have long formed a core part of the British Army’s spine; as a tongue-in-cheek Army meme has it, ‘Bagpipes: because Europe wasn’t liberated by French horns.’ Looking beyond Scotland, the same goes for Northern Ireland, from where several British Army regiments are still drawn. And Gibraltar’s naval base (including nuclear-capable Z Berths used by UK and U.S. submarines), Royal Air Force (RAF) station, and other military facilities are of significance to UK and NATO area control, maritime security, and power projection throughout the Mediterranean and en route to the Gulf. All of these dimensions of UK defence are therefore potentially put at risk by the Brexit decision and its fallout.

### *Diminished Economic and Political Capacity for Security Policymaking?*

Third, if the economic shock of Brexit results in a recession – and if some loss of trading access, high-skilled labour movement, and inwards investment results in a lower long-term growth trajectory – the associated fiscal conditions may feed through to national security spending.<sup>15</sup> 2015’s Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) had been lauded for going some way towards reversing the cuts to UK conventional capabilities instigated by the equivalent Review of 2010.<sup>16</sup> Crucially, a commitment was made to hold defence spending at NATO’s 2% of GDP target.<sup>17</sup> The Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s budget was also held constant in real terms, defying expectations of further cuts to the Diplomatic Service.<sup>18</sup> A Brexit-induced low-

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<sup>14</sup> Hugh Chalmers and Malcolm Chalmers, “Relocation, Relocation, Relocation: Could the UK’s Nuclear Force be Moved after Scottish Independence?”, Occasional Paper, August 2014, Royal United Services Institute, [https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201408\\_op\\_relocation\\_relocation\\_relocation.pdf](https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201408_op_relocation_relocation_relocation.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Malcolm Chalmers, “Would a New SDSR be Needed after a Brexit Vote?”, Briefing Paper, June 2016, Royal United Services Institute, [https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/chalmers\\_brexit\\_sdsr.final\\_.pdf](https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/chalmers_brexit_sdsr.final_.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> “Britain reasserts itself as a serious military power,” *The Economist*, 23 November 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21678990-spies-special-forces-and-royal-air-force-are-main-winners-britain-reasserts-itself>.

<sup>17</sup> Kyla Maclellan, “Britain commits to NATO two percent defence spending target for next five years,” *Reuters*, 8 July 2016, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-economy-budget-defence-idUKKCN0PI1HV20150708>.

<sup>18</sup> HM Government, “Foreign Office’s settlement at the Spending Review 2015,” 25 November 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-offices-settlement-at-the-spending-review-2015>.

growth trajectory may jeopardise aspects of this recovery in national capabilities. 2% of GDP still means a smaller pot of money if GDP itself is smaller. SDSR ‘headline’ capabilities – two new aircraft carriers, the regeneration of a maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) force, a new class of SSBNs, and so forth – are unlikely to be ditched, given the political costs involved in doing so. But areas where quantities can be quietly salami-sliced may be vulnerable: planned growth in the frigate and fast-jet fleets could be discreetly reduced or abandoned, for example. To be sure, the economic fallout of the 23 June vote has not yet been as bad as many had feared, as market participants await details of what the Brexit settlement will actually look like: continued UK Single Market access may render the eventual effects muted, for instance. But the fundamental circle of needing overseas investors to provide the financial account surplus that covers Britain’s yawning current account deficit,<sup>19</sup> needing market access to attract such overseas investors, yet (probably) needing to concede free movement of labour – many Brexiteers’ anathema – to secure such Single Market access remains to be squared.<sup>20</sup> If it cannot be, an economic hard landing could still lie in store.

Fourth, Brexit and its uncertainties look set to dominate the political and policy agendas for the foreseeable future.<sup>21</sup> While the ruling Conservative Party moved swiftly to install a new leader and thus prime minister, in keeping with its famed knack for power, thereby averting the worst possible post-referendum political instability scenarios, much remains to be settled.<sup>22</sup> At best, negotiating the terms of Brexit, seeking replacement trade relationships, and beginning the process of implementing its domestic ramifications in everything from EU-aligned legislation to agricultural and scientific subsidies will command a major share of state capacity for years to come.<sup>23</sup> Such government and associated media preoccupation may come at the expense of other valuable areas of foreign and defence policy attention: making the case for a substantial UK contribution to bolstering deterrence on NATO’s eastern flank, say, or fashioning a coherent Middle East policy. Just as no academic conference panel will now be safe from the question, “yes, but what does Brexit mean for all of this?”, so too that question will colour every aspect of policymaking. Worse outcomes than mere political distraction remain foreseeable, moreover: the government may prove unable to arrive at a negotiated exit that simultaneously satisfies the disparate constituencies that make up the Brexit lobby in the face of an understandably resistant EU, say, resulting in a loss of governmental authority and perhaps an indecisive early election.

### *How will the European Security Environment Change in Britain’s Absence?*

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<sup>19</sup> Brexit-weakened sterling will help with such a correction, of course.

<sup>20</sup> Emily Cadman and Gemma Tatlow, “Current account is Britain’s post-Brexit Achilles heel,” *Financial Times*, 30 June 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/eeb713bc-3e09-11e6-9f2c-36b487ebd80a>.

<sup>21</sup> “After the vote, chaos,” *The Economist*, 25 June 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21701264-britain-has-voted-leave-eu-what-follows-will-be-new-prime-minister-volatile-financial>.

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Freedland, “Theresa May has benefitted from Tories’ hunger for power,” *The Guardian*, 11 July 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/11/theresa-may-tories-power-labour>.

<sup>23</sup> Max Colchester and Jenny Gross, “Britain’s Civil Service confronts Brexit unprepared,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 8 July 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/britains-civil-service-confronts-brexit-unprepared-1468004403>.

Fifth, the day-to-day ‘trivia’ of European security cooperation will also become more complicated.<sup>24</sup> Europol’s information exchange databases and the European Arrest Warrant have both proven effective tools of counter-terrorism cooperation, and both are explicitly for EU members. Of course, access to both may yet be negotiated – a common refrain with all facets of Brexit, since we have so little idea what form it may yet take – but, at best, the sustainment of such cooperation will become more complicated.

Sixth, looking further into the future, Britain’s exit from the bloc removes the most substantial obstacle to further EU federalisation. An array of pressures – migrant flows in the absence of functioning state borders, the imbalances created by shared monetary policy in the absence of shared fiscal policy, countering radicalisation and terrorism, environmental degradation, and so forth – incentivise some form of ‘United States of Europe’. Pushing against such pressures have been public sentiment – the fact that most Europeans still put national identity ahead of European identity and do not want to see their nation-states subsumed<sup>25</sup> – and, until recently, the UK’s alternative conception of the EU as an economic area rather than a federal political project.<sup>26</sup> Others share Britain’s erstwhile vision, but none have London’s ability to oppose federalisation should Brussels, Berlin, and Paris align on its desirability.<sup>27</sup> Despite Britain having spent the past half-millennium as an ‘offshore balancer’ seeking to oppose the domination of continental Europe by a single major state, therefore, Brexit increases the possibility of just such an outcome: a continent-spanning federal superpower able to dictate political and economic terms to the UK.<sup>28</sup> Those terms may yet prove less than benevolent, moreover, given the desire of some in the EU to ensure that Brexit is sufficiently painful for Britain to discourage other countries’ leave campaigners.

### *Conclusion*

The security implications of Brexit must not be overstated, particularly not in the short-to-medium term. The EU did not cause peace in Europe; on the contrary, it was itself able to emerge under the benign security environment created by NATO, nuclear deterrence, and the American military guarantee, all of which remain intact.<sup>29</sup> And Britain is not about to become some isolationist retractor from regional defence commitments,

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas Escritt, “Brexit would make UK counter-terrorism job harder: Europol,” *Reuters*, 22 February 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-eu-europol-idUSKCN0VV1CR>.

<sup>25</sup> European Commission, “European Citizenship,” Standard Eurobarometer 81 (Spring 2014), 10-14, [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81\\_citizen\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81_citizen_en.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> On Britain’s different vision of the EU, see Igor Merheim-Eyre, “Is it really so terrible for Britain to have a different vision for Europe?,” *The Conversation*, 19 February 2016, <http://theconversation.com/is-it-really-so-terrible-for-britain-to-have-a-different-vision-for-europe-54932>.

<sup>27</sup> On Britain’s erstwhile position as one of the EU’s three veto players, see Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

<sup>28</sup> David Blagden, “The fate of Britain: offshore balancing and the Brexit,” *War On The Rocks*, 28 April 2016, <http://warontherocks.com/2016/04/the-fate-of-britain-offshore-balancing-and-the-brexit/>.

<sup>29</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, “Why is Europe Peaceful Today?” *European Political Science* 9:3 (2010): 387-397.

contra much of the punditry community's hysteria;<sup>30</sup> if anything, Brexit may cause London to double down on European security cooperation under NATO's aegis.

None of this is to say, however, that the security implications of Brexit will necessarily be trivial either. The EU may not have caused peace in Europe, but it had nonetheless emerged as a useful forum for dialogue and collaboration on security matters. An additional source of tension and discord in European diplomacy will disrupt efforts to fashion effective, coherent solutions to regional and extra-regional strategic challenges. Anything that weighs on UK economic growth, meanwhile – either as a near-term shock or longer term readjustment – will inevitably reduce the levels of defence spending that the country is able to sustain. That may have negative implications for Britain's own precariously over-stretched military posture; it could also have consequences for the rump EU that is left behind, given that Britain (along with France, which has economic problems of its own) has been the European country with the combination of appetite, proficiency, and wherewithal to make meaningful contributions to regional and extra-regional defence. The United Kingdom itself could yet cease to be united, moreover, if Scottish voters decide that they gain more from the European Union than the British Union. And looking to the longer term, if the EU's response to its manifold political, economic, and military inadequacies is deeper integration as some form of federal superpower, then Britain may yet find itself in an uncomfortable position of extreme relative weakness, receiving terms from the continental hegemon that it always strove to prevent.

Ultimately, with Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty still not yet even invoked, what 'Brexit' will mean – from diplomatic chimera that leaves the substance of the present relationship intact, to hard severance of even Single Market access – is still shrouded in uncertainty. The British government has still not yet decided what it wants from the negotiations, or even when the negotiations should officially begin, let alone settled what it is likely to receive. Confident assertions about the positive or negative consequences of Brexit – for security or anything else – should therefore be treated sceptically. As with understanding the causes of the Brexit decision, this is therefore a question that we will only be able to systematically research once concrete data begin to roll in.

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<sup>30</sup> Brian Klaas and Marcel Dirsus, 'The isolationist catastrophe of 'Brexit'', *Los Angeles Times*, 23 June 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-klaas-dirsus-leave-victory-in-britain-20160623-snap-story.html>. For a critique of the over-use of 'isolationism' as a critical charge on both sides of the Atlantic, see Patrick Porter, "Never alone: let's retire the word 'isolationism'," *War On The Rock*, 18 May 2016, <http://warontherocks.com/2016/05/never-alone-lets-retire-the-word-isolationism/>.

**Essay by Kathleen Burk, University College London**

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**W**hat does Brexit mean for British security arrangements? No one really knows for certain, but the probability is that not very much will change, at least in the medium term. The UK has four relevant relationships: 1) its largely bilateral links with the U.S.; 2) its position within NATO; 3) its military links with France in the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force; and 4) its separate military links with the Netherlands, Denmark, the three Baltic countries, and Norway in the Joint Expeditionary Force. None of the four are EU arrangements, and there is no fundamental reason why any of them should be disrupted.

U.S.-UK. The two main categories here are nuclear and intelligence. The nuclear relationship is governed by the 1958 U.S.-UK Mutual Defence Agreement and its subsequent related agreements. These cover, for example, Trident, the U.S. provision of missiles, target selection, and the exchange of information. The intelligence relationship has its institutional origins in the 1946 UKUSA [Intelligence] Agreement and its progeny of 'Eyes.' There is the so-called Five Eyes Agreement, which essentially adds Canada, Australia, and New Zealand to UKUSA. They cooperate in obtaining and exchanging information, primarily signals intelligence, with listening stations in Canada and the Antipodes, and digital information, from, for example, the internet. Five Eyes obviously has no institutional relationship with Europe or any European countries. Five Eyes essentially spawned Nine Eyes, which added Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and Norway; then came Fourteen Eyes, which is the Nine plus Germany, Belgium, Spain, Italy and Norway. This was followed by Forty-One Eyes, which is the Fourteen Eyes plus the Afghanistan coalition; here cohesion and overall utility begin to diminish. In all of these intelligence co-operation permutations the core, and indispensable, countries are the U.S. and the UK, neither of which at this point can function satisfactorily without the close co-operation of the other. If all other organisational links decline or disappear, this one will remain. There are, of course, other military privileges which the UK gains from the long-standing relationship, one example being sole access to lethal drone technology.

NATO. The UK was the midwife of NATO in 1948-1949, essentially convincing the U.S. of the need for it and of its efficacy. This works, theoretically, on the Three Musketeers Principle of all for one and one for all. There must, of course, be niggling doubts as to whether it will stay together in a full crisis – does Italy care about Latvia? – but again, the core countries will remain together, at least unless and until Donald Trump, who questions the utility of NATO to the U.S., becomes President. At that point, insecurity in Great Britain and especially in the EU will reign: even though they are not coterminous – there are six countries which are members of the EU which do not belong to NATO – there is no doubt that a threat dangerous enough to trigger NATO will hardly differentiate between the two categories of countries. In the UK, membership of NATO is questioned only by the hard left, more prominent now that Jeremy Corbyn leads the Labour Party; Mr. Corbyn recently said that he would not commit the UK to providing military help to a NATO ally should it be invaded by Russia, thereby negating the whole point of NATO. This, however, is different from the question as to whether Brexit will affect the UK's membership of NATO, and the answer is no.

UK-France. There is currently a strong *Entente militaire* between the two countries, which are, and for long have been, the two strongest military powers in Europe and the only ones able to project significant force abroad. This relationship arises from the 2010 Lancaster House Treaties, one of which provides for military and the other for nuclear co-operation, and both of which are meant to last for fifty years. The British and French defence ministers meet once a month, and there are countless other meetings at other levels. The treaties launched a number of joint programmes, such as closer co-operation between the two navies; one

current programme in this area is to possess, by the early 2020s, the ability to deploy an integrated aircraft carrier strike group. There is also research on fighter aircraft, and the joint deployment of ground troops. The latter became the most public example with the launch in 2015 of the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, whose remit is the rapid mobilisation of up to 10,000 troops for use in either NATO or bilateral operations. Again this is likely to survive Brexit, provided that there is not such acrimony during the negotiations over British withdrawal from the EU that the links between the two are seriously damaged. However, the arrangement seems to fly under the political radar in both countries and has as yet attracted almost no post-Brexit comment.

Joint Expeditionary Force. This is a combination of the UK and Denmark, the Netherlands, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Norway. Its purpose is for the UK to share knowledge with and to develop the skills of the other six countries; it is led by a British major-general. The goal is the ability to provide from these countries more troops at a high level of readiness, able to respond rapidly to crises around the globe and across the full spectrum of operations, including combat operations, humanitarian assistance, and deterrence. The countries in question already include one non-EU country (Norway), and Brexit is most unlikely to affect the arrangement.

In short, none of the primary organisations on which British security is based has any direct link with the EU, and only the military relationship with France might be indirectly affected by Brexit. The only real difference Brexit will make will be to plant the feet of British security even more firmly in London and Washington, with only the headquarters of NATO in Brussels. Certainly if the EU develops a European defence force, as has been proposed, the UK will not play a part in it.

## Essay by Maria Rost Rublee, Monash University

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### *Brexit and the Global Nuclear Order*

The most resounding security repercussion of the June 2016 Brexit vote may be the forced unilateral nuclear disarmament of the United Kingdom. The chain of events that could lead from Brexit to UK nuclear disarmament is neither implausible nor impossible. In fact, the likelihood is high enough that the United States, NATO members and other UK allies need to start thinking seriously about the strategic, military, and political implications of British nuclear disarmament, which could occur within the next 5 years and possibly sooner.

The series of events that could lead to such an upending of the global nuclear order is entirely conceivable: Scottish independence; next, forced closure of HM Naval Base Clyde in western Scotland, the sole base for UK nuclear submarines; and finally, failure of the UK to find another base for its nuclear submarines.

#### Step One: Scottish Independence

The first part of the chain reaction – Scottish independence – is the least likely of the three to occur, but progress towards it has already been set in motion. The 2014 referendum on Scottish independence should have put the issue to rest; the “remain” vote won 55% to 45%. However, Brexit has resurrected the likelihood of another referendum, potentially as early as 2017. A fervent supporter of independence, Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon warned that if the UK terms of exit from the EU are not favorable to Scotland, she is prepared to hold another referendum. Sturgeon’s Scottish National Party (SNP) plans to introduce legislation for a second referendum by early September 2016; the proposal will include conditions that would “trigger” the referendum, most likely related to whether the UK remains in the common market.<sup>1</sup>

Several factors make it more likely that independence could win out in a second referendum. Within Scotland, every council voted to remain in the EU, and the overall Scottish vote was 62% to remain – a landslide in political terms. Thus, if given a choice between staying in the UK outside the EU, or leaving the UK with the goal of joining the EU, Scots may choose the latter. Arguments about the financial security of remaining within the UK helped persuade voters to reject independence in 2014, but now, with the uncertainty of the economic costs of Brexit, independence may now seem the safer option. For example, a Scottish government report projects that leaving the EU could reduce Scottish tax revenues by up to £3.7 billion a year by 2030, approximately 13% of the government budget.<sup>2</sup> In addition, voters will face appeals from not only the SNP to consider independence. For example, the Scottish Greens are planning a major

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<sup>1</sup> Hamish Macdonell, “Sturgeon weeks away from revealing second referendum plans,” *The Times*, 24 August 2016, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/sturgeon-weeks-away-from-revealing-second-referendum-plans>

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government, “Potential Implications of the UK Leaving the EU on Scotland’s Long Run Economic Performance,” August 2016, <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Economy/Publications/PotentialEU>

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campaign for independence in the next few months, with the goal of swaying voters before a second referendum occurs.<sup>3</sup>

### Step Two: Removing Nuclear Weapons from Scotland

Should Scotland become independent – a scenario that may occur as soon as next year – then the next step in the UK’s unwilling nuclear disarmament would be Holyrood closing down Her Majesty’s Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde, which hosts the Trident submarines. Once the political decision is made, the UK nuclear deterrent could be disarmed within a week, according to a report by the Scottish Affairs Committee of the UK Parliament.<sup>4</sup> Some question whether an independent Scotland would force disarmament upon Britain. In particular, the SNP would come under pressure not to do so not only by the UK, but also the U.S. and possibly other NATO members.

However, the SNP is passionately anti-nuclear, and SNP leaders have discussed forcing dismantlement of the UK deterrent with relish. The July 2016 vote in the UK Parliament affirming the replacement of Trident underscores the Scottish commitment to rid itself of nuclear weapons. While the overall vote in Commons was 472 to 117 in favor of renewing Trident, 57 out of 58 Scottish MPs voted against it. The SNP immediately protested the “democratic deficit” and several linked the vote to the need for independence, including one who said, “Make no mistake, these weapons of mass destruction will not be tolerated in an independent Scotland.”<sup>5</sup> In the lead-up to the 2012 independence referendum, the Scottish government advised that it would insist on the nuclear weapons being removed by 2020, and that it would also include a ban on nuclear weapons in its new constitution.<sup>6</sup>

### Step Three: Failure to Find Another Base for Trident

The last step in the potential nuclear disarmament of the UK would be for Westminster to fail to find another base for its nuclear submarines. It may seem inconceivable that one of the five nuclear weapons states under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty would be forced to give up its military nuclear capacity because of something as simple as the lack of a naval base. However, the Scottish Affairs Committee of UK Parliament investigated the issue extensively in 2012, in advance of the Scottish independence reference. The resulting report concluded that if Scotland closed down Clyde, it “would inevitably create the prospect of unilateral

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<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Nutt, “Fresh case for Scottish independence to be launched in the autumn,” *The National*, 10 August 2016, <http://www.thenational.scot/politics/fresh-case-for-scottish-independence-to-be-launched-in-the-autumn.20995>

<sup>4</sup> UK Parliament, House of Commons, Scottish Affairs Committee, “The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: Terminating Trident-Days or Decades?” (Fourth Report), 23 October 2012, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmselect/cmselect/676/67602.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Press Association, “SNP push again for Scottish independence vote after Trident result,” *The Guardian*, 19 July 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jul/19/snp-push-again-for-scottish-independence-vote-after-trident-result>

<sup>6</sup> Vanessa Barford, “Scottish independence: Where might Trident go?” *BBC News*, 30 June 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-28009977>

nuclear disarmament being imposed upon the Royal Navy and UK, since the construction of facilities elsewhere could take upwards of 20 years.”<sup>7</sup>

Other options to create a home for the nuclear submarines have been discussed – and found wanting, from other ports in the UK to possible basing in the United States or France. The difficulty lies in that the UK needs more than a suitable submarine port. HMNB Clyde is made up of two parts: the submarine port at Faslane, and, eight miles away, the weapons depot and warhead transferal dock at Coulport. At Coulport, the weapons are loaded into the missiles, and then loaded inside and removed from the submarines.

Replacing Faslane is the easy part; the hard part is finding a replacement for Coulport within a minimum distance from the new port. The safety and security issues related to weapons transferal rules out any areas with significant populations, tourist or natural heritage value, or industry with its own safety concerns, such as oil refineries and natural gas plants. Even if a suitable site is located, experts estimate that it could take up to 20 years before it was operational, due not only to significant safety hurdles a new nuclear weapons depot would face, but also any local political opposition that is likely to occur. As the Parliamentary Report concluded, “Identifying and recreating a suitable base to replace Faslane and Coulport would be highly problematic, very expensive, and fraught with political difficulties.”<sup>8</sup>

### British Disarmament and the Global Nuclear Order

If Brexit does lead to British disarmament, then what? Space limitations of the roundtable prevent lengthy discussion, but I would like to raise a provocative point. Perhaps if the UK is forced into nuclear disarmament, it may eventually realize that its nuclear deterrent was not particularly useful – that it served more as an expensive security blanket than a practical defensive capability. If the UK has to disarm, and calamity does not ensue, a drop in the perceived value of nuclear weapons may shake up the global nuclear order as much as the actual act of disarmament itself.

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<sup>7</sup> “The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: Terminating Trident-Days or Decades?,” (Fourth Report).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

**Essay by Leslie Vinjamuri, SOAS, University of London**

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On 23 June, over 72% of eligible voters in the UK turned out to choose whether to “Remain” in or “Leave” the European Union. The result—51.9% Leave to 48.1% Remain—sent shock waves across London, Europe, and beyond. The short-term consequences of the vote to Leave were dramatic and the politics that followed, gripping. On 24 June, Leave was declared triumphant, the pound plummeted and David Cameron announced that he would resign. As one commentator wrote, it is not every day that the Prime Minister’s resignation is only the third most important news item. Mark Carney, the (Canadian) Governor of the Bank of England spoke immediately after Cameron’s resignation speech, outlining the Bank’s plans for ensuring market stability, including doling out 250 billion pounds to support the financial markets, if necessary. The UK quickly moved into crisis mode.

Less than two weeks later, after an extraordinary contest for the leadership of the Conservative Party that resembled a real world ‘Game of Thrones,’ Theresa May, a reluctant Remain supporter, was appointed Prime Minister and leading Leave campaigners, Michael Gove (“whatever charisma is I do not have it”), Secretary of State for Justice and co-convenor of Vote Leave and Nigel Farage, leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), had departed the political scene.<sup>1</sup> Boris Johnson, a late but publicly fervent Leave supporter lost his bid for leadership of the Conservative Party, only to rise again days later when Theresa May appointed him to her cabinet, as Foreign Secretary. The drama marking these rapid developments was such that even the release of the Chilcot Inquiry (an official inquiry into Britain’s role in the invasion of Iraq) was trending neck-in-neck on twitter with a meeting of elite politicians, industry leaders and think tankers convened by the Centre for European Reform to discuss Brexit.

The vote to Leave was a very powerful protest vote with spectacular short-term implications. The long-term consequences are far more difficult to speak about intelligibly. “Leave” contained no blueprint for the future. But the Brexit era is significant regardless the end game. Even if there turns out to be no Brexit (which seems very unlikely) the Brexit era in British politics will prove consequential both at home and abroad. Already, it has transformed the political context.

First, political elites in the UK now express a common view (rightly or wrongly) that they work under a hard (political) constraint: the people have spoken and Brexit means Brexit. The legal relevance of parliamentary sovereignty pales by comparison to this new political fact. Elites have converged on the view that the bedrock of Brexit must be a limit on the free movement of people (Boris Johnson is the exception that proves the rule). So far, the idea that free movement must be restricted operates as a point of theology (albeit with different sources for those in the EU than those in the UK) rather than as a proposition subject to rigorous debate or contestation. For UK political elites, the fact that polls support this interpretation only loosely does

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Gove, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/video/2016/jul/01/michael-gove-launches-tory-leadership-bid-video>

not seem to matter.<sup>2</sup> Sovereignty (itself a core interest for the Remain campaign) was the first concern of those who voted for Brexit.<sup>3</sup> Immigration came second.

Second, the current period is dynamic. Non-state actors (firms especially) are gearing up to be change-agents of Brexit. Uncertainty and fluidity define political and economic life. This is at odds with the basic fact that, for the time being, Britain remains fully part of the EU (though already the UK has relinquished its prior plans to take up the EU Presidency in July 2017). Public and private actors across multiple sectors are making a series of decisions that will be highly consequential for the economy. Lobbying is also now the name of the game. Consultancies are advising firms on who and how to lobby public officials and so to shape future choices about Europe. Banks and other private sector organizations have formed internal ‘Brexit committees.’ Universities are convening in a similar fashion. Scientists are blogging about big and small things that are shaping this new research environment. Individuals are calculating where to live, where to work, and guarding against uncertainty.

Third, the role of individuals in shaping the Brexit era is paramount. Already, there has been a tendency among scholars to nod to the role of charismatic (and also less charismatic) politicians that have shaped the Referendum, and then to focus their analysis primarily on the structural and demographic factors that underpinned the success of Leave. But the Brexit era has revealed the power of highly charismatic elites with strong political instincts that are willing to play fast and loose with the facts and are enabled by the media.

Fourth, the divisions that the EU Referendum revealed are now a palpable feature of British political life. This is likely to be the most significant and lasting consequence of the Brexit era, especially in the UK, but possibly across Europe. Theresa May’s response to this has been to articulate a political platform that advocates for redistribution and seeks, in the words of John Ruggie, to re-embed liberalism. May’s words: we need a Britain that “works for all”.

So what will this mean for the future? First, the ‘institutionalists’ (otherwise known as the ‘Hotel California’ view of Brexit). Institutionalists do not think that the Brexit will materialize. They argue that interdependence, globalization, and integration exercise a powerful constraint on the UK to remain in Europe, regardless the politics of Brexit. Andrew Moravcsik is most strongly identified with this view. Last April, he wrote, “Europe is real because globalization means every day more British people rely on the EU to secure and stabilize trade, investment, travel, litigation, national security and political values. So the same politicians who lead a majority of Britons down the path to leave Europe would have to lead them back up again the next day to save their own political skins.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Lord Ashcroft, “How the UK voted on Thursday ...and why,” *Lord Ashcroft Polls*, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016 <http://lordashcroftpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/>

<sup>3</sup> Robin Niblett, “Britain, the EU and the Sovereignty Myth,” Chatham House, Royal Institute of International Affairs, May 2016; In his speech at the British Museum, Prime Minister David Cameron directly addressed sovereignty concerns. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-on-the-uks-strength-and-security-in-the-eu-9-may-2016>;

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, “The Great Brexit Kabuki — A Masterclass in Political Theatre”, *Financial Times*, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/64159804-fc1f-11e5-b5f5-070dca6d0a0d>

Closely related, the “globalizers” offer a different explanation of the UK’s likely reaction to Brexit. The UK may exit Europe, for theological and political reasons, but will compensate by seeking to become more rather than less global than membership in the EU permitted. This is the Boris Johnson-plan, “Change Britain.”<sup>5</sup>

Third, backlash theorists interpret the Leave vote as emblematic of a backlash against globalization and retreat (greater protectionism, little England, etc.) is inevitable. Heightened inequality, a post 2008 policy program defined by austerity, and a decent capacity to organize politically, facilitated by a popular referendum, has meant that those who have been left out and left behind are pushing back. The UK will have to respond by providing welfare transfers, compensation, and even a restructuring of the economy. A retreat from neoliberalism (including, of course, limits on the free movement of people) that is devoid of democratic legitimacy is politically unavoidable. Theresa May’s decision to re-evaluate Chinese investment in Britain’s nuclear energy sector, though she ultimately accepted Hinkley, also suggests that, at least in the short term, foreign investment will come under increased scrutiny on the grounds of national as well as economic security.

Finally, ethno-nationalists stresses cultural values and identity politics. The Leave vote was a cultural backlash against cosmopolitans. The surge of hate crimes at home signify an inflection point that mark a new era in British social and political life marked by a surge of ethno-nationalism. The Human Rights Act is now at risk, and the UK may even withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights. For some, the obvious prescription is create a stronger sense of citizenship that is grounded on liberalism, human rights, and proximity to Europe. Others may prescribe ‘Little England’: less globalism, less Europe, and less liberalism.

Which of these helps us understand the future best? So far, the great irony of the Referendum is that it is driving the UK to seek more, rather than less, globalism. (This is not the same as saying that there will be no Brexit; I imagine there will be). The Army talks of more international partnerships. Boris Johnson’s recent ‘Change Britain’ campaign exemplifies this greater globalism scenario. The UK’s best alternative to Europe is not retreat, but to greater investment in regional and international organizations, especially NATO and the United Nations Security Council, as well as in bilateral relationships. It is also blocking further integration in Europe, especially on matters of security and defense. The Referendum was about anti-globalism, but the Brexit era will drive the UK to search for an even greater embrace of globalism than before. Realising this ambition will be hampered by those states, private individuals, etc. who are now more sceptical about the UK’s commitment to openness and internationalism.

The drive for greater globalism is likely to have a half life at best if it fails to take count of the cultural drivers of Brexit. The EU Referendum has exposed multiple divides in the UK. Empirically, we know that one of the most significant divides is between the young and the old. Younger people voted to Remain (73% of 18-24yo) while older people voted to leave (60% of 65+). Education has also proved to be highly significant. Graduates voted to Remain while those areas with the fewest university graduates voted to Leave. Geographically the vote revealed a divided country. London voted to remain, but England voted to leave by a 7% margin. Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to Remain, Wales voted to leave. Areas where the

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<sup>5</sup> Change Britain, [www.changebritain.org](http://www.changebritain.org)

population most strongly identified as “English” (30 identified by the Economist) all voted to leave. London chose to Remain.<sup>6</sup>

The vote to leave is now widely interpreted as a vote driven by those left out of the global economy. In her first speech as Prime Minister, Theresa May vowed to create an economy that “works for all,” not a privileged minority.<sup>7</sup> But the correlation between income and voting was not nearly as strong as May’s remarks suggest. Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris argue that cultural values mattered more than economic insecurity.<sup>8</sup> Education and identity appear to have been more significant than income in determining voting patterns.<sup>9</sup> A study by the Economist revealed that those areas with the greatest number of individuals identifying primarily as “English,” were also those areas that were most inclined to vote leave.<sup>10</sup> The startling divide between cosmopolitan London and parochial (but not necessarily poor) England also suggests the centrality of identity politics.

The EU Referendum created a permissive environment for hate crimes and racism and sharpened the distinction between citizen and non-citizen. In the week prior to and following the UK referendum on Europe, the rate of reported hate crimes increased by 42% in the UK. Reported hate crimes peaked in the final week of July, but remained higher than the previous year even in mid-September.<sup>11</sup> Even before the Referendum, the Conservative Party had expressed its interest in repealing the Human Rights Act.

Ultimately, disentangling a cultural backlash from a backlash driven by inequality or globalisation is complicated. Anti-globalization critiques often have lodged within them an identity claim that separates

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<sup>6</sup> “EU Referendum: The result in maps and charts,” *BBC News*, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-36616028>

<sup>7</sup> “Theresa May pledges to fight injustice and make Britain ‘a country that works for everyone’ in her first speech as Prime Minister,” *The Telegraph*, 13 July 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/13/theresa-mays-pledges-to-fight-injustice-and-make-britain-a-count/>

<sup>8</sup> Ronald F. Inglehart and Pippa Norris, “Trump, Brexit, and the rise of Populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash,” Harvard Kennedy School Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP16-026, August 2016, <https://research.hks.harvard.edu/publications/getFile.aspx?Id=1401>

<sup>9</sup> “EU Referendum: The result in maps and charts,” *BBC News*; “Who Voted for the Brexit?,” *The Atlantic*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/06/brexit-vote-statistics-united-kingdom-european-union/488780/>

<sup>10</sup> “EU Referendum: The result in maps and charts,” *BBC News*.

<sup>11</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, “Concluding observations on the twenty-first to twenty-third periodic reports of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland,” 26th August 2016, [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/GBR/CERD\\_C\\_GBR\\_CO\\_21-23\\_24985\\_E.pdf](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/GBR/CERD_C_GBR_CO_21-23_24985_E.pdf); Vikram Dodd, “Police blame worst rise in recorded hate crimes on EU Referendum,” *The Guardian*, 11 July 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jul/11/police-blame-worst-rise-in-recorded-hate-on-eu-referendum>; see also Caroline Mortimer, “Post-Brexit increase in hate crimes continues as police promise crackdown,” 22nd July 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/post-brexit-increase-in-hate-crimes-continues-as-police-promise-crackdown-a7150901.html>

‘them’ (those who suffer from globalization) from ‘us’ (those who suffer from globalization).<sup>12</sup> The divisions recorded on 23 June may be more or less malleable depending on whether they pre-dated the Referendum or were mobilized as part of that process. (The answer to this question is currently a source of debate among scholars).

The rush to predict the UK’s future relationship with Europe (in or out, Norway or Switzerland, global or local) should be tempered by an attention to the political realities and consequences of the Brexit era. The UK will probably seek more globalization abroad, and more welfare at home, at least for awhile. Economically, this might not be possible. Politically, solutions that are tailored to address economic insecurity are unlikely to prove adequate for solving problems that are rooted in identity and culture.

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<sup>12</sup> Jeremy Shapiro, Director of Research at the European Council on Foreign Relations, made this point very effectively in a discussion at SOAS.