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Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies



Post-Brexit Foreign Policy of the United Kingdom

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Al-Bayan Center Studies Series

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On June the 23rd 2016, the British public went to the polls to have their say on whether they wished the United Kingdom to remain part of the European Union or whether it should leave. In an outcome that shocked many observers, analysts, members of the public and politicians, 51.9% of the voters chose to leave the EU.

What was seen as a surprise for many analysts was, in fact, in long time making. Euroscepticism has been part of the British political and social landscape since before the UK joined what was then the European Communities. Even after joining the union, its status as an “awkward partner” persisted amidst an air of growing mutual suspicion. Amidst rising immigration levels, stagnating incomes in many parts of the UK, struggling infrastructure and concerns about the overreach of the EU, Euroscepticism became a powerful enough force to result in a major shift in Britain’s future relations.

This paper seeks to answer how the British foreign policy will look like in the post-Brexit era. As the British Government has been tight-lipped on its future policy decisions, this paper instead looks at historic relations, pre-existing trends and future indicators in order to determine a trajectory for British foreign policy.

The conclusion reached by this paper is that the British foreign policy in the post-Brexit era will be a lot more inward looking as the British Government mobilises to meet internal challenges associated with Brexit. The next two years, in particular, will see the British Government putting all its energies into getting a positive outcome from its negotiations with the EU and retaining as many rights as possible with regards to trade, immigration and border control. As a result, it will deprioritise relations that are not of immediate political or economic benefits to the UK and are not grounded in a historic foundation that can be built upon quickly.

The UK will try to build relations with the United States whose President Donald Trump has supported Brexit. But the two countries have vastly-divergent notions of what they want out of Brexit and the world. Similarly, they have significantly divergent threat perceptions regarding China and Russia and this will constrain what their relationship is capable of, forcing the UK to balance between different partners while retaining the “special relationship” with the US.

The UK’s economic partnerships with the Gulf will expand. UK has historic and growing economic links with the Gulf and these links have remained stable and predictable over the decades. As these are qualities that the UK could use in the post-Brexit era, partnerships with the Gulf will remain.

Its relations with a number of countries, such as Turkey and Iraq, are mired in rapid shifts and contradictions and it will be difficult to determine how they progress. In recognising the UK’s interests and preferred outcomes, these countries can engineer a foreign policy that is more favourable to them.

Meanwhile, a number of issues remain unknown and could have significant impacts on post-Brexit foreign policy of the UK.

Internally, the British Government will be forced to deal with the independence calls within its own body, with regards to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, ensuring that they remain part of the wider UK. Should the independence of these parts take place, Westminster, now controlling England alone, will find itself constrained severely in economic and political terms.

Externally, Eurosceptic and anti-establishment parties and movements across the EU will continue to make waves. Although their candidates have been defeated in Netherlands and Austria and will likely be defeated in Germany, the popularity they gained should not be underestimated. They still remain potent in France and Italy where elections near and the outcomes

of these elections will have a significant impact on how the EU behaves. While a weaker EU will provide short-term benefits to the UK, sustained instability and the spill-over of the instability will cause detriments to the UK in the medium-to-long term.

Regardless of the outcome, Brexit and its aftermath will take British foreign policy into uncharted territories.

History of Euroscepticism in the United Kingdom and the Main Issues Behind the Referendum

The European Union (EU) began its life as the “European Communities” in the 1950s. It included the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC); the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the European Economic Community (EEC), also known as the Common Market. In its initial stages, the European Communities included Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany. This union sought to create economic and political ties among Central European powers in a bid to overcome the environment of rivalry and mutual suspicion that had led to World War II. Although supportive of the goals and functions of the European Communities within the Cold War context, the United Kingdom (UK) chose to stay out of the nascent union, perceiving it to not serve British interests¹. At the time, the UK still maintained a strong colonial presence across the Middle East and parts of East Asia and viewed itself capable of maintaining its economic and political clout without intertwining its interests with the French and Germans that it still viewed as rivals. In addition, both the public and politicians in Britain held a belief that the UK should be “an important part of Europe without being a part of it”².

The Suez Crisis in the 1950s and its aftermath had immense impacts on British self-perceptions as an imperial power. Following the crisis, British foreign policy thinking turned away from acting as an imperial power, resulting with an acceleration of decolonization. The crisis also had

1. Watts, Duncan; Pilkington, Colin. *Britain in the European Union Today*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005

2. Ibid

an impact on British relations with the United States (US). Although the “special relationship” between the UK and the US did not suffer any lasting consequences, it did heighten the perception of vulnerability among the British foreign policy establishment. Compounded with the escalation of the Cold War hostilities and a middling economic outlook, the UK applied for membership into the European Communities in 1961.

The UK’s first application was vetoed by France under its President Charles de Gaulle. A staunch nationalist, de Gaulle was concerned that the UK’s close relations with the US and the former’s “deep seated hostility towards European Construction” would threaten the European Communities and the French interests³. The UK would go on to enter the EC in 1973, after a second application to join was approved. A referendum in 1975 confirmed that 67% of the public approved of the UK’s continued membership within the EC⁴.

Despite joining the EC and the subsequent public approval for membership, scepticism towards European affairs persisted in British politics. Much of the scepticism towards Europe stemmed from the British political tradition that put emphasis on unlimited sovereignty based on a British legal system. Practical gains, such as growing economic interdependence between the UK and the rest of the EC (which went on to supplant the UK’s own economic relations with the Commonwealth of Nations) were not able to undo the traditional Euroscepticism of the British political establishment. Although the number of pro-Europe politicians and members of the parliament increased over the following decades, resistance to further European integration persisted, culminating in Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s opposition to the plans to introduce a single European currency and the deepening of the European integration through the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 that turned the European Communities into the European Union (EU).

3. Wilson, Sam. “Britain and the EU: A Long and Rocky Relationship”, BBC, 01-April-2014, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26515129>> [Accessed 22-March-2017]

4. Ibid

Following the formation of the EU through the Maastricht Treaty, Euroscepticism in the UK has witnessed spikes and drops depending on the political currents of the time. However, it retained a strong presence in politics and public opinion compared to continental Europe. During this period, mainstream Eurosceptic figures in the leading Conservative and Labour Parties increasingly took a stance of “soft Euroscepticism”, resisting attempts to deepen integration and highlighting the flaws of the organisation but not calling for outright withdrawal. Parties advocating complete withdrawal from the EU such as the Referendum Party and the UK Independence Party (UKIP) experienced bouts of popularity but made no sustainable gains. In a bid to placate voters of such parties and slow European integration, British politicians have taken on to acting as the spoiler in European policy-making, earning itself the moniker of “awkward partner in Europe”⁵. Actions such as these prevented the UK from forming durable alliances with continental powers. This, in turn, resulted with a growing perception among the British public that the EU was ineffectual and against the UK’s interests⁶. The notion that the EU’s influence upon the UK was undesirable and contrary to sovereign interests of the UK was strong enough that it became one of the main issue areas pushed by the Eurosceptic politicians in the lead-up to the 2016 referendum to determine UK’s continued membership in the EU. During the referendum itself, 49% of those who voted for the UK to leave the EU stated that they did so because they believe in “the principle that decisions about the UK should be taken in the UK”⁷.

The notions of sovereignty of the UK from the EU were buffered by the crises the EU experienced over the course of the early 21st Century and the EU’s response to them. Eurosceptics felt that the decision to not join the Eurozone was vindicated by the persistently-weak performance of the

5. Lynch, Philip; Fairclough, Paul. «The European Union», AS UK Government and Politics, Hodder Education, pp. 339-340

6. Ibid

7. Lord Ashcroft, «How the United Kingdom Voted on Thursday...and why», Lord Ashcroft Polls, 24-June-2016, <<http://lordashcroftpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/>>, [Accessed 24-March-2017]

Euro since its inception. These sentiments were further vindicated by the 2008 Financial Crisis and the subsequent debt crises that had immense impacts on the Greek Economy⁸. Eurosceptics argued that not only had the common currency left the entirety of the EU vulnerable to the weaknesses of the Greek economy, but the EU's inability to restore the Greek economy decisively had highlighted the inherent flaws and limitations of the organisation. At the time, there was intense speculation that Greece would leave the Eurozone and even the wider EU⁹. It was the prospect of such "Grexit" that first led to calls for a "Brexit" referendum to be considered seriously in the UK. Although Grexit ended up not materialising, the notion that richer EU states such as Germany and the UK were forced to shore up the Greek (and increasingly, Spanish and Italian) economy bolstered the Eurosceptic position that the UK would be better off without participating in (and paying into) the EU. Economic Eurosceptics drew attention to other financial costs incurred by the EU and made an argument towards using the money spent on the EU on bolstering UK infrastructure instead. The most infamous of such claims was the claim that the UK spent £350 Million on the EU and leaving the EU would allow these funds to be allocated to the National Health Service (NHS). The claim has since been disproven and abandoned by most Eurosceptic advocates¹⁰. However, the economic argument has remained strong enough that 6% of Leave voters cited a better and fairer British economic outlook as the main reason behind their vote¹¹.

The issue of a fair economy also relates to the growing perception that the EU has come to benefit large corporations more than individuals.

8. Wilson, Sam. "Britain and the EU: A Long and Rocky Relationship", BBC, 01-April-2014, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26515129>> [Accessed 23-March-2017]

9. Krause-Jackson, Flavia; «Economist that coined 'Grexit' now says Greece will stay in the Euro», Bloomberg, 28-June-2015, <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-06-28/economist-who-coined-grexit-now-says-greece-will-stay-in-euro>>, [Accessed 24-March-2017]

10. Helm, Toby. "Brexit camp abandons £350m-a-week NHS funding pledge", The Guardian, 10-September-2016, <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/sep/10/brexit-camp-abandons-350-million-pound-nhs-pledge>>, [Accessed 27-March-2017]

11. Lord Ashcroft, «How the United Kingdom Voted on Thursday...and why», Lord Ashcroft Polls, 24-June-2016, <<http://lordashcroftpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/>>, [Accessed 24-March-2017]

This demographic consists of two main groups: The first demographic consists of left-wing voters who believe that the EU, rather than being an ideal social-democratic organisation, has become profoundly pro-corporate and anti-democratic. They cited the EU forcing the Greek Government to reduce social welfare and government employment programmes to save money during the Greek financial crisis despite these being the only source of support for many Greek people in the face of ballooning unemployment. They have also cited the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) proposed between the EU and the United States. If ratified, this agreement would increase privatisation and give corporations significant legal powers¹². In proposing a “Lexit” (left-wing Brexit), this demographic went against the mainstream left-wing voters. The Lexit campaign lost steam significantly as the right-wing parties such as UKIP and the Eurosceptic wing of the Conservative Party dominated the campaign. However, their impact on left-wing unity was significant. In conjunction with the aforementioned loss of support from their traditional voters, Labour’s inability to reconcile the differences between its pro and anti-EU factions have had significant impacts on the integrity of the campaign against leaving the EU and the unity of the party itself¹³.

The second demographic comes from traditionally conservative white working class backgrounds, having found their skills and education levels increasingly outmatched by the younger and pro-EU working class. Originally a Labour target-demographic, these voters have gravitated towards UKIP in response to Labour’s increasingly pro-EU stance¹⁴. This demographic has witnessed traditional manufacturing jobs being lost to other countries and the remaining jobs moving to urban centres where the competition for jobs is much stronger and migration is a lot higher. It would

12. “About Lexit”, Left Leave: Campaign for a UK Left Exit from the EU, <<http://www.leftleave.org/about-2/>>, [Accessed 27-March-2017]

13. Chakelian, Anoosh. “Is Jeremy Corbyn losing his supporters after voting for Brexit?”, The New Statesman, 16-February-2017, <www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/02/jeremy-corbyn-losing-his-supporters-after-voting-brexit>, [Accessed 27-March-2017]

14. Ford, Rob. “Older ‘left-behind’ voters turned against a political class with values opposed to theirs”, The Guardian, 25-June-2016, <www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/25/left-behind-eu-referendum-vote-ukip-revolt-brexit>, [Accessed 27-March-2017]

be this “left-behind” demographic that would make anti-immigration into one of the biggest Eurosceptic issue areas.

British Eurosceptics have adopted EU-migration as a major issue area only recently. In the post-World War II era, many in the British far right were supportive of British integration into Europe in a bid to unite Europe and encourage migration from within Western Europe, rather than the Commonwealth of Nations (which was Britain’s main source of migrant workers at the time)¹⁵. However, the enlargement of the EC eastwards and the growing migrant population from these countries have created a shift towards Euroscepticism and the adoption of anti-migration sentiment within Eurosceptic politics. The enlargement of the EU in 2004 and the inclusion of a number of eastern European countries have resulted with high levels of migration from Poland in particular, resulting in a 200% increase in the foreign population in some areas of the UK between 2001 and 2014¹⁶. In conjunction with economic stagnation in rural Britain, this led to the perception that jobs were being taken over by the newly-arrived migrants. Similar concerns were expressed regarding the Turkish accession into the EU¹⁷.

The refugee crisis caused by the Syrian Civil War and the war in Iraq; and the subsequent acts of terrorism linked to the Islamic State (IS) has further heightened the xenophobic and often-Islamophobic rhetoric. Eurosceptics in the UK saw German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s open door policy and the high number of refugees in Greece and Sweden as a reason to tighten migratory controls in the UK under the belief that allowing the refugees entry in would lead to criminality, worsening economic conditions and terrorist attacks. Firebrand anti-EU parties such as UK were among

15. Gottlieb, Julie (ed.); Linehan, Thomas (ed.). *Culture of Fascism: Visions of the Far Right in Britain*, I.B.Tauris, 31-December-2003, p. 75

16. “Explaining the Brexit Vote”, *The Economist*, 14-July-2016, <<http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21702228-areas-lots-migrants-voted-mainly-remain-or-did-they-explaining-brexit-vote>>, [Accessed 23-March-2016]

17. Boffey, Daniel; Helm, Toby. “Vote Leave embroiled in race row over Turkey security threat claims”, *The Guardian*, 22-May-2016, <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/21/vote-leave-prejudice-turkey-eu-security-threat>>, [Accessed 24-March-2017]

those that exploited such sentiments most vocally, resulting in accusations that the UKIP leader Nigel Farage was stoking racial hatred through the use of language and imagery that was reminiscent of the Nazi Germany¹⁸. Although Farage and UKIP received widespread condemnation for their rhetoric and language, the message still resonated with a portion of the public that saw the refugee crisis and the wider concerns relating to immigration as hot-button issues. These people, constituting some 33% of those that voted for the UK to leave the EU, felt that doing so was the only way to gain effective control on British immigration policies¹⁹.

In summary, the British Eurosceptic movement that campaigned for the UK to leave the EU were motivated by: the desire to give London increased control over policies they felt were not beneficial to the UK; the desire to implement increased controls over immigration and protect the UK from the impacts of the refugee crisis that impacted much of Europe; the desire for resources and finances allocated to EU funding to be used towards the improvement of the UK's native services, particularly the NHS; and finally, the perception that the EU's policies did not positively impact the lives and struggles of ordinary British people and favoured the financial establishment instead. Many of these issues have a strong nationalist, anti-liberal and anti-establishment (be it the financial or political establishment) appeals to them and have been argued to be part of the same nationalist wave that has propelled into popular consciousness figures such as Donald Trump in the US, Geert Wilders in Netherlands and Marine Le Pen in France²⁰. While Wilders' defeat in the Dutch elections on March 2017 suggests that the success of this movement is far from assured, it is

18. Riley-Smith, Ben. "EU referendum: George Osborne compares UKIP 'breaking point' migration poster to Nazi propaganda", *The Telegraph*, 19-June-2016, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/19/eu-referendum-campaigning-resumes-as-jeremy-corbyn-and-michael-g2/>>, [Accessed 24-March-2017]

19. Lord Ashcroft, «How the United Kingdom Voted on Thursday...and why», Lord Ashcroft Polls, 24-June-2016, <<http://lordashcroftpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/>>, [Accessed 24-March-2017]

20. McAllester, Matt. «Brexit, Trump, Le Pen and the rise of the right: the anger goes global», *The Independent*, 02-December-2016, <www.independent.co.uk/news/world/brexit-trump-le-pen-and-the-rise-of-the-right-a7443241.html>, [Accessed 27-March 2017]

likely that politicians in the UK and across the EU will try to appeal to the biases of this demographic in a bid to gain votes, retain power and avoid inflaming further tensions. Even in their most pragmatic, policymakers will need to keep these issues in mind.

The Referendum and its Aftermath

The referendum to determine the UK's continued membership of the EU took place on 23 June 2016, resulting in a narrow win of 51.9% of the votes for the UK leaving the EU. The outcome came as a surprise for many due to polls suggesting that Remain would win the vote, sending shockwaves through the British political and economic system. In the aftermath of the referendum, Prime Minister David Cameron who had advocated the referendum and sided with the campaign to remain in the EU, resigned and former Home Secretary Theresa May became the Prime Minister. In a surprising move, UKIP leader Nigel Farage resigned from his position as well though remained a vocal and visible figure in post-Brexit British politics. Although the Labour Party did not experience leadership changes, the party leader Jeremy Corbyn was criticised for his indeterminate stance during the referendum campaign, and was accused of sabotaging the Remain campaign despite that campaign being more favourable with Labour voters²¹. Thus, although Corbyn managed to survive a challenge to his leadership, the party itself has remained fractured and factionalised following Brexit, unable to maintain a cohesive policy line.

The financial markets were also shaken by the results, declining rapidly over the course of the first few days. Internationally, more than US\$2 trillion of wealth in equities markets was wiped out in the highest one-day sell-off in recorded history, in absolute terms²². The stock market losses amounted to a total of \$3 trillion by 27 June; the domestically-

21. Kuenssberg, Laura. "Corbyn office 'sabotaged EU Remain campaign – sources'", BBC, 26-June-2016, <www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36633238>, [Accessed 28-March-2017]

22. Kirka, Danica; Lee, Youkyung. "Stocks crash as UK vote to quit EU shocks investors", The Associated Press, 24-June-2016, <www.bigstory.ap.org/article/d4930c2180b143d685213a75e-916bee8/british-vote-leaving-eu-rocks-world-financial-markets>, [Accessed 28-March-2017]

focused FTSE 250 Index was down approximately 14% compared to the day before the referendum results were published²³. Since then, the stock markers have mostly recovered, although they remained apprehensive of shocks and shifts. Similarly, the British Sterling fell to its lowest level against the US dollar since 1985, marking the pound down 10% against the US dollar and 7% against the euro. The drop from \$1.50 to \$1.37 was the biggest move for the currency in any two-hour period in history²⁴. The pound remained low, and on 8 July became the worst performing currency of the year, against 31 other major currencies, performing worse than the Argentine peso, the previous lowest currency²⁵. The economies of other countries with significant trade links with the UK were also impacted, including the largest single-day decline of the South African Rand²⁶ since 2008 and sudden drops of stock market value in Canada²⁷, Nigeria and Kenya²⁸ due to a global financial shift out of currencies viewed as risky and concerns that the UK withdrawal from the EU could impact the economies and trade relations of these countries. Following the plunge of the Sterling, the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne attempted to reassure financial markets that the UK economy was not in serious trouble, adding

23. Buttonwood. "Britain Faces Project Reality", *The Economist*, 27-June-2016, <<http://www.economist.com/blogs/buttonwood/2016/06/markets-after-referendum>>, [Accessed 28-March-2017]

24. Allen, Katie; Treanor, Jill; Goodley, Simon. "Pound Slumps to 31-year low following Brexit vote", *The Guardian*, 24-June-2016, <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/jun/23/british-pound-given-boost-by-projected-remain-win-in-eu-referendum>>, [Accessed 28-March-2017]

25. De Aragao, Marianna Duarte. "Pound Overtakes Argentine Peso to Become 2016's Worst Performer", *Bloomberg*, 08-July-2016, <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-07-08/pound-overtakes-argentine-peso-to-become-2016-s-worst-performer>>, [Accessed 28-March-2017]

26. «Rand slumps more than 8% against Dollar», *Business Report*, 24-June-2016, <www.iol.co.za/business-report/markets/currencies/rand-slumps-more-than-8-against-dollar-2038150>, [Accessed 28-March-2017]

27. Evans, Pete. "Loonie loses more than a penny, TSX sheds 239 points after Britons vote to quit EU", *CBC News*, 24-June-2016, <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/brexit-vote-business-impact-1.3650553>>, [Accessed 28-March-2016]

28. Kuo, Lily; Kazeem, Yomi. "Brexit Will be terrible for Africa's largest economies", *Quartz Africa*, 24-June-2016, <<https://qz.com/715710/brexit-could-be-terrible-for-africas-largest-economies/>>, [Accessed 28-June-2017]

that Britain was facing the future “from a position of strength”²⁹. However, a negative outlook remained among businesses anticipating negative results amidst an unstable Sterling and stock market. A number of financial companies have warned of the likelihood of a recession taking place³⁰.

Such conditions and uncertainties would make for a difficult negotiation environment under the best of circumstances. However, in the days following the referendum, it became apparent that Westminster was wholly unprepared for the negotiations that would follow. Indeed, in what has been described as an act of “gross negligence”, Prime Minister David Cameron had barred the British Government from making any contingency plans towards a referendum outcome to leave the EU. The parliament’s foreign affairs select committee said that the ban on contingencies was prompted by fears that they would leak to the press, bolstering the Eurosceptic position. In the end, however, all it did was to exacerbate “post-referendum uncertainty both within the UK and amongst key international partners, and made the task now facing the new government substantially more difficult”³¹. Thus, when the former Home Secretary Theresa May (who backed the vote to Remain) took the position of Prime Minister and appointed the former Mayor of London Boris Johnson (who backed the vote to Leave despite London itself overwhelmingly voting to Remain) as the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the British Government was already facing an uphill struggle to define Brexit and enact Article 50 of the Treaty of the European Union that will officially start the process of the UK leaving the EU.

Between June 2016 and March 2017, the British Government set out

29. “Osborne: UK Economy in a position of strength”, BBC, 27-June-2016, <www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-36637732>, [Accessed 28-March-2017]

30. Sheffield, Hazel. “Brexit will plunge the UK into a recession in the next year, BlackRock says”, The Independent, 13-July-2016, <www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/brexit-will-plunge-the-uk-into-a-recession-in-the-next-year-blackrock-says-a7134616.html>, [Accessed 28-March-2017]

31. Wintour, Patrick. “Cameron accused of ‘gross negligence’ over Brexit contingency plans”, The Guardian, 20-July-2016, <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jul/20/david-cameron-accused-gross-negligence-brexit-contingency-plans>>, [Accessed 28-March-2017]

to define the exact terms of Brexit, what the United Kingdom could get out of the negotiations and what could be at risk in the event of a deadlock of negotiations. Although the referendum itself was non-binding, Prime Minister Theresa May stated that the public had made its choice clear and that “Brexit means Brexit” and that she would push for it to happen with the best possible outcomes³². Furthermore, she stated that “No deal for Britain is better than a bad deal for Britain” adding that “I am sure a positive agreement can be reached”. The implication being that the UK would seek to reach an outcome that would benefit all parties but did not rule out the uncertainties involved in the negotiations or the likelihood that the UK and the EU could end up having what has been referred to as a “messy breakup”³³.

As a whole, the British Government remained tight-lipped of its negotiation goals, objectives and red-lines, leaving analysts, journalists and leaked documents to speculate the trajectory of the negotiations. The only White Paper regarding the government’s goals in the negotiations was formulated in February 2017 and released in March the same year. Based on the White Paper, the British Government has the following goals for its negotiations with the EU:

- Trade: The UK will withdraw from the single market and seek a new customs arrangement and a free trade agreement with the EU
- Immigration: A new system to control EU migration will be introduced, and could be phased in to give businesses time to prepare. The new system will be designed to help fill skills shortages and welcome “genuine” students

32. Cowburn, Ashley, “Theresa May says ‘Brexit means Brexit’ and there will be no attempt to remain inside the EU”, The Independent, 11-July-2016, <www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-brexit-means-brexit-conservative-leadership-no-attempt-remain-inside-eu-leave-europe-a7130596.html>, [Accessed 29-March-2017]

33. Kellner, Peter. “Brexit, a Game of Deal or No Deal”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 06-February-2017<<http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/67909>>, [Accessed 28-March-2017]

- Expats: The government wants to secure an agreement with European countries “at the earliest opportunity” on the rights of EU nationals in the UK and Britons living in Europe
- Sovereignty: Britain will leave the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice but seek to set up separate resolution mechanisms for things like trade disputes
- Border: Aiming for “as seamless and frictionless a border as possible between Northern Ireland and Ireland”
- Devolution: Giving more powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as decision-making is brought back to the UK³⁴.

Whether the UK will be able to achieve all these goals remains to be seen. As mentioned above, the UK made no preparatory steps in the event of a vote to leave the UK, resulting in the government scrambling to determine their goals and objectives in a short space of time before the negotiations began. Even if the government can negotiate a favourable outcome, this outcome will have to be palatable to the public which has voted to leave the EU. This is going to be especially problematic, as a growing body of literature suggests that the public was ill-informed about the exact functions of the EU, the number of migrants in the UK or the level of contribution to the EU budget by the UK³⁵. Thus, what the Leave-voting public expects from the outcome of the negotiations will almost certainly be mutually-exclusive with what the negotiators and politicians can actually achieve. The likelihood of expectations meeting up against reality and resulting with a deadlock is particularly high.

34. “The United Kingdom’s exit from and new partnership with the European Union”, HM Government, February 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/589191/The_United_Kingdoms_exit_from_and_partnership_with_the_EU_Web.pdf>, [Accessed 29-March-2017]

35. Kellner, Peter. “The Great Fog of Brexit”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 05-December-2016, <<http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/66342>>, [Accessed 29-March-2017]

Furthermore, the EU is motivated to prevent a smooth Brexit process in a bid to prevent the British model from setting up a future precedent for other Eurosceptic nationalists in countries such as Italy, France and Netherlands. French nationalist Marine Le Pen has already cited Brexit as something to be aspired to in France³⁶. Although the EU may not have an intention to “punish” the UK for leaving, it will naturally seek an outcome that benefits the EU over the UK while signalling to the mainland Eurosceptics that remaining within the EU is more advantageous leaving. Indeed, despite May’s optimistic public stance, there has been a growing acknowledgement of the difficulties and dangers associated with Brexit among the members of the government³⁷.

Thus, it was amidst such rising tensions and lack of clarity regarding the outcome of the negotiations that Prime Minister Theresa May officially invoked Article 50 on March 29th, 2017. The Article 50 of the Treaty of the European Union states that:

1) Any Member State may decide to withdraw from the Union in accordance with its own constitutional requirements.

2) A Member State which decides to withdraw shall notify the European Council of its intention. In the light of the guidelines provided by the European Council, the Union shall negotiate and conclude an agreement with that State, setting out the arrangements for its withdrawal, taking account of the framework for its future relationship with the Union. That agreement shall be negotiated in accordance with Article 218(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It shall be concluded on behalf of the Union by the Council, acting by a qualified majority, after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament.

36. Huggler, Justin. “Brexit (the first real blow to the old order) Marine Le Pen tells rowdy (alternative European summit) in Germany”, The Telegraph, 21-January-2017, <www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/21/brexit-first-real-blow-old-order-marine-le-pen-tells-rowdy-alternative/>, [Accessed 29-March-2017]

37. “MPs (walk out) in protest at (too gloomy) Brexit report”, BBC, 28-March-2017, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-39417715>>, [Accessed 29-March-2017]

3) The Treaties shall cease to apply to the State in question from the date of entry into force of the withdrawal agreement or, failing that, two years after the notification referred to in paragraph 2, unless the European Council, in agreement with the Member State concerned, unanimously decides to extend this period.

4) For the purposes of paragraphs 2 and 3, the member of the European Council or of the Council representing the withdrawing Member State shall not participate in the discussions of the European Council or Council or in decisions concerning it. A qualified majority shall be defined in accordance with Article 238(3) (b) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

5) If a State which has withdrawn from the Union asks to re-join, its request shall be subject to the procedure referred to in Article 49³⁸.

The invocation of Article 50 begins a two-year period during which the UK will negotiate its exit from the European Union.

After receiving the official Article 50 document from the British Government, President of the European Council Donald Tusk will publish negotiation guidelines. Tusk has also announced that an EU summit will take place on the 29th of April. During this summit, EU leaders will work on setting up a framework for Brexit negotiations. This framework will then be forwarded to the European Commission, which will prepare more detailed guidelines for the negotiations. Member states in the Council of the European Union will then need to approve the guidelines in a process that could finish between May and July. No dramatic decisions are expected this early in the process, but when the negotiations finally begin, the two sides will need to hash out the status of British citizens who live in the European Union and EU citizens living in the United Kingdom³⁹.

38. "Consolidated Texts of the EU Treaties Of the EU Treaties As Amended By the Treaty of Lisbon", Foreign and Commonwealth Office, January 2008, <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228848/7310.pdf>, [Accessed 29-March-2017]

39. "UK: EU Summit Announced to Formulate Brexit Framework", Stratfor, 21-March-2017, <<https://www.stratfor.com/situation-report/uk-eu-summit-announced-formulate-brexit-frame>>

In the UK, the British Government will formally announce the “Great Repeal Bill” in May 2017. The bill will repeal the European Communities Act 1972 and restate in UK law all enactments previously in force under EU law. The bill would not come into force until the date of exit and is aimed at smoothing the transition by ensuring that all laws remain in force until specifically repealed⁴⁰.

Formal face-to-face talks are expected to start early summer of 2017 and initial discussions are expected to conclude late 2017, around the same time as the Great Repeal Bill is scrutinised by the Parliament. The Great Repeal Bill is expected to receive royal assent early 2017, with subsequent amendments to the law to cover any gaps in legislation⁴¹.

Lead Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier stated that he expects the main Brexit terms to wrap up by the 30th of December 2018. Late 2018 or early 2019 will see both the British Parliament and the European Council to have a vote on any deal. By March 2019, the negotiating window will close. Should there be no agreement, an extension of the negotiations can take place but requires a vote of every member state. If no extension is offered and no deal is reached, all treaties with the EU leave the EU with all prior treaties annulled⁴².

Trajectory of the Post-Brexit British Foreign Policy:.

As the negotiations are yet due to start, their outcome and impact is difficult to predict. However, there are a number of areas that are almost certain to be impacted. The first such impact will be the reduction of trade with the EU. As the largest trade partner of the UK, the EU has a number significant trade and free market agreements with the UK, most important being the access to the EU single market. All of these trade deals will have to be re-negotiated. Although a successful agreement that retains de-facto

work>, [Accessed 24-March-2017]

40. “Brexit: Article 50 Has been triggered - what now?”, BBC, 29-March-2017, <www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-39143978>, [Accessed 29-March-2017]

41. Ibid

42. Ibid

access to the single market is not out of the question, there is a considerable risk that it will not materialise⁴³, resulting in detrimental impacts to a number of industries such as construction and finance⁴⁴. This concern is especially acute following the statements of German Chancellor Angela Merkel following the invocation of Article 50. Merkel rebuffed Prime Minister May's request to discuss the future of the comprehensive trade deals between the EU and UK at the time as the Article 50 negotiations, stating that the UK and EU would first need to "distinguish" their complex relations before agreeing to a new set of deals⁴⁵. With the prospect of an extended period of uncertainty looming ahead, a number of businesses have already made the decision to relocate and the likelihood that more will follow is high⁴⁶. The British Government and pro-Leave advocates have suggested that the UK compensate for the loss by bolstering non-EU (likely Commonwealth) trade⁴⁷. However, negotiating and finalising these negotiations will likely take time.

Another impact will be the falling value of the British Sterling. The announcement of the referendum outcome has already knocked the value of the British Sterling significantly. Although the Sterling has recovered somewhat since, the invocation of Article 50 resulted with a second out of a drop. With other issues such as the Scottish Independence debate also

43. Noyer, Christian. "Brexit means the end of single market access for London", Financial Times, 15-March-2017, <Financial Times, <https://www.ft.com/content/4a7e49b2-042b-11e7-aa5b-6bb07f5c8e12>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

44. Fletcher, Nick. "Single Market exit: UK Construction <could lose 175,000 EU workers>", The Guardian, 15-March-2017, <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/mar/15/single-market-exit-brexit-uk-construction-sector-lose-175000-eu-workers>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

45. Stone, Jon. "Angela Merkel derails Theresa May's Brexit plan by rejecting parallel trade talks", The Independent, 29-March-2017, <www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-article-50-angela-merkel-rejects-theresa-may-parallel-talks-a7656506.html>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

46. Suess, Oliver; Larsen, Ross. "Lloyd's of London Chooses Brussels for Post-Brexit EU Hub", Bloomberg, 30-March-2017, <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-03-30/lloyd-s-of-london-picks-brussels-for-post-brexit-eu-headquarters>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

47. "Brexit: Single Market benefit <largely imaginary>", BBC, 23-March-2017, <www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-39356664>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

heating up, confidence in the Sterling may remain low in the near-future⁴⁸. On the flipside, however, export-oriented British manufacturing jobs have benefited from a weak Sterling that rendered imports less viable and exports less prohibitive⁴⁹. Thus, the weakness of the Sterling could be a boon that bolsters local manufacturing and signals the return of industries tied to manufacturing back into the UK. As the loss of jobs for the traditional working-class jobs in manufacturing has been one of the grievances that led to Euroscepticism, the British Government will likely seek to take advantage of this current.

Thus, although the negotiations have not yet yielded any definite changes and outcomes to British policy, particularly with regards to foreign relations, events and trends in the lead-up to the referendum and its aftermath gives a picture towards what how the UK's relations with the world will look like. Based on the existing information at hand, it is likely that British Foreign Policy in the post-Brexit era will be:

- **More inward-looking:** Much of the rhetoric surrounding the Leave campaign, espousing sovereignty and a level of disengagement from political and economic commitments of no benefit to the UK had a protectionist edge. There is a distinct desire among those who voted to leave the EU to focus on fixing internal issues such as unemployment, infrastructure and the NHS. In addition, although the British Government has re-iterated the desire to remain involved in the world, a number of priorities will preclude a deep global involvement: The Article 50 negotiations with the EU as well as the on-going debates surrounding Scottish Independence (as well as the nascent secessionist movements such as those in Northern Ireland and Wales) will occupy much of the attention and resources the British Government has. As a result, British policy making will likely take a step back from a number of foreign involvements and attempt to prioritise or

48. Adinolfi, Joseph; Reklatis, Victor. "British Pound edges lower as UK Formally begins EU exit", MarketWatch, 29-March-2017, <www.marketwatch.com/story/british-pound-under-pressure-ahead-of-brex-it-trigger-2017-03-29>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

49. Elliott, Larry; Kollewe, Julia. "UK Manufacturers upbeat as weak pound boosts exports", The Guardian, 26-January-2017, <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/jan/25/uk-manufacturers-weak-pound-exports-cbi-sterling-brex-it>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

revitalise the remaining ones. The calculus regarding which relations are prioritised will be based on a UK-centric cost-benefit analysis in the short-to-medium term rather than long-term or ideologically-motivated policy goals.

- Favouring political and economic expediency: Due to looking more inward and having much of its Foreign Policy apparatus concerned with matters relating to Brexit, the British Government will have limited capacity to deal with other issues. The relations it does build will be based on whether such relations can provide an alternative to the EU, make a success out of Brexit and bring the maximum political and economic gain with minimal fallout. To this end, prior familiarity will be a major factor, as is already evident in the statements of Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson who argued that when the UK joined the Single Market, it “betrayed our relationships with the Commonwealth countries”⁵⁰. In a vein not dissimilar to the nationalistic visions of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan or Russian President Vladimir Putin, figures such as Johnson have long dreamed of reviving the Commonwealth or placing the UK at the centre of a global alliance of Anglophone countries (The United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa)⁵¹. Similarly, countries and regions that the UK already has substantial ties with such as the Gulf Region will also see deeper economic and political ties.

UK’s Post-Brexit Relations with the United States:

The UK’s “special relationship” with the US goes back decades and has been long-documented by political analysts. This relationship has always left the UK balancing its relations with the EU. As was the case during the Iraq War of 2003, the UK’s close alignment to the US over the EU has been a source of contention. During his tenure, President Barack Obama took a somewhat different approach, favouring the UK building

50. Campanella, Edoardo; Dassu, Marta. “A Future of the English-Speaking Peoples”, Foreign Affairs Magazine, 21-February-2017, <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2017-02-21/future-english-speaking-peoples>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

51. Ibid

closer relations with the EU. Obama was especially harsh in relation to the Brexit referendum, stating that the UK would go “to the back of the queue” in trade negotiations if it chose to leave the EU⁵². This is in contrast to current US President Donald Trump who not only congratulated the UK on its decision to leave the EU, but promised to make a success out of Brexit⁵³. Given the sudden lifeline received by Trump’s unexpected election victory and the keenness of figures such as Boris Johnson to build up relations with the Anglophone World the Commonwealth, the prospect of a closer alignment between the UK and the US in the post-Brexit era is obvious. Indeed, it is likely with this in mind did Prime Minister May become one of the first leader to congratulate Trump when he became President, subsequently visiting him in Washington in late January 2017 even as the EU’s tone towards him remained cold and hostile.

However, the two leaders have vastly divergent views of Brexit, the world and pressing foreign policy concerns and priorities. Although the UK will seek to build closer political and economic relations with the US and re-invigorate the “special relationship”, these divergences will test their relationship.

Although the voters for the UK’s exit from the EU may have been motivated by protectionism, this has not been the official position of May, which contrasts Trump who made protectionism a rallying call and retains his protectionist rhetoric months after entering the White House⁵⁴. With a protectionist at the helm, Washington will be unwilling to import products from a country unless it pays dividends in some other ways. Opening the way to increased US products in the UK would be a viable option, but will have knock-on effects of its own. Many UK manufacturers and farmers may not only be able to compete with US-based industries, the lower

52. “Seeking Reassurance Across the Pond”, Stratfor, 26-January-2017, <<https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/seeking-reassurance-across-pond>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

53. Ibid.

54. De Luce, Dan. “Trump Sticks to a Protectionist, Isolationist Script in First Big Speech”, Foreign Policy Magazine, 01-March-2017, <foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/01/trump-sticks-to-a-protectionist-isolationist-script-in-first-big-speech/>, [Accessed 30 March-2017]

regulatory standards in the US compared to the UK has raised concerns on the type of products British citizens would import⁵⁵. The lowering of the British regulatory standards and the mass-privatisation and acquisition of UK institutions, infrastructure and companies would lead to the exact opposite outcome to those that Brexit voters have desired⁵⁶. As a country that has incentives to push for increased market access abroad for its goods, the UK is simply closer to the EU than the US.

Increasing the UK/US trade relations can also potentially jeopardise another major trade partner of the UK: China. China has been a growing and increasingly-influential trade partner of the UK and has been involved in a number of major construction and infrastructure projects including the construction of a nuclear power station, Hinkley Point C. The UK is also participating in China's "One Belt, One Road" project that seeks to create direct transport links between the world's major trade hubs. British officials have remarked that with the UK leaving the EU, a partnership with China is "more important than ever"⁵⁷. This sentiment was echoed by Chinese officials who have spoken positively about the impacts of Brexit as they consider the UK a more open and accessible market than the EU⁵⁸.

In contrast, the American President has had an adversarial relationship with Beijing since he set off on the campaign trail. Trump has criticised China for unfair trade practices, failing to rein in on its neighbour North Korea and its policies in the South China sea and in Taiwan. Trump has not only kept his hard-line anti-China stance after entering Presidency, but

55. Blythman, Joanna. "Is chlorinated chicken about to hit our shelves after new US trade deal?", The Guardian, 29-January-2017, <<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jan/29/britain-us-trade-deal-gm-food-eu-rules>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

56. Macshane, Denis. "Brits, Beware of Trumps Bearing Trade Deals", Foreign Policy Magazine, 18-January-2017, <foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/18/brits-beware-of-trumps-bearing-trade-deals/>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

57. "China trade <more important than ever to the UK>", BBC, 10-November-2016, <www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-37934784>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

58. Tan, Huileng. "Brexit to open new opportunities in China-UK trade, top Chinese banker says", CNBC, 25-March-2017, <www.cnbc.com/2017/03/25/uk-china-trade-brexit-li-ruogo-boao-forum.html>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

he has shown himself willing to enter a trade war with Beijing; disregard the “One China Policy” that has allowed Washington to keep relations with Beijing without forsaking Taiwan; and risk actual military conflict against China⁵⁹. Should relations continue to deteriorate, the likelihood that both Washington and Beijing will demand Westminster to pick a side is extremely likely. Both outcomes will be to the UK’s detriment.

A similar but inverse divergence of UK/US interests is present with regards to Russia. Over the course of his Presidential campaign, Trump has consistently held a reconciliatory tone towards Russia. Although Trump’s softened tone was initially welcomed by observers as a departure from the acrimonious politics of the Obama era; the exact natures of ties between Trump and the Russian Government have since been called into question⁶⁰. Despite growing concerns, President Trump not only continues to avoid referring to pressing foreign policy issues such as the conflict in Ukraine⁶¹ but has instead sought to attack NATO, referring to the alliance as “obsolete” and indicating that the US may not be willing to defend the European allies in the event of a conflict⁶².

The threat perception in Westminster towards Moscow, in turn, is a lot higher. The UK has advocated and enacted a number of sanctions at Russia due to its activities in Syria and Ukraine. Relations between the two countries deteriorated significantly during the tenure of Prime Minister David Cameron. Although Boris Johnson has expressed desire to restore

59. Auslin, Michael. “China Won’t Run From a Fight With Trump”, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, 24-January-2017, <foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/24/china-wont-run-from-a-fight-with-trump/>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

60. Tamkin, Emily; Groll, Elias. “Comey: Yes, We’re Investigating Possible Ties Between Trump and Russia”, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, 20-March-2017, <foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/comey-yes-were-investigating-possible-ties-between-trump-and-russia/>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

61. De Luce, Dan. “Trump Sticks to a Protectionist, Isolationist Script in First Big Speech”, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, 01-March-2017, <foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/01/trump-sticks-to-a-protectionist-isolationist-script-in-first-big-speech/>, [Accessed 30 March-2017]

62. Hudson, John. “Republicans Join Democrats in Defending NATO”, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, 16-March-2017, <foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/16/republicans-join-democrats-in-defending-nato/>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

relations with Moscow⁶³, the UK continued to push for sanctions against Moscow and Russian companies⁶⁴. Furthermore, the intrusion of the UK airspace by Russian fighter jets and bombers, which became a regular occurrence during Cameron's tenure, has continued unabated⁶⁵. Given Trump's ambiguous stance on Moscow and hostile stance towards NATO, the security concerns that Russia could represent is one that is shared by both the British and the EU governments.

Consequently, a full commitment between the US and the UK will not take place after Brexit even though the official foreign policies may strive to do so. The two countries will likely align on a number of political and economic issues, but there will be limits to this relationship. Instead, the UK will follow the foreign policy it always has, balancing its interests with Washington against a number of regional and global interests that will, often, be at odd with one-another. As exemplified by the UK's delayed and muted condemnation of the so-called "Muslim Ban"⁶⁶ on January 2017 that banned entrants from six Muslim-majority countries, Westminster will seek to temper, moderate and placate some of Washington's more hawkish tendencies and attempt to find mutual ground for cooperation. In conjunction, Westminster will look at alternate partners across the world in a bid to increase leverage against Washington where it might require.

63. Hughes, Laura. "Boris Johnson says Britain must 'normalise' its relationship with Russia", The Telegraph, <www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/11/boris-johnson-says-britain-must-normalise-its-relationship-with/>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

64. Stefanini, Sara. "Russian oil company loses challenge to UK sanctions measures", Politico, 28-March-2017, <www.politico.eu/article/rosneft-loses-challenge-to-uk-sanctions-measures/>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

65. Dearden, Lizzie. "RAF Typhoon jets scrambled to intercept Russian bombers circling UK", The Independent, 09-February-2017, <www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/raf-typhoon-jets-scrambled-russian-blackjack-bombers-intercept-north-scotland-lossimouth-conings-by-a7571691.html>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

66. "UK finally makes moves against Trump's Muslim immigration order", The New Arab, 29-January-2017, <<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/1/29/uk-finally-makes-moves-against-trumps-muslim-immigration-order>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

UK's Post-Brexit Relations with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region:

The Gulf:.

The majority of the UK's post-Brexit economic and political agreements will be concentrated in the Gulf Region. This should come as no surprise, as the Gulf countries already make up the majority of Britain's ties in the wider region. Saudi Arabia is Britain's primary trading partner in the Middle East. UK exports of visible goods to Saudi Arabia totalled £7 billion in 2014, with goods exports account for £4.17 billion. Joint ventures between British and Saudi Companies are worth \$11.5 billion, with some 30,000 British nationals living and working in Saudi Arabia⁶⁷. Qatar where the UK is the second biggest oil investor through the Dutch-British firm Royal Dutch Shell comes a close second as the UK's main regional trade partner. In addition, Qatar has been involved and invested in a number of infrastructure and development projects in the UK, including major British firms such as Barclays and Sainsbury as well as the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station and the Heathrow Airport⁶⁸. Similar ties exist with Bahrain – where the UK has a naval base -, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

The UK's ties with the Gulf have remained continuous, stable and not subject to serious shifts in policy. While relations were, at times strained due to the a number of concerns relating to human rights records, extremism and, most recently, the war in Yemen and the resulting civilian death toll and humanitarian conditions. This continuity and stability will make the Gulf a desirable partner for Britain in the post-Brexit era due to the aforementioned preference for political and expediency. Indeed, the British Government has often been accused of defending the abuses perpetrated by the Gulf States or turning a blind eye to them, most notably

67. «Saudi Arabia», Middle East Association, <the-mea.co.uk/countries/saudi-arabia>, [Accessed: 30-March-2017]

68. Packard, Jim; Parker, George. "Qatar lined up for £10bn UK projects fund", Financial Times, 13-March-2013, <<https://www.ft.com/content/0f6c15ca-8c07-11e2-8fcf-00144feabdc0>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

in Bahrain⁶⁹. Even prior to the Brexit vote, economic ties between the UK and the Gulf States were projected to rise. As Brexit will require the UK to build economic and political relations outside Europe to compensate for the potential loss of the common market, it is highly likely that the UK will seek to foster these relations in the Gulf where it already has a solid foundation. This will likely take place despite the Islamophobic undertones of the Brexit vote⁷⁰ as prior bouts of Islamophobia such as after the September 11 or July 7 attacks have had little to no impacts on British-Gulf ties.

North Africa:

The UK's involvement with the North Africa region, consisting of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt has always been a lot more limited compared to the Gulf. Historic, geographical and political factors have always favoured the European powers in the Mediterranean such as Spain, France and Italy in this region⁷¹. Where the UK has been involved, it has often been part of joint ventures or international alliances and sought to limit its footprint. The UK's involvement in the Libyan conflict has ended after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 and it refrained from providing assistance to the EU during the Mediterranean Refugee Crisis that reached crisis point in 2014. Furthermore, some projections for post-Brexit EU politics suggest that the EU will strengthen political and economic ties with North African states to compensate for the loss of the UK⁷². Thus, the relative instability of the region (compared to the Gulf), the heightened competition from other European powers and a lack of historic foundation

69. "Britain won't back UN statement condemning Bahrain's human rights abuses", Russia Today, 02-March-2017, <<https://www.rt.com/uk/379187-un-bahrain-human-rights/>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

70. Kazmi, Zaheer. «Islamophobia and the New Britishness», Foreign Affairs, 02-August-2016, <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-kingdom/2016-08-02/islamophobia-and-new-britishness>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

71. Geri, Maurizio. «From Brexit Towards a New EU-MENA Relationship», The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, <www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/from-brexit-towards-a-new-eu-mena-relationship>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

72. Ibid.

in the region means that the UK will likely de-prioritise the North Africa region in the post-Brexit era.

Turkey:

Turkey's place in the Brexit debate has been a rather contradictory one. The UK has had historically strong relations with Turkey. It is the second biggest exporter of goods from Turkey, coming after Germany, constituting some 8% of its total exports⁷³. The UK has been one of the strongest supporters of Turkey's accession into the EU and Foreign Minister Boris Johnson has been a passionate advocate of Turkish accession⁷⁴.

Despite these close ties, however, Turkey's potential accession into the EU, whether a realistic prospect at the time or not, was became a rallying cry for the Eurosceptic camp. The argument presented was that Turkey, with a population of 76 million, was a risk to the EU demographics and security and the UK should leave to avoid high numbers of Turkish immigrants entering the UK⁷⁵. This argument fed towards the already-existing undercurrent of Islamophobia in the Leave campaign, presenting Turkey as a threat to Britain and "Britishness"⁷⁶. Boris Johnson (then a Member of the Parliament) himself issued a strong criticism bordering on insult at the Turkish President Erdoğan during this period⁷⁷. Given the aforementioned anti-immigrant sentiments present among leave voters, there is a strong argument that the threat of Turkey joining the EU may have swayed the vote.

73. "The World Factbook: Turkey", Central Intelligence Agency, <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html#Econ>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

74. Johnson, Boris, "Let Turkey In", The Spectator, 16-November-2002 <archive.spectator.co.uk/article/16th-november-2002/7/let-turkey-in>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

75. Boffey, Daniel; Helm, Toby. "Vote Leave embroiled in race row over Turkey security threat claims", The Guardian, 22-May-2016, <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/21/vote-leave-prejudice-turkey-eu-security-threat>>, [Accessed 24-March-2017]

76. Kazmi, Zaheer. «Islamophobia and the New Britishness», Foreign Affairs, 02-August-2016, <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-kingdom/2016-08-02/islamophobia-and-new-britishness>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

77. Weise, Zia. "Boris Johnson praises his <Turkish washing machine> as he attempts to woo Erdogan in Ankara", The Telegraph, <www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/27/boris-johnson-praises-his-beautiful-turkish-washing-machine-as-h/>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

And yet, despite being presented as a threat to the values of the EU and the UK, the post-Brexit British Government was keen to restore economic and political ties with Turkey, which had experienced its own upheaval in the form of an attempted coup on July 2016. Johnson ignored the mounting accusations towards Erdoğan that he was using the coup as an excuse to detain and silence political opponents⁷⁸. Visiting Turkey in September 2016, he instead advocated that the UK and Turkey enter a Free Trade Agreement⁷⁹.

The contradictory and fluid stance of British politicians towards the UK makes it difficult to predict how relations between the two countries will develop in the post-Brexit era. However, since 2016, the British Government has not only remained relatively quiet regarding the accusations of coup-related human rights abuses in Turkey, but has also remained quiet after relations between Turkey and the EU began to deteriorate rapidly after a pro-Erdoğan demonstration in Netherlands was suppressed⁸⁰.

Despite hostile rhetoric during the Brexit campaign, Johnson's diplomatic overtures towards Turkey have likely paid off and the relations between the two countries have been relatively stable. With both countries now facing an acrimonious relationship with the EU, building up a partnership would be of both political and economic benefit to both countries, allowing them to exert joint pressure upon the EU on a variety of issues. However, there remains significant suspicion towards Ankara among the British public and a large number of British politicians. Thus, Westminster will need to manage its partnership with Turkey carefully to avoid a backlash.

78. Wintour, Patrick. «British MPs say Turkish president using attempted coup to suppress human rights», The Guardian, 25-March-2017, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/25/british-mps-say-turkish-president-using-attempted-coup-to-suppress-human-rights>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

79. Weise, Zia. “Boris Johnson praises his ‘Turkish washing machine’ as he attempts to woo Erdogan in Ankara”, The Telegraph, <www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/27/boris-johnson-praises-his-beautiful-turkish-washing-machine-as-h/>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

80. Yazsıl, Cemal, “Why is Turkey in a row with the Netherlands?”, The New Statesman, 14-March-2017, <www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/2017/03/why-turkey-row-netherlands>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

Iraq:

As one of the main participants of the invasion in 2003 that deposed Saddam Hussein, the UK has had a significant political and military presence in Iraq, primarily around the city of Basra. Much of the UK's post-2003 approach towards Iraq has been shaped by the circumstances that led to the war as well as its aftermath⁸¹. The movement against British participation in the 2003 war was a lot more vocal and stronger in the UK compared to the US and many in the movement felt their resistance was vindicated after the US-led coalition failed to find any weapons of mass destruction. As a result, the UK was keen to reduce its presence in Iraq as quickly as possible and focus on reconstruction efforts and humanitarian assistance. Although the British troops were based in Basra, the majority of the reconstruction efforts were concentrated around the Kurdistan Region⁸².

British troops left in 2011 but returned after the Islamic State (IS) took large parts of the country's north in 2014. However, much of the British involvement were limited to advisors and airstrikes, making less than 10% of the anti-IS coalition. In general, Westminster followed Washington's policy and military direction during the war against the IS⁸³. Instead, the majority of the work conducted by the British Government in Iraq has been focused on humanitarian matters. Since 2014, the UK donated over £60 million in humanitarian aid to Iraq. Part of this money was spent to provide victims with essential help, on "emergency life-saving support" with the help of the UN and various NGOs and to help people in winter 2014 by providing them with winter essentials and cash assistance⁸⁴.

81. "The United Kingdom's Policy Towards Iraq", Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies, December 2015, <www.bayancenter.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/The-UK.pdf>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

82. Ibid

83. Ibid

84. "Iraq Crisis: UK Humanitarian Response Factsheet", British Government, 8-September-2015, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/iraq-crisis-uk-humanitarian-response-factsheet>>, [Accessed 24-March-2017]

Despite the conflict, the British Government increased the level of economic cooperation with Iraq after 2014. In 2015, The UK's then-Energy Minister Andrea Leadsom expressed desire for Iraq to become a “partner of choice” for the UK and highlighted that Shell had recently signed a Heads of Agreement to build an \$11bn petrochemical plant in Basra which would be one of the largest in the world and generate around 40,000 to 50,000 jobs⁸⁵.

However, the Brexit vote and the subsequent leadership shuffle has witnessed Leadsom being reassigned to the position of Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Her ministry has since been rolled into the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy lead by Greg Clark. Clark has not yet made any regarding the UK's commitments in Iraq or referenced to any of Leadsom's pledges.

As a result of these changes, it is challenging to project and predict the UK's policy towards Iraq in the post-Brexit era. Historically, the UK kept its footprint in Iraq limited to a security-centric approach and following the US' lead with regards to political decisions. With Brexit negotiations taking much of Westminster's resources, it will likely reduce its footprint even more, delegating much of the responsibilities to the US once the war against the IS ends. However, its investments in Basra during the 2014-2015 period suggests that when provided with the right incentives, the UK is willing to deepen its economic involvement in Iraq and invest in Iraqi infrastructure and industries.

Unknown Factors That Can Impact UK's Post-Brexit Foreign Policy:

Due to the lack of clarity and preparation surrounding the Brexit policy-making and negotiation process, many of the UK's post-Brexit policies are mired in unknowns. Despite the lack of clarity, past and present trends and existing relations can help project and predict the future of British foreign policy. However, there remain two major events whose

85. «Iraqi Petroleum Conference», The British Government, 09-June-2015, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/iraqi-petroleum-conference-2015>>, [Accessed 24-March-2017]

outcomes remain difficult to predict: The Scottish Independence debate and the upcoming European elections. The outcomes of both of these events are highly variable and will have significant knock-on effects on the future of the Brexit negotiations and the British foreign policy.

The Scottish Independence Debate and the Prospect of Welsh and Northern Irish Independence:

Scottish independence refers to the goal of a variety of Scotland-based political parties and advocacy groups to form an independent sovereign state. The independence movement has experienced bouts of popularity throughout history but has gained traction since the mid-20th Century due to the efforts of the Scottish National Party (SNP). Since then, the SNP has pushed for Scotland to be given increased autonomy to manage its own affairs, culminating in a referendum in 2014. The referendum, which was an election promise of the SNP, sought to determine whether the Scottish people sought to become an independent nation or remain as part of the United Kingdom. The campaign to remain in the United Kingdom won with 55% of the vote.

The Brexit referendum of 2016 and its outcome to leave the EU reignited the calls for Scottish Independence on grounds that when Scotland voted to remain part of the UK in 2014, it did so under the impression that an independent Scotland would not be able to enter the EU⁸⁶. Scottish voters, who have voted for the UK to remain in the EU with a significant majority, now found themselves leaving the EU anyways. The SNP therefore argued that the circumstances that prevailed in 2014 and led Scottish voters to vote to remain in the UK no longer applied⁸⁷. Since the calls for a second referendum emerged, Prime Minister Theresa May has sought to calm the mood down, promising increased devaluation of powers to Scotland,

86. Clegg, David. "Independence referendum: Euro bigwig Jose Manuel Barroso delivers fresh blow to Yes campaign", The Daily Record, 11-August-2014, <www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/independence-referendum-ec-president-jose-3154114>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

87. "SNP Manifesto", the Scottish National Party, 2016, <https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/thesnp/pages/5540/attachments/original/1461935515/SNP_Manifesto2016_-_ER.pdf?1461935515>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

Northern Ireland and Wales. However, SNP's leader Nicola Sturgeon has pledged to press ahead with the referendum⁸⁸.

Sturgeon's call elicited similar calls from politicians from Northern Ireland and Wales⁸⁹. In Northern Ireland, where the majority also voted to remain in the EU, the calls for an independence referendum were motivated by fears that the limiting border access with the UK could end instituting border controls between Ireland and Northern Ireland. Such controls have not existed since the Protestant-Catholic conflicts in Northern Ireland ended and their removal was hailed as a dividend of the peace process⁹⁰. The Northern Irish independence movement received a further boost when Brexit Secretary David Davis stated that Northern Ireland would not need to re-apply to the EU if it joined Ireland, which is already an EU member⁹¹.

In Wales, the calls for a Welsh independence were made despite that the majority of Wales voted to leave the EU alongside England. Following the referendum, the head of the Welsh-nationalist political party Plaid Cymru, Leanne Wood, claimed that a Scottish independence vote would "lead to the end of the UK as a state" and said "in that situation Wales would need to decide its own future"⁹². Unlike Scottish and Northern Irish politicians, however, Welsh politicians have not so far taken any significant steps that would lay the legal foundations of an independence referendum.

88. Carrell, Severin, "Scottish independence: Sturgeon to press on with referendum", The Guardian, 29- March-2017, <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/mar/29/scottish-independence-sturgeon-to-press-on-with-referendum>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

89. Batchelor, Tom. "Nicola Sturgeon's referendum call prompts demands for Welsh and Northern Irish independence votes", The Independent, 13-March-2017, <www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/wales-northern-ireland-independence-campaign-nicola-sturgeon-scottish-independence-demand-speech-a7627861.html>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

90. Ibid

91. "Northern Ireland 'can rejoin EU after Brexit if it votes for reunification'", The Independent, 27-March-2017, <www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-northern-ireland-can-rejoin-eu-reunification-david-davis-stormont-a7653346.html>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

92. Batchelor, Tom. "Nicola Sturgeon's referendum call prompts demands for Welsh and Northern Irish independence votes", The Independent, 13-March-2017, <www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/wales-northern-ireland-independence-campaign-nicola-sturgeon-scottish-independence-demand-speech-a7627861.html>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

Thus, what began as calls for Scottish independence has the potential to completely disintegrate the United Kingdom as a country, leaving behind only England as an independent entity. Such disintegration would severely diminish Westminster's ability to negotiate with the EU and reduce its ability to project economic and political power around the world, potentially preventing it from building up any substantial trade relations in the post-Brexit era. Moreover, Scotland claims the territories that cover the UK's North Sea oil fields⁹³. Although oil prices have been chronically low over the past two years due to the global oil glut and the resultant low oil prices, their loss would nevertheless be a blow to England, depriving it of its main source of native oil and forcing it to import more oil. The economic impacts of such a development could potentially be catastrophic.

Thus, the Scottish Independence referendum represents one of the great unknowns of the post-Brexit era. In the event of a referendum, the likelihood that the outcome will favour Scotland leaving the UK is almost certain. If that was to happen, Northern Ireland and Wales would definitely attempt to replicate Scotland's success. Thus, the question is not what the outcome of the referendum will be but whether Prime Minister May will be able to prevent it from taking place in the first place.

European Elections in France and Italy:

It has become commonplace to argue that the Brexit vote in the UK and the election of Donald Trump in the US represented the burgeoning nationalist populist movements sweeping the West. It has been argued that this movement materialised out of a desire to shake the establishment parties that were viewed as corrupt and complacent. The rise of figures such as Nigel Farage in the UK, Norbert Hofer in Austria, Marine Le Pen in France, Geert Wilders in Netherlands, Alternativ Für Deutschland Partei in Germany and the Five Star Movement in Italy were all portrayed as part

93. Chapman, Ben. "Scotland North Sea oil revenues collapse by nearly 100% to re-ignite independence debate", The Independent, 24-August-2016, <www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/scotland-north-sea-oil-97-per-cent-148bn-budget-deficit-scottish-independence-nicola-sturgeon-a7207756.html>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

of the same anti-establishment current with a populist appeal⁹⁴.

As of March 2017, the elections in Austria and Netherlands have concluded, with Hofer⁹⁵ and Wilders⁹⁶ losing out. In the UK, UKIP failed to capitalise on its Brexit success, becoming fractured due to internal divisions⁹⁷. Pre-election polls are turning consistently-low numbers for Alternativ Für Deutschland Partei in Germany⁹⁸. And in the US, Donald Trump's popularity levels have reached new lows⁹⁹. Amidst these developments, one could argue that the wave of nationalist populism is crawling back. However, elections that are due to take place in France and Italy have the potential to reinvigorate the Eurosceptic movements across Europe.

In Italy, the Five Star Movement has emerged as the main opposition party against the ruling center-left Democratic Party, gaining control of Rome during the municipal elections and most recent polls show that it has surged past Italy's mainstream parties. The Five Star Movement is a curious example in that unlike the other parties listed, it lacks a clear ideology, defining itself solely on its anti-establishment credentials. Amidst a stagnating economy, rising unemployment and growing disenchantment with the political mainstream, this strategy has been fairly effective¹⁰⁰. Although the party has suffered from internal divisions due to its eclectic

94. Kellner, Peter. "Peak Populism, Perhaps", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 06-March-2017, <carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=68183>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

95. "Stimmenstärkste Kandidaten pro Bundesland", Bundesministerium Für Inneres, 2016, <wahl16.bmi.gv.at>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

96. Matthews, Alex; Robinson, Martin. "Dutch PM says people rejected 'wrong sort of populism after Brexit and Trump' as he beats far right MP Geert Wilders by 13 seats in election", Daily Mail, 15-March-2017, <www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4315374/Europe-braced-NEXIT.html>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

97. Kellner, Peter. "Peak Populism, Perhaps", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 06-March-2017, <carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=68183>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

98. Ibid

99. Bryan, Bob, "Trump's approval ratings crater even further after 'Trumpcare' debacle", UK Business Insider, 29-March-2017, <uk.businessinsider.com/poll-trump-approval-rating-ahca-2017-3?r=US&IR=T>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

100. "A Warning Sent to Italy's Ruling Party", Stratfor, 06-June-2017, <<https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/warning-sent-italys-ruling-party>>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

composition, its anti-establishment stance tinted with Euroscepticism has remained popular. Meanwhile, the expressively pro-EU candidates such as Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano are struggling to retain votes¹⁰¹.

In France where the Marine Le Pen far right National Front is running elections, things are a lot more precarious. Unlike the Five Star Movement, Le Pen positioned herself expressively as a xenophobic, ethno-nationalist with an Islamophobic platform and an anti-EU bent. She has not only congratulated the Brexit outcome but voiced intent to replicate it in France¹⁰². Polls estimating Le Pen's chances to win have kept her either ahead, or close to her closest contender, Emmanuel Macron¹⁰³.

The outcome of either the Five Star Movement or the National Front winning the elections would have significant implications for the EU. With Italy suffering from heavy unemployment and a looming banking crisis, the Five Star Movement would either pressure the EU to provide a bailout or set up a referendum for Italy's exit from the EU. In France, an election win by the National Front is expected to sabotage the EU's negotiations with the UK to harm EU interests as much as possible before finally pulling France out of the union¹⁰⁴. Although the outcome of Le Pen winning is a lot more harmful to the EU, both outcomes would have significant impacts on European Unity. For the UK, a fractured Europe would provide limited resistance to the concessions it demands, thus providing it with a much smoother avenue of negotiations. However, in the medium-to-long run, a destabilised Europe would be to the detriment of the UK as well. As such,

101. Surana, Kavitha. "Europe Has a New Defender in Italy", Foreign Policy Magazine, 20-March-2017, <foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/europe-has-a-new-defender-in-italy-populism-trump-berlusconi-pro-european-union-eu-brexit/>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

102. Traub, James. "Marine Le Pen Is Donald Trump Without the Crazy", Foreign Policy Magazine, 16-February-2017, <foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/16/marine-le-pen-is-donald-trump-without-the-crazy-front-national/>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

103. "Macron holds edge in French election race ahead of first debate", Reuters, 19-March-2017, <www.reuters.com/article/us-france-election-idUSKBN16Q0J8>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

104. Traub, James. "Marine Le Pen Is Donald Trump Without the Crazy", Foreign Policy Magazine, 16-February-2017, <foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/16/marine-le-pen-is-donald-trump-without-the-crazy-front-national/>, [Accessed 30-March-2017]

though the nationalist populist candidates have been defeated or otherwise lost popularity across much of the West, the Italian and French elections still have the potential to cause significant challenges.

Conclusion

The United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU has caught many observers, analysts, members of the public and politicians unprepared, scrambling to respond to the rapid escalation of hostile rhetoric between different sides of the debates. As a result of the British Government itself being unprepared for the negotiations and remaining generally tight-lipped about the negotiating process and future policies of the British Government, outside observers have been forced to draw predictions and trajectories based on historic relations, pre-existing trends and future indicators.

In analysing these trends and indicators, this paper has concluded that the British foreign policy in the post-Brexit era will be a lot more inward looking as the British Government mobilises to meet internal challenges associated with Brexit. The next two years, in particular, will see the British Government putting all its energies into getting a positive outcome from its negotiations with the EU and retaining as many rights as possible with regards to trade, immigration and border control.

While doing so, the British Government will need to keep in mind the public sentiments that have led to the Brexit vote: Immigration, economic stagnation, dissatisfaction with the establishment that is perceived to be elitist and a fear that supranational organisations such as the EU do not have the interests of ordinary people at heart.

In conjunction, the British Government will be forced to deal with the independence calls within its own body, with regards to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, ensuring that they remain part of the wider UK. Should the independence of these parts take place, Westminster, now controlling England alone, will find itself constrained severely in economic and political terms.

As a result, the British Government will shift its priorities in foreign policy towards a more pragmatic direction, favouring political and economic expediency. It will build up on established relations in the Gulf, attempting to build relations with global powers such as China while retaining and improving the “special relationship” with the US. Its relations with a number of countries, such as Turkey and Iraq, are mired in rapid shifts and contradictions and it will be difficult to determine how they progress. In recognising the UK’s interests and preferred outcomes, these countries can engineer a foreign policy that is more favourable to them.

In the meanwhile, Eurosceptic and anti-establishment parties and movements across the EU will continue to make waves. Although their candidates have been defeated in Netherlands and Austria and will likely be defeated in Germany, the popularity they gained should not be underestimated. They still remain potent in France and Italy where elections near and the outcomes of these elections will have a significant impact on how the EU behaves. While a weaker EU will provide short-term benefits to the UK, sustained instability and the spill-over of the instability will cause detriments to the UK in the medium-to-long term.

Regardless of the outcome, the following two years which will witness the EU’s negotiations with the UK over Brexit will take the world into unfamiliar territories in foreign policy making.