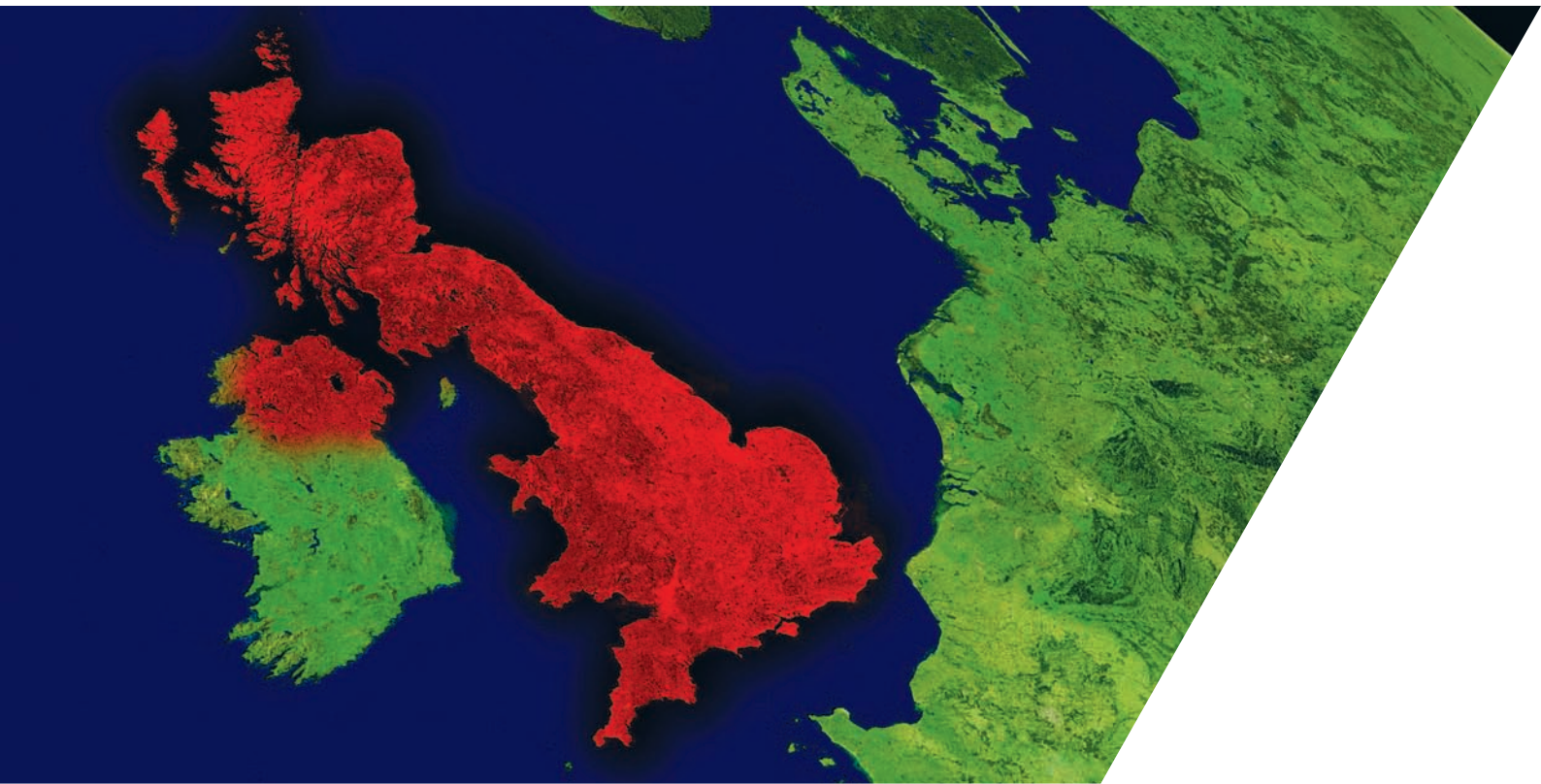


DEFENDING EUROPE: “GLOBAL BRITAIN” AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN GEOPOLITICS

BY JAMES ROGERS



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**GLOBAL
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For centuries the basis for the protection of the interests of Britain has been the need to ensure that the continent of Europe is not dominated by a power that is unfriendly to us. That was the basis of opposition to France in the time of Louis XIV and XV and of Napoleon Bonaparte, and to Germany under Kaiser Wilhelm II and Hitler. It is the fundamental reason why we have welcomed the foundation of NATO, the threat from Germany having been replaced by that of the Soviet Union. Throughout our history a rival view of the priority for our strategy has been urged: that we should turn our backs on the continent and concentrate our efforts on securing trading advantage and access to raw materials across the oceans, in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, the South and Western Atlantic. That strategy brought some significant successes, as well as notable failures; but it has never been able to preserve our fundamental interests and security, if alliances on the continent of Europe have failed us.

- Field Marshal Lord Carver, 1981*

* Field Marshal Lord Carver, 'Getting Defence Priorities Right', cited in: Baylis, J., *Alternative Approaches to British Defence Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1983), p. 76.

Executive Summary

1. The decision of the United Kingdom (UK) to leave the European Union (EU) has thrown a curveball on to the pitch of European geopolitics, on several different levels.
2. This decision threatens to upend a 70-year geopolitical system that binds together two geostrategic orders. The first began in 1948 with the signing of the Treaty of Brussels, leading to the Five-Power Pact and ultimately the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), creating an “Atlantic order”. The second began with the “Schuman Plan” in 1950, leading ultimately to today’s EU. The UK initiated the first and joined the second – albeit two decades later in 1973. However, through its dual membership, Britain ensured that European integration would remain little more than a “subsystem” within the wider Atlantic order.
3. However, just as the UK has opted to leave the EU, geopolitics on the European mainland has begun to intensify, with the destabilising revisionism of Russia, the emergence of China at the fringes of Europe, the changing domestic politics and international priorities of the US, and the re-emergence of competition to (re)define the EU on the part of France and Germany.
4. Britain’s decision to leave the EU threatens to create new opportunities for those who wish to decouple the European subsystem, either in whole or part, from the wider Atlantic order, and develop alternative “autonomous” structures.
5. While this does not mean that the UK and the EU are necessarily bound to compete, it does mean that the UK – as one of the strongest European countries – ought to do more to ensure that the Atlantic order is upheld, regenerating for a new geopolitical context the geostrategic architecture that has brought peace and prosperity to a European mainland long prone to discord and war.
6. Thus, as part of “Global Britain”, the UK would do well to seize the initiative, in the same way as it did 70 years ago with the formation of the Five-Power Pact. As it leaves the EU, the UK ought to initiate a new project to encourage its European NATO allies to do more to uphold their own security, while ensuring that the EU remains aligned to the wider Atlantic order, which will remain fundamental to European geopolitics.

1. Introduction

Although now largely forgotten and redundant, the Treaty of Brussels was agreed between the United Kingdom (UK) and four Western European countries on 17 March 1948, making 2018 its seventieth anniversary. Officially known as the Western Union Defence Organisation, this Five-Power Pact bound France, the Low Countries – Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg – and the UK to three explicit objectives: firstly, to “fortify and preserve ... democracy, personal freedom and political liberty” in Western Europe; secondly, to “afford assistance ... in resisting any policy of aggression” in the event of an attack on any member; and, thirdly, to “associate progressively in the pursuance of these aims other States inspired by the same ideals and animated by the like determination”.¹ Thus, with strong bipartisan support in the Houses of Parliament, the Brussels treaty began the envelopment of what would eventually become vast swathes of the European mainland in “democratic geopolitics”, founded on liberal principles and constitutional structures, first envisaged with the Atlantic Charter of 1941.² It would finally put an end to Germany’s violent attempts at national aggrandisement, starting with the Franco-Prussian War during the late nineteenth century and ending with the Second World War in the mid-twentieth. It can also be seen as the foundation for the emergence of all subsequent Atlantic institutional arrangements, including the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty, which gave rise to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and the 1954 Modified Treaty of Brussels, which allowed for the creation of the now-defunct Western European Union (WEU). And insofar as the European Union (EU) and its predecessors – which the UK joined in 1973 – sheltered under the umbrella of both alliances before effectively absorbing the essential provisions of the Modified Treaty of Brussels through the 2007 Treaty of Lisbon, the Five-Power Pact also helped facilitate the project of European integration.

To no small extent, this Five-Power Pact was about more than the establishment of a new alliance: it was also about the construction of a new order on the European mainland, with the UK at its heart. But this was just the start of a new project for Britain, which would eventually envelop the entire North Atlantic area and incorporate a range of different components. This “defence system” would alter Britain’s place both globally and in relation to Europe, insofar as it would involve – as it did – the reorientation of the entire national defence effort, away from the wider world and the remnants of the rapidly contracting British Empire and towards the defence of the UK’s European allies on the River Rhine, if not the River Elbe. This defence system gradually came to incorporate three critical components:

¹ “‘The Brussels Treaty’, Treaty of Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defence’, *NATO* [17 March 1948], 1 October 2009, available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17072.htm, last visited: 8 March 2018.

² On the day of the treaty’s signing, 17 March 1948, both Prime Minister Clement Attlee and the Leader of the House of Lords announced their approval in their respective chambers. In the Prime Minister’s words, “At this moment, in Brussels ... the Foreign Secretary has just signed a treaty which provides for economic, social, cultural and defensive collaboration between the five Western European Powers, namely Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France and the United Kingdom. This is indeed no ordinary treaty. It is not an alliance based on self-interest and fear; it is rather an association of likeminded neighbours who, engaged jointly in shaping their way towards some closer social, and indeed spiritual, integration, base themselves on the essential similarity of their civilisations and solemnly pledge on paper their common obligations and their common intentions alike.” House of Commons Debate, 17 March 1948, vol. 448, cc2137-8, *Hansard*, available at: http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1948/mar/17/western-european-powers-treaty#S5CV0448PO_19480317_HOC_383, last visited: 8 March 2018. Or, in the Marquess of Salisbury’s words, “This ... is a great and, it may be, an historic occasion. It marks the recognition of the identity of friendly interest between those nations who to-day constitute the core of Western civilisation. They have the same history and the same traditions, and their future welfare and prosperity, both in Europe and outside, is, inevitably, closely linked. I hope that this is only the first step, the prelude to a wider combination.” House of Lords Debate, 17 March 1948, vol. 154, cc926-8, *Hansard*, available at: http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1948/mar/17/treaty-with-western-european-powers#S5LV0154PO_19480317_HOL_57, last visited: 8 March 2018.

1. The eventual successors of the Five-Power Pact, NATO and the WEU, which would draw together the resources and power of the British Isles and North America, before permanently “tethering” them to the European mainland, particularly those countries with market economies and broadly constitutional structures;
2. A large British (as well as American and Canadian) military commitment to West Germany and a handful of other European countries; and,
3. UK membership of the European Economic Community (EEC), later the European Community and then the EU, which started out as a French-German-led project to generate a subsystem within Western Europe to enhance their own leverage, but which the UK eventually joined as a leading participant.

Thus, in the 30 years after the Second World War, the UK’s geopolitical orientation changed fundamentally: located just a stone’s throw from the European mainland, the UK has always been a European country, but during this period it became a permanently engaged European power, which, with its North American allies, came to undergird the defence of Europe.³ Indeed, aside from gaining access to a new centre of economic gravity, the UK’s rationale for seeking admission into the EEC was so it could shape the policies and preferences of this exclusive Western European project. For not only did Britain, alongside its North American allies, define the groundwork – NATO – on which the European integration depended, but it also began, with its European partners, to shape its particular rules. In other words, the UK ensured that the European subsystem of the Atlantic order was permanently subordinated. Thus, as the leading European power since the end of the Second World War, the UK has been central to the geopolitical construction of the prevailing order in Europe, and across many levels.⁴

There is a serious risk that, as the UK withdraws from the EU, the EU (and/or its leading member states) either may decide to enact rules that might (indirectly) damage the wider order on which it depends or, even, might seek to wrest control of the foundations on which it was built. Put another way, Britain will no longer be able to prevent so readily policies or initiatives that it dislikes or perceives will destabilise NATO, or the wider Atlantic order of which it is part. This problem may be further compounded by the fact that, as they have grown, these different structures – NATO and the EU – have developed their own narratives, which do not necessarily sit easily with one another. For NATO, the post-war European peace has been the result of the strategic (and nuclear) guarantee, provided by the UK and the US, as demonstrated by Article 5 in the North Atlantic Treaty; while for the EU, peace is the result of the members’ agreement to forge supranational rules and institutions that constrain their national capacity to wage war against one another, to such an extent that armed conflict becomes unthinkable.⁵

This report will argue that the UK, as it withdraws from the EU, should seize the initiative and (re)capture the narrative, as it did with the Treaty of Brussels, to ensure that it retains pervasive

³ For a good overview of Britain’s European policy, see Simms, B., *Britain’s Europe: A Thousand Years of Conflict and Cooperation* (London: Allen Lane, 2016).

⁴ Brendan Simms, Professor of the History of International Relations at the University of Cambridge, puts it like this: “The UK played and plays a unique role in the [European] system. It is not in any meaningful sense ‘equal’ to the other states of the ‘club’ [the EU] that it is leaving. Over the past three centuries ... Britain has been central to the European order, far more than any other power. This remains true today, because the EU depends entirely on NATO, of which Britain is the dominant European member, for its security. The EU may be a club and it can make whatever rules it likes, but it should never forget that the Anglo-Americans own the freehold of the property on which the club is built. Brussels and the continental capitals are at best leaseholders, and in many cases just tenants of this order. Put another way, the UK is not just another European ‘space’ to be ordered, but one of the principal ordering powers of the continent.” Simms, B., ‘The world after Brexit’, *New Statesman*, 1 March 2017, available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/2017/03/world-after-brexite>, last visited: 8 March 2018.

⁵ Williams, A., ‘How valid is the claim that the EU has delivered peace in Europe?’, *New Statesman*, 9 May 2016, available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/2016/05/how-valid-claim-eu-has-delivered-peace-europe>, last visited: 29 March 2019.

influence as a European “ordering power”, and thus remains a lynchpin in the defence of Europe. It will therefore assert, from a geopolitical standpoint, that insofar as the UK is withdrawing from the EU, the British government should communicate more clearly how the Leave vote was not against Europe, but for the renewal of Europe, making it more suited to survival and prosperity in the new global geopolitical age. As such, this report will argue that, as it leaves the EU, a “Global Britain” will need a robust regional geostrategy to shape its own neighbourhood in a way that is compatible with the country’s geopolitical perspective, while simultaneously upholding the Atlantic orientation of the European mainland. If seen through this prism, Brexit has the potential to become less an act of national self-harm, as its critics would allege, and more an act of national and European revival: by ensuring that it remains a keystone in the defence of Europe, even in a new geopolitical context, the UK has now a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reanimate Europe after years of stagnation. In short, through a new defence initiative affiliated to NATO, the UK could ensure the continued alignment of the European subsystem with the wider Atlantic order, underpinned by the principles of the Atlantic Charter.

2. The Old Geopolitics of Europe

Before the present can be understood, it is necessary to identify the structures and trends of the past, for those structures and trends still influence the geopolitics of Europe. These include the geographic foundations on which the major European powers are based and the geostrategic approaches they have adopted to “order” their respective regions, not least since the last great geopolitical rupture, namely Germany’s wars of national expansion and aggrandisement (i.e., the struggles of the French-Prussian War and the Second World War).

Map 1: The geography of the European power bases



2.1 Europe’s Bases of Geopolitical Power

As Map 1 shows, there are four centres of geopolitical power in contemporary Europe, which – according to The Henry Jackson Society’s ‘Audit of Geopolitical Capability’ – underpin, even today, four of the eight most geopolitically capable countries in the

world.⁶ Three of these bases of power sit on the European Plain, a vast belt of lowlands running diagonally from the English Channel, across the Low Countries (the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg), Northern Germany and Poland, before diffusing into the Eurasian steppe.⁷ The drainage basin of the River Seine, the basin of the River Rhine and the adjacent basins of the Rivers Don and Volga have proven particularly productive, to such an extent that they acted as cradles for the emergence of Paris, Moscow and a series of cities running along an axis from Essen to Frankfurt as the respective cores of France, Germany and Russia.⁸ Meanwhile, located just off the north-western tip of the European continent, Great Britain – the largest island in the British Isles, with its fertile lowlands and surrounding uplands enriched with raw materials – has provided the seat for the fourth great European geopolitical power base, over which the UK has long been ascendant. Through geographic design, these four countries have become – and have the potential to remain – the strongest European powers. They are surrounded by considerably smaller nations, in regions once known as “crunch zones” or, even, “bloodlands”, which have often tended to create a kind of geopolitical vacuum, drawing the major powers in.⁹

However, the four European power bases are not in any way equal in geopolitical orientation, geostrategic outlook or political character. This point was captured aptly more than 200 years ago by Captain Charles Pasley, who penned the first modern British geostrategic text:

To nations that have a land frontier, their exertions will be farther stimulated by the necessity of subduing or of being subdued. This was the case with the Romans, and has been the case with the French. The same necessity has acted upon us, in prosecuting our object, but in a different way. As we had no land frontier, and the popular sentiment has always, at least since we had any claim to the title of a free people, been against standing armies; the maintenance of a naval superiority was not only a favorite [sic] object of policy, but, by degrees, became the only safeguard of our existence as a state.¹⁰

Indeed, in terms of self-defence, the geography of the major European powers has had a pervasive impact on their geopolitical orientation. To protect their porous, transient frontiers, Germany and Russia – both essentially landlocked and exposed on the European Plain – were drawn towards “terrestrial” orientations, maintaining large standing armies and static fortification systems.¹¹ Meanwhile, France, with its coastal borders along the Atlantic Ocean to the west and Mediterranean Sea to the south, was instinctively more “amphibious”, but its location alongside Germany and Russia on the European Plain compelled it, in the final instance, towards a more “terrestrial” predilection.¹² Meanwhile, the UK – an island nation, with fixed coastal borders – emerged, once the Celtic peripheries had been integrated into a singular political formation, as a quintessential “maritime” power.¹³

⁶ Rogers, J., ‘An Audit of Geopolitical Capability: A Comparison of Eight Major Powers’, *The Henry Jackson Society* (2017), available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/An-audit-of-geopolitical-capabilities-part-1.pdf>, last visited: 8 March 2018.

⁷ For more on the relative importance of this area’s geographic aspect, see: Diamond, J., *Guns, Germs and Steel: A short history of everybody for the last 13,000 years* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2005 [1997]).

⁸ Spykman, N. J., ‘Geography and Foreign Policy, I’, *The American Political Science Review* 32.1 (1938), pp. 35-36.

⁹ The term “bloodlands” was used by Timothy Snyder as the title of his book on the Baltic region during the Second World War: Snyder, T., *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Vintage, 2011). For an overview of the implications of a geopolitical vacuum, see: Grygiel, J., ‘Vacuum Wars’, *The American Interest*, 1 July 2009, available at: <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2009/07/01/vacuum-wars/>, last visited: 10 May 2018.

¹⁰ Pasley, C. W., *The Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire* (London: Edmund Lloyd, 1810), p. 111.

¹¹ Most of Russia’s northern coastline is surrounded by ice for much of the year, while what remains – on the Pacific, the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea – is either too distant from the Don-Volga power base or is part of an enclosed sea, blocked by maritime powers. Spykman, N. J., ‘Geography and Foreign Policy, II’, *The American Political Science Review* 32.2 (1938): pp. 219-222, 230.

¹² Only when France developed the *force de frappe* in the 1960s did the River Rhine lose its geopolitical salience. Until then, France obsessed over its north-eastern flank. Klinker, I. and B. Perombelon, ‘Notes on the Desecuritisation of the Rhineland Frontier’, *Geopolitics* 20.4 (2015): pp. 1-17. See also Spykman N. J., ‘Geography and Foreign Policy, II’, *The American Political Science Review* 32.2 (1938), p. 220.

Owing to their superior resources, and in keeping with their specific geopolitical orientations, the major European powers – whether “terrestrial” or “maritime” – have all attempted to shape, structure and, ultimately, *order* their surrounding regions (i.e., the “crunch zones”) to extend their security beyond simple self-defence. As Box 1 shows, geostrategic order leans towards one of two ideal forms: either “positive” or “negative”. This classification accounts for the way in which some orders (“positive”) are based on the pursuit of the progressive assimilation and integration of surrounding countries, while others (“negative”) are based on the production and maintenance of permanent, but partial, fragmentation. And to be clear, this classification has nothing to do with the morality or desirability of a specific order, nor with the fact that each kind of order can involve the diffusion of certain values and norms or the creation of common institutions by the ordering power. Nor does it attempt to capture the fact that some orders are more “imperial”, while others are more “suzerain”, even if the former might be more “positive” and whereas the latter might accrue a more “negative” flavour.¹⁴

So just as geographic location has shaped the major European powers’ geopolitical orientation, so too has it drawn them towards the implementation and extension of geostrategic order. Owing to their lack of natural borders, “terrestrial” powers have tended towards the establishment of “positive” orders. As Catherine the Great is rumoured to have once said, “I have no means to defend my borders, but to extend them.”¹⁵ This idea captures neatly Russia’s – and the Soviet Union’s – many attempts to expand and uphold a transcontinental imperium stretching from the River Elbe to the Pacific Ocean. It can be seen in the successive attempts by France to establish hegemony over Western Europe, ultimately in the form of Napoleon’s “Continental System”. And it can also be seen in Imperial Germany’s fascination with *Mitteleuropa* [“Middle Europe”] in Central and Eastern Europe and the Third Reich’s attempt to create a “New Order”, comprising so-called *lebensraum* [“living space”], stretching from the Atlantic coast to the Ural Mountains.¹⁶

However, the more “insular” a country, the more likely it is to favour a “negative” order. Save for its small frontier with the Republic of Ireland, the UK – as a well-defined “positive” order in its own right – has only firmly defined coastal borders, encapsulating a distinct geographic space.¹⁷ “Maritime” powers therefore tend not to defend their borders by extending them,

¹³ As the UK newspaper *The Morning Post* noted during the height of the Napoleonic Wars, “The different position of the two countries [i.e., France and the UK], and the difference of their means and resources, renders a war between them different from a war between any other nations, and gives it some features of a very singular nature. England is a power whose forces are more naval than terrestrial, though not without a considerable terrestrial force also. France is a power more terrestrial than naval, yet not so great in proportion to the navy of Great Britain as the British land forces are to those of France. Thus the two countries, when they go to war, resemble two individuals engaging with arms in some respects alike, and in some different; one has a better sword, the other a surer pistol.” Cited in Davey, J., *In Nelson’s Wake: How the Royal Navy Ruled the Waves after Trafalgar* (Hampshire: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 8.

¹⁴ Spykman tries to explain the very different orders pursued by “maritime” and “terrestrial” powers: “Their differing conceptions of space and of the conquest of space indicate one of the outstanding differences between land and sea powers. A sea power conquers a large space by leaping lightly from point to point, adjusting itself to existing political relationships wherever possible, and often not establishing its legal control until its factual domination has long been tacitly recognized. An expanding land power moves slowly and methodically forward, forced by the nature of its terrain to establish its control step by step and so preserve the mobility of its forces. Thus a land power thinks in terms of continuous surfaces surrounding a central point of control, while a sea power thinks in terms of points and connecting lines dominating an immense territory.” Spykman, N., ‘Geography and Foreign Policy II’, *The American Political Science Review* 32.2 (April 1938), p. 224.

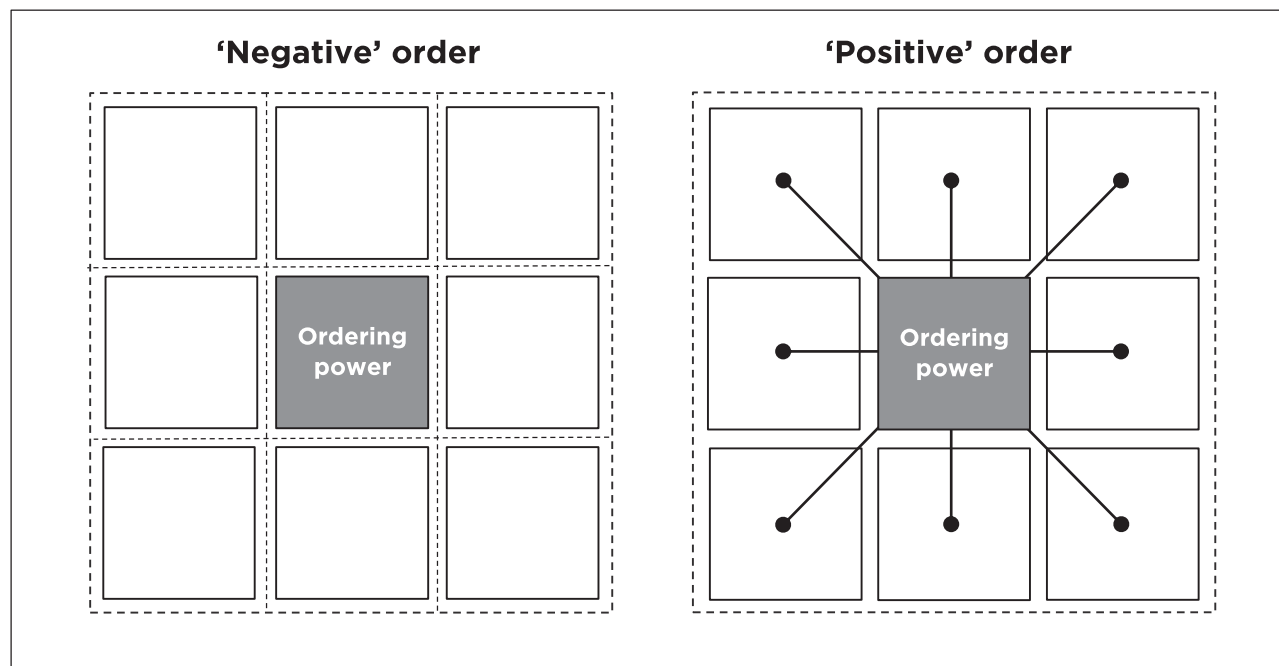
¹⁵ Cited in Cooper, R., *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-first Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2004), p. 78.

¹⁶ For an excellent chapter on Pan-Germanic “living space”, see Smith, W. D., *The Ideological Origins of Nazi Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 83-111.

¹⁷ It is perhaps worth noting that as a single political system took hold on the British Isles, England’s growing disenchantment with continental empire went into steep decline, much dented after France’s victory in the Hundred Years’ War. Moreover, it is worth noting that – alongside this movement – as the as Norman rule mutated into the English monarchy, the barons and clergy moved gradually to constrain unruly autocrats, firstly through the Magna Carta and then with the break with Rome 300 years later, which became a crucial step in the development of the “body politick [sic]” – namely, a British demos, or nation. Guy, J., *Henry VIII: The Quest for Fame* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), pp. 66-71; Whittlesey, D., *The Earth and the State* (New York City: Henry Holt and Company, 1939), p. 101. For an overview of the demise of England’s imperial appetites in Europe, see Armitage, D., ‘The Elizabethan Idea of Empire’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 14.6 (2004): pp. 269-277.

which would force them towards a more “amphibious”, even “terrestrial”, vocation, with all its shortcomings; rather, owing to their insular orientation, they tend to seek control of the sea around them. But this mandates more than merely an overwhelmingly powerful navy; it also requires the “negation” of any nearby “terrestrial” powers, not least their own ordering efforts. The reason for this is simple: a “maritime” power can ill-afford to allow vast swathes of a neighbouring continent to fall under a peer competitor’s “positive” order lest the potential “terrestrial” hegemon turns its greater resources and attention towards contesting its “maritime” peer’s naval superiority.

Box 1: Types of geopolitical order



The geopolitical orientation and geostrategic outlook of the four major European powers has had significant impact on the development of their respective political systems. This idea was powerfully captured by George Orwell during the height of the Second World War in his short essay, *England Your England*. He recognised that:

[For the British, a] dislike of standing armies is a perfectly sound instinct. A navy employs comparatively few people, and it is an external weapon which cannot affect home politics directly. Military dictatorships exist everywhere, but there is no such thing as a naval dictatorship.¹⁸

Put another way, insofar as insular and “maritime” countries such as the UK have rarely required large standing armies for self-defence, they have been freer to experiment with the curtailment of arbitrary power and the development of more transparent, liberal and democratic government.¹⁹ In turn, they redefined their understanding of political legitimacy at the national level, whereby liberal government became coterminous with the democratic nation,²⁰ indicated by the English ambassadorial quip that “God made not his princes for the

¹⁸ Orwell, G., *England Your England* (London: Penguin, 2017 [1941]), p. 11.

¹⁹ Mead, W. R., *God and Gold: Britain, America, and the Making of the Modern World* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007).

²⁰ The philosopher Hannah Arendt captured this issue in the context of mainland European and British party politics when she remarked, “It is ... almost a matter of course that the outstanding characteristics of the modern [European] party – its autocratic and oligarchic structure, its lack of internal democracy and freedom, its tendency to ‘become totalitarian,’ its claim to infallibility – are conspicuous by their absence ... in Great Britain.” Arendt, H., *On Revolution* (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 2016 [1963]), p. 272.

princes, but ... for his service and for the wele [welfare] of his people”.²¹ Conversely, although France, Germany and Russia have all experimented with more enlightened forms of government over the past 300-odd years, they have remained hamstrung by their “terrestrial” geopolitical predilection.²² Even when they did initiate political reforms, they were soon drawn back towards autocratic government during times of tension, particularly when there was a need for military mobilisation. Indeed, this can even result in a vicious circle: as geopolitical pressure builds up, the authoritarian tendencies within a given “terrestrial” power may themselves intensify, to such an extent that they culminate in extremism and absolutism – the German expression for this being *Drang nach dem absoluten*.²³ This extremism then feeds back into the “terrestrial” power’s ordering effort, provoking in turn geostrategic responses on the part of the other major powers.

2.2 “Ordering” Europe: the UK’s Geostrategic Role

From a UK vantage point, mainland Europe is far larger and potentially more resourceful than the British Isles. In terms of land area, the continent – including Russia (west of the Ural mountains) but excluding Turkey – is more than 39 times greater than the UK; in terms of population, it is approximately 11 times bigger; and in terms of economic output, it is almost six times larger.²⁴ Moreover, as Map 2 shows, although the British Isles hold a commanding position in relation to the European mainland, the opposite is also true: the European mainland effectively encircles the British Isles.²⁵ From the Scandinavian appendage to the North-East, the UK is surrounded, all the way to the peninsulas of Brittany and Iberia to the South and South-West. Further, the European mainland is very close: only 40 kilometres separates Dover from Calais. Therefore, should any one of the three major continental powers gain control and impose an unfriendly “positive” order, even over adjacent regions, let alone vast swathes of Europe or the entire continent, Britain would likely become, as it has in the past, extremely vulnerable. At best it would suffer from an asymmetry of power that could be used to gain concessions, or, worse, it could be used to draw the British Isles themselves into whatever “positive” order was in vogue at that moment.²⁶

²¹ Cited in Hitchens, C., *Letters to a Young Contrarian* (New York: Basic Books, 2005 [2001]), p. 130.

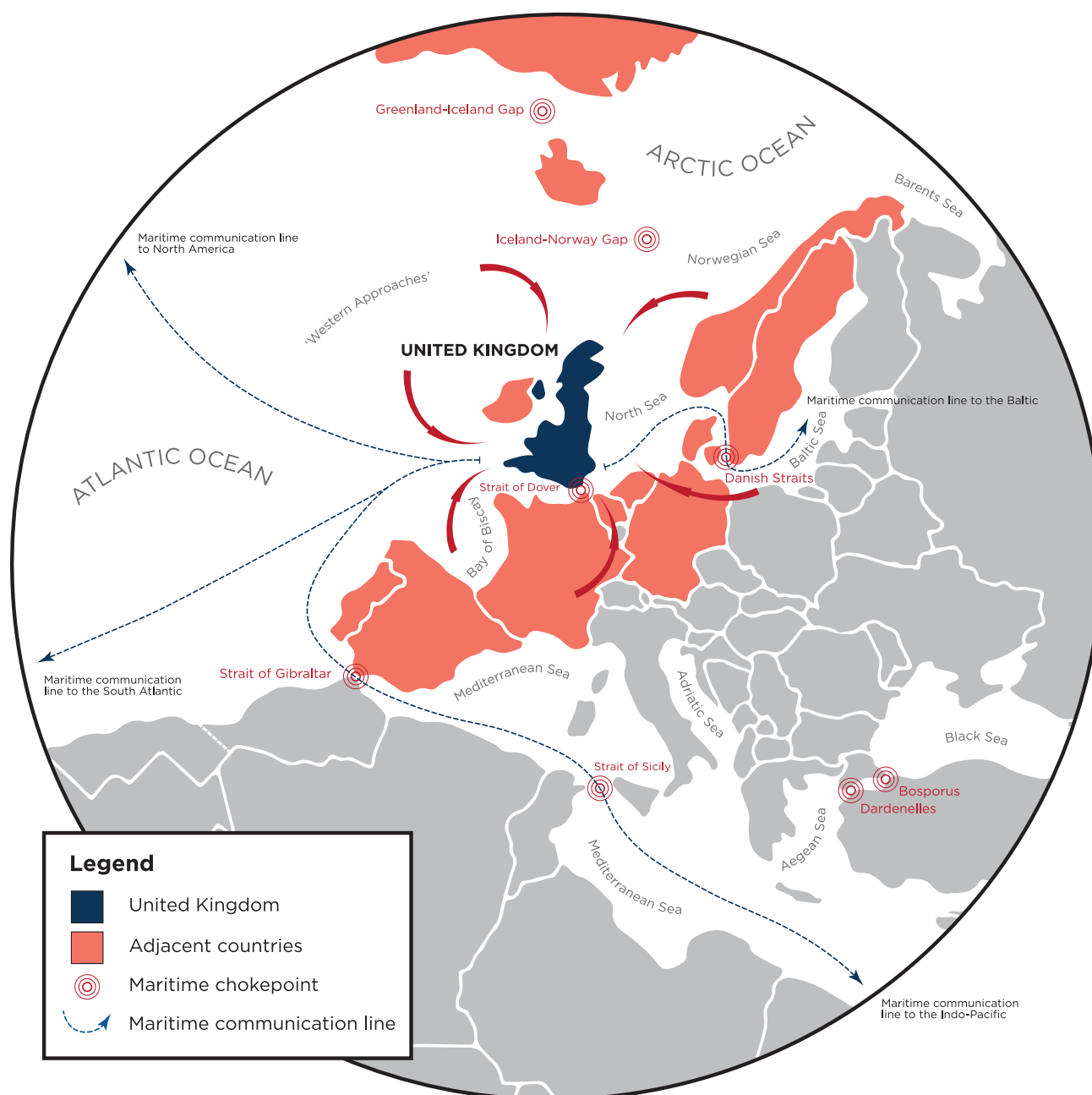
²² Jeremy Cliffe, Chief of Bureau in Berlin for *The Economist*, captures well this internal struggle in a German context: “There are two Germanies ... If the first is the ‘Germany of seas’, call this the ‘Germany of rivers’. It is a romantic land of dense, misty forests and dark past traumas. It is grandly continental, bleeding into the countries on its borders.” Cliffe, J., ‘There is a new consensus in Germany – Brexit should be clean, and Britain should pay for it’, *New Statesman*, 15 May 2017, available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/brexit/2017/05/there-new-consensus-germany-brexit-should-be-clean-and-britain-should-pay-it>, last visited: 30 April 2018.

²³ This German philosophical term is derived from Murray, D., *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 215.

²⁴ These figures – land area, population and Gross Domestic Product (Nominal US\$) – were calculated using statistics from the World Bank: ‘World Bank Open Data’, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/>, last visited: 26 March 2018.

²⁵ Nicholas Spykman, the then Sterling Professor of International Relations at Yale University, explained of Britain’s distinct position, “British sea power lies between the Continent of Europe and the Atlantic, and, therefore, between Europe and the United States. England can function as a barrier against continental threats to the Western hemisphere and, conversely, she can function as a buffer state against American threats to the continent. The relations between the United States and Continental Europe are, consequently, influenced by the geographic location of Britain. The United States can be effective in military action on the continent only in alliance with British sea power, not against it. The Continent of Europe can engage in distant naval operations with the consent of Britain, not against her. British sea power in turn must consider other European navies and will, therefore, be available for distant operation only to the extent that it is not balanced by continental fleets.” Spykman, N. J., *America’s Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New York City: Transaction Publishers, 2007 [1942]), p. 98.

²⁶ The Low Countries – a “dagger” or “pistol” aimed at Britain’s heart – are especially salient because they have been used as launch pad from which to invade the UK. However, the disruption of the Baltic and Mediterranean basins, and the so-called “Western Approaches” and “UK-Iceland gap”, by a hostile country could threaten Britain’s maritime communication lines. Whittlesey, D., *The Earth and the State: A Study of Political Geography* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1939), p. 38. See also Gray, C., *The Politics of Superpower* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky, 1988), p. 15.

Map 2: The British Isles encircled by the European mainland

Although the UK – as a “maritime” power, with global connections and interests – would prefer to enact a policy of “splendid isolation” in relation to the European mainland, disengagement is all but impossible.²⁷ The most important British geostrategic objective has therefore been “negative”, to prevent either any single European country or a group of countries from establishing a “positive” order, either via a coalition or through the imposition of empire. As Sir Winston Churchill put it in 1948:

For four hundred years the foreign policy of England has been to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most domineering Power on the continent, and particularly preventing

²⁷ Macmillan, M., *The War That Ended Peace: How Europe Abandoned Peace for the First World War* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2013), p. 50.

the Low Countries from falling into the hands of such a power ... Observe that the policy of England takes no account of which nation it is that seeks the overlordship of Europe. The question is not whether it is Spain, or the French Empire, or the German Empire, or the Hitler regime. It has nothing to do with rulers or nations; it is concerned solely with whoever is the strongest or potentially dominating tyrant.²⁸

To secure this objective and to impose a "negative" order of its own, the UK has historically engaged in "offshore balancing".²⁹ This involves phases of dissuasion and then deterrence to ward off a potential continental revisionist from the pursuit of ascendancy, often through the financing of a coalition or an alliance. If the revisionist could be neither dissuaded nor deterred, the UK would then intervene militarily, while increasing the funding for its alliance or a coalition, until the hostile power was knocked down. Britain would then try to fall back to its default setting – "splendid isolation" – or would begin balancing once again.³⁰ Indeed, over the past 300-odd years, European geopolitics can be likened to an unrelenting struggle between the leading "terrestrial" power – whether France, Prussia/Germany or Russia/Soviet Union – and the UK to impose or maintain a "positive" or "negative" order over much of the continental mainland.

However, from the late nineteenth century, "offshore balancing" (to say nothing of "splendid isolation") became progressively harder to implement.³¹ In particular, the large "terrestrial" powers of Russia and Germany learnt to harness industrial technologies – railways, telegraphs and factories – to open up and develop their own interiors and exploit their full potential, reducing both Britain's relative power and its "maritime" edge. Worse, the accelerating mechanisation of the armed forces provided the European land powers with the means to push their geographic "points of culmination" – their ability to extend themselves through space and time – farther than ever.³² Indeed, if Britain's strategy of "offshore balancing" was threatened by the speed of the German advance during the First World War, the advent of airpower and combined-arms warfare before and during the Second World War shattered it altogether. It soon became clear that the Low Countries, in the face of the new military transport and logistics systems combined with the speed and force of the new weaponry, would soon fall in the event of a conflict, before the UK could

²⁸ Churchill, W., *The Gathering Storm* (New York City: Rosetta Books, 2002 [1948]), pp. 186-187. Others have made the same argument. In the words of Michael Howard, Fellow in Higher Defence Studies at All Souls College, University of Oxford, "Our security remains involved with that of our continental neighbours: for the dominance of the European landmass by an alien and hostile power would make almost impossible the maintenance of our national independence, to say nothing of our capacity to maintain a defensive system to protect any extra-European interests we may retain." Howard, M., *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of Two World Wars* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 9-10. Or, as Sir Eyre Crowe wrote in 1907, "the first interest of all countries is the preservation of national independence. It follows that England, more than any other non-insular Power, has a direct and positive interest in the maintenance of the independence of nations, and therefore must be the natural enemy of any country threatening the independence of others, and the natural protector of the weaker communities." To read the full memorandum, see Crowe, E., 'Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany', 1 January 1907, available in Gooch, G. P. and H. Temperley (eds.), *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, vol. 3 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928), p. 403.

²⁹ Spykman, N. J., *America's Strategy in World Politics*, p. 104.

³⁰ Britain thrust its power behind the United Provinces and France to constrain Spain; behind France and certain German states to stymie the Dutch Republic (Anglo-Dutch Wars); behind Prussia and Portugal to bring down France and Russia (Seven Years' War); behind Prussia and Spain to frustrate France (French Revolutionary/Napoleonic Wars); and behind France and Tsarist Russia to stop the German Empire (First World War).

³¹ Charles Pasley argued during the Napoleonic Wars that Britain's old strategy was in its death throes. The ability of European countries to overwhelm their opponents and shut the UK out of the mainland, he argued, would require greater a British continental engagement. Pasley, C. W., *The Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire* (London: Edmund Lloyd, 1810), p. 104.

³² Boulding, K., *Conflict and Defence: A General Theory* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), pp. 261-263; Webb, K., 'The Continued Importance of Geographic Distance and Boulding's Loss of Strength Gradient', *Comparative Strategy* 26.4 (2007); O'Sullivan, P., *Geopolitics* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986), pp. 53-76. See also Rogers, J., 'An Audit of Geopolitical Capability: A Comparison of Eight Major Powers', *The Henry Jackson Society* (2017).

mobilise a military response of sufficient strength to press any revisionist back down.³³ Once occupied, the Low Countries could then be used as a launch pad to either forcefully attack British cities – long shielded by the sea – from the air or, potentially, mount an invasion, threatening the nation’s very existence.

After the Second World War, then, the maintenance of a “negative” order required a new British approach – the construction of a defence system – extending deep into the European mainland.³⁴ This is because the UK feared that the Soviet Union, having failed to relinquish the Eastern European territories it had conquered during the Second World War – and hot in pursuit of ballistic missiles and atomic weaponry – would eventually seek to impose a “positive” order all the way to the English Channel, which would be almost impossible to reverse.³⁵ Moreover, it was not at the time unthinkable that Germany, though occupied and divided, would not eventually re-emerge as an existential threat, in the same way that it had done after the First World War. The solution came in the form of a new geostrategy, which could be described as “onshore tethering”. As with the previous approach – “offshore balancing” – the UK would still seek to uphold a “negative” continental order, but it would now do so by a more direct and coordinated approach.³⁶ This required the *prioritisation* of continental Europe in British geostrategic thinking, a *perpetual* UK military presence on the European mainland, forwardly deployed and ready for war, particularly in West Germany, and a British autonomous nuclear weapons programme.³⁷

In the construction of this defence system, Britain’s fundamental goal was to transcend insecurity on the European mainland by permanently “negating” the “terrestrial” powers’ – France, Germany and Soviet Union – drive to hegemony. In other words, the UK sought to “tame” the “terrestrial” influence of continental European geography by deterring the Soviet Union and preventing insecurity between France, West Germany and the lesser powers so that more open, transparent and liberal forms of government could take hold. Indeed, as Sir Halford Mackinder, a former Director of the London School of Economics and prominent geostrategic theorist, argued during the Second World War with his vision for a “Midland Ocean” alliance, this “democratic geopolitics” would require the “envelopment” of Western

³³ As the then Lord President of the Privy Council, Stanley Baldwin, put it in 1934, “Let us never forget this; since the day of the air, the old frontiers are gone. When you think of the defence of England you no longer think of the chalk cliffs of Dover; you think of the Rhine. That is where our frontier lies.” Stanley Baldwin, ‘House of Commons, Debates’, 30 July 1934; Havighurst, A. F., *Britain in Transition: The Twentieth Century*, 4th ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1985 [1962]), p. 228. See also Spykman, N. J., ‘Geography and Foreign Policy, I’, *The American Political Science Review* 32.1 (1938): p. 49.

³⁴ In 1950, General Sir William Slim, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, explained how thinking evolved during the late 1940s: “In the past, we had been prepared to contemplate the overrunning of Western Europe on the grounds that it would be possible for Britain and the United States to fight back from the bases in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. The Chiefs of Staff now considered that the defence of Western Europe must form part of the defence of the United Kingdom. The reason for this change in policy was that it was now considered that, if Europe was overwhelmed, the United Kingdom would be threatened as never before and might well not survive.” Cited in Baylis, J., *Ambiguity and Deterrence: British Nuclear Strategy, 1945–1964* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.108.

³⁵ In 1947, even before the Soviet Union had acquired nuclear warheads and the means to deliver them, the British chiefs of the navy, air force and army pointed out, “The advent of mass destruction weapons and other new means of offence has greatly increased the vulnerability of the United Kingdom with her dense and concentrated population and industries ... The vulnerability of this country to modern weapons would bring the war to its climax much earlier than in the past.” ‘The Overall Strategic Plan, May 1947’, cited in Baylis, J., *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism: Britain and the Formation of NATO, 1942–1949* (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1993), p. 140.

³⁶ Several schemes for “organising” the European mainland were envisaged in the early 1940s, particularly as British officials sought to plan for the future of the continent once Nazi Germany had been defeated. Baylis, J., ‘Britain, the Brussels Pact and the continental commitment’, *International Affairs* 60.4 (1984): pp. 616–617.

³⁷ As the then Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, explained in the House of Commons, “If we are to preserve peace and our own safety at the same time we can only do so by the mobilisation of such a moral and material force as will create confidence and energy in the West and inspire respect elsewhere, and this means that Britain cannot stand outside Europe and regard her problems as quite separate from those of her European neighbours.” House of Commons Debate, 22 January 1948, vol. 446, cc383–517, *Hansard*, available at: <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1948/jan/22/foreign-affairs>, last visited: 9 March 2018.

Europe into a wider Atlantic geopolitical space, structured by UK, US and Canadian power.³⁸ Throughout much of the late 1940s, though, it remained unclear whether the Americans would remain engaged in European affairs or whether, with a monopoly over atomic weapons, they would revert to a new form of isolationism, known at the time as "hemispheric defence".³⁹ The UK felt that, without US support, and owing to the emergence of nationalist movements within the British Empire, its own military and industrial power would become increasingly insufficient for the realisation of this new geostrategic framework.⁴¹

To coax the US in, the UK began to put the necessary geopolitical groundwork in place: it issued security guarantees to France and the Low Countries, through the Dunkirk (1947) and Brussels Treaties respectively, with the anticipation that they would secure an American commitment.⁴¹ Fortunately, as the US realised that its nuclear monopoly would not last, it became a more active and permanent participant in European geopolitics.⁴² The Brussels pact was effectively rolled into NATO the following year, facilitating the progressive institutionalisation of American, British and Canadian military power on the continental mainland. And insofar as the Soviet Union now loomed over Eastern Europe, closing it off behind an "Iron Curtain", NATO became increasingly a kind of "empire by invitation", consolidating the democratic nature of the new Western European geopolitics.⁴³ While the UK, the US and Canada found themselves with a permanent "continental commitment", their new alliance – NATO – began to actively regulate European geopolitics and hold it in check.⁴⁴ As Map 3 shows, it has, in Lord Ismay's infamous quip, been keeping "the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down" ever since.⁴⁵

³⁸ Mackinder, H., 'The Round World and the Winning of the Peace', *Foreign Affairs* 21.4 (1943), available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1943-07-01/round-world-and-winning-peace>, last visited: 29 March 2018.

³⁹ Rees, W., 'Preserving the Security of Europe', in Croft, S., A. Dorman, W. Rees and M. Uttley (eds.), *Britain and Defence, 1945–2000: A Policy Re-evaluation* (New York: Routledge, 2013 [2001]), pp. 49–52.

⁴⁰ In 1948, Brigadier Head said, "It seems to me that if we really set about it, work hard, give a lead and indicate we mean business, not only will the countries of Western Europe be encouraged and start to make progress, but we shall receive a far greater amount of American assistance than we could possibly hope to receive if we revealed that we are half-hearted and dilatory in this respect ... I believe that close co-operation with Western Europe and the United States is the only means whereby we can fill the power vacuum which now exists in Western Europe itself." House of Commons Debate, 23 September 1948, vol. 456, cc1096-221, *Hansard*, available at: http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1948/sep/23/defence#S5CV0456PO_19480923_HOC_307, last visited: 12 March 2018.

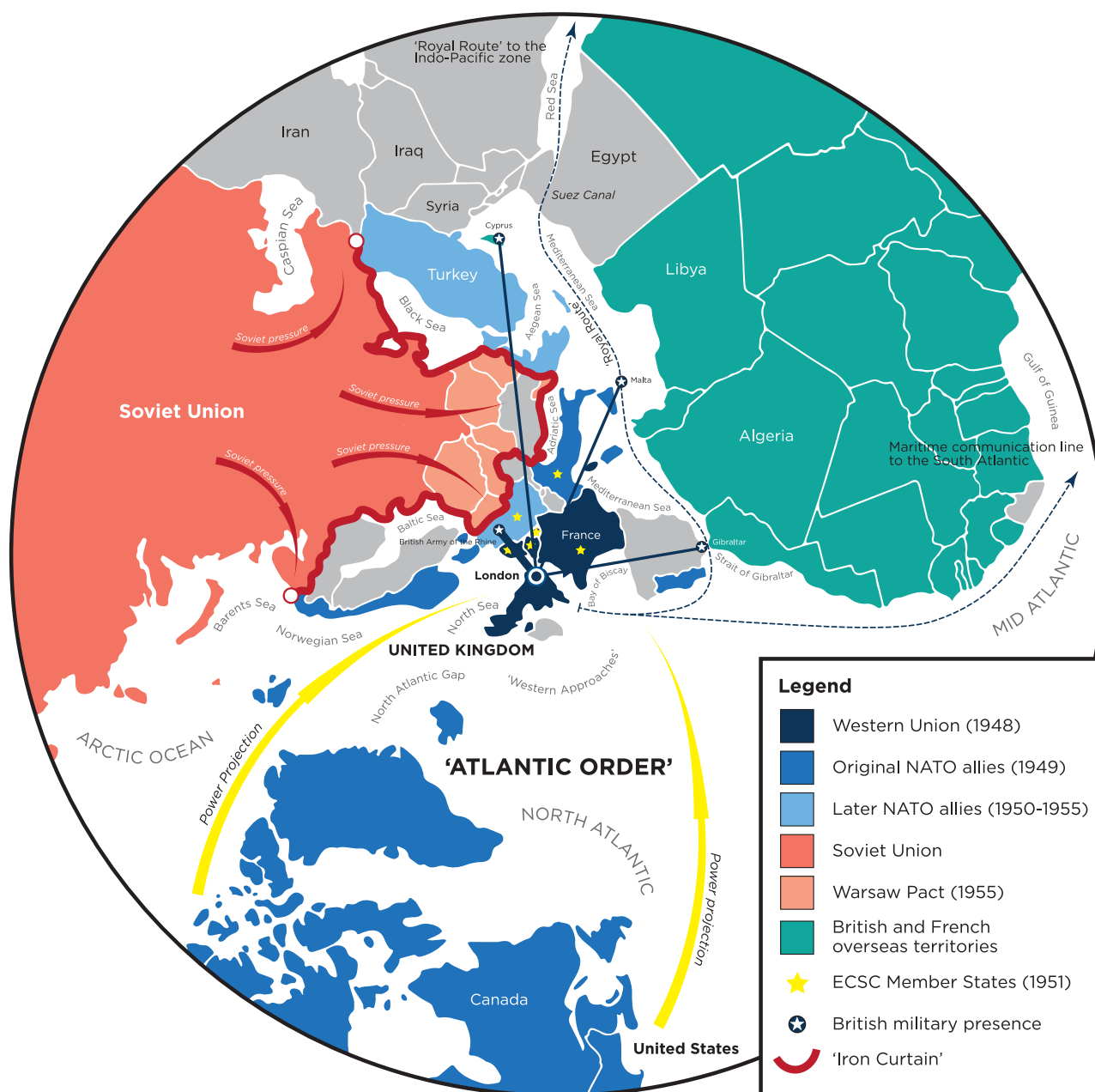
⁴¹ For more information, see Baylis, J., *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism: Britain and the Formation of NATO, 1942–1949* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1993), p. 75; Baylis, J., 'Britain, the Brussels Pact and the continental commitment', *International Affairs* 60.4 (1984), p. 617; Croft, S., A. Dorman, W. Reese and M. Uttley, *Britain and Defence, 1945–2000, A Policy Re-evaluation*, pp. 50–51.

⁴² Already in 1942, Nicholas Spykman had realised in *America's Strategy in World Politics* that the US would need to engage in continental affairs: "The integration of the whole of Europe including the British Isles into a single political unit [i.e., a 'positive' order] able to express its total economic potential in naval strength would seriously diminish our own [i.e., US] relative power. The position of the United States in regard to Europe as a whole is, therefore, identical to the position of Great Britain in regard to the European continent. The scale is different, the units are larger, and the distances are greater, but the pattern is the same. We have an interest in the European balance as the British have an interest in the continental balance." Spykman, N., *America's Strategy in World Politics*, p. 124. According to the eminent scholars Harold and Margaret Sprout, Spykman's *America's Strategy in World Politics* "began to find its way onto the desks of top-level Washington executives" and was "probably read by more people in America during World War II than any other book on international politics". Indeed, they claim that it "represents a crucial turning point in American thinking about foreign affairs", and that "its imprint on American thinking is still discernible". See: Sprout, H. and M. Sprout, *Foundations of International Politics* (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand and Company, 1963), pp. 110–111.

⁴³ Lundestad, G., 'Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945–1952', *Journal of Peace Research* 23.3 (September 1986): pp. 263–277.

⁴⁴ For more on the "continental commitment", see: Howard, M., *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of Two World Wars* (Middlesex: Pelican Books, 1974 [1972]).

⁴⁵ 'Origins: NATO Leaders: Lord Ismay', *NATO*, available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_137930.htm, last visited: 10 May 2018.

Map 3: The UK's position in the Atlantic Order, 1949–1955

2.3 “Ordering” Europe: the Response of France and (West) Germany

Meanwhile, as the Atlantic democracies began to consolidate and enlarge their “negative” Atlantic space, thereby smothering traditional geopolitics on the European Plain and thereby providing a breathing space for more liberal and democratic forms of politics to take hold, a different set of ideas for achieving security emerged in France and West Germany. For France, the ultimate objective was to “sheathe” West Germany in such a way that the Germans would never again be able to construct their own “positive” order on the European mainland, particularly one that included French territory. After all, the same geopolitical convulsion – the rise of “terrestrial” Germany – that had undermined the UK during the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries had had an even greater impact on France.⁴⁶ With the transcendence of the River Rhine as a natural barrier, and with the rise of a vast aggregation of organised industrial and military power on its north-eastern flank, France fell foul of Prussian advances in 1870, invasion at the hands of Imperial Germany in 1914 and outright annexation and occupation by the Third Reich in 1940.⁴⁷ Having been subjected to such dislocation, France came to regard it as essential to permanently hobble West Germany by shaping its economic preferences and guiding its future development.⁴⁸

For this reason, Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, devised a scheme – the “Schuman Plan” – to constrain West Germany by combining the French and West German war industries (coal and steel) under a common High Authority as part of a European Coal and Steel Community. To a small extent, this marked the construction of a new “positive” order on the European mainland, binding together France and Germany as well as Italy and the Low Countries, in a new political and economic project, albeit even if it would remain enveloped within the wider “negative” Atlantic order. As the British Empire was wound down and as the British economy began to experience restructuring during the 1960s, the UK sought to join the successor of the French-West German project, namely the EEC. While initially having been vetoed twice by France’s President Charles de Gaulle for being too “insular” and “maritime”, the UK finally joined the EEC in 1973.⁴⁹ In part, the UK sought membership to ensure the EEC’s continued alignment with the wider Atlantic order, not least by providing an internal alternative perspective to French-German co-dominion. Meanwhile, insofar as it would never be a proponent of universal integration, the UK racked up an impressive array of “opt-outs” as a member, including from economic and monetary union, one of the flagship projects of European integration.

⁴⁶ For a comparison between the two powers (and Imperial Germany), see Kennedy, P., *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: William Collins, 2017 [1988]).

⁴⁷ Evans, R. J., *The Coming of the Third Reich: How the Nazis Destroyed Democracy and Seized Power in Germany* (London: Allen Lane, 2004 [2003]), pp. 1-16.

⁴⁸ ‘Text of the Elysee [sic.] Treaty (Joint Declaration of Franco-German Friendship)’, *Atlantic Council*, 22 January 2013, available at: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/text-of-the-elysee-treaty-joint-declaration-of-francogerman-friendship>, last visited: 29 March 2018.

⁴⁹ Charles de Gaulle, then President of France, remarked during a press conference to explain his decision to reject Britain’s application to join the EEC in 1963, “England [sic] in effect is insular, she is maritime, she is linked through her exchanges, her markets, her supply lines to the most diverse and often the most distant countries; she pursues essentially industrial and commercial activities, and only slight agricultural ones. She has in all her doings very marked and very original habits and traditions.” de Gaulle, C., ‘Press conference held by General de Gaulle (14 January 1963)’, *CVCU*, 14 January 1963, available at: https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/press_conference_held_by_general_de_gaulle_14_january_1963-en-5b5d0d35-4266-49bc-b770-b24826858e1f.html, last visited: 30 April 2018.

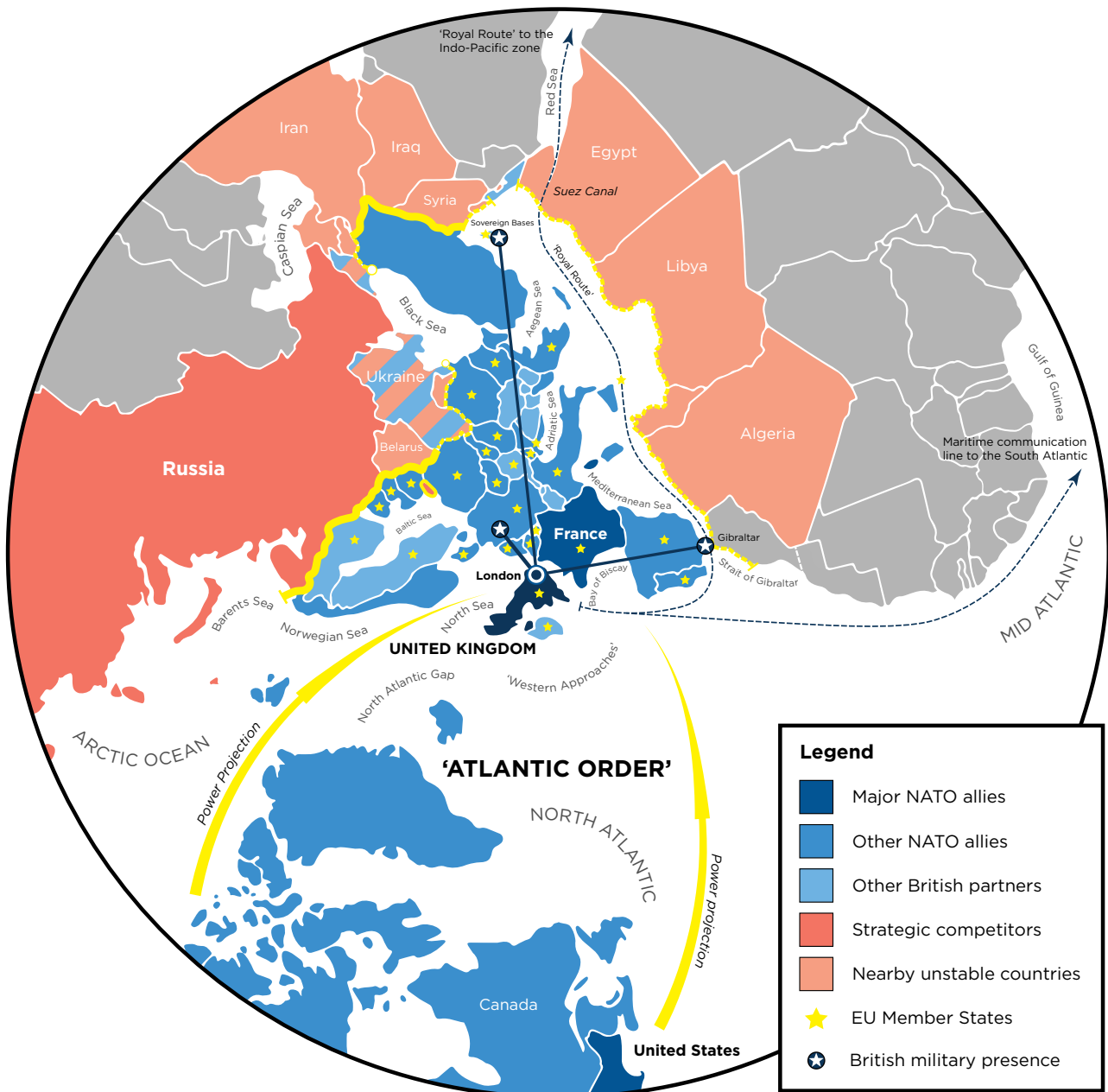
3. The New Geopolitics of Europe

As Map 4 shows, owing to the dislocation of the Soviet empire and Germany's reintegration, the UK- and US-backed Atlantic order reached its climax around the turn of the twenty-first century. Indeed, British strategic defence and security reviews were all undertaken – in 1990, 1994, 1998 and 2010 respectively – under the assumption that under the forces of globalisation, both geography and geopolitics would become less and less important, and that future threats would be “asymmetric” or “cross sector” in character.⁵⁰ It was hoped that the rough and tumble of geopolitics would be gradually overcome, not only because of the collapse of the Soviet Union and its associated “positive” order, the Warsaw Pact, but also because the acceleration of globalisation and the onset of the “information age” would progressively enlarge the Atlantic space.⁵¹ The 2010 UK Strategic Defence and Security Review even counselled that state-on-state conflict had become a “low probability” (if “high impact”) event and that the British military presence in Germany, an essential buttress to NATO and a cornerstone of British strategy since the end of the Second World War, could be wound down and withdrawn by 2020.⁵² The future would be “out of area”, requiring lighter, nimbler and more mobile forces for rapid global deployment. On the one hand, these assumptions were correct, as the numerous interventions – from Libya (2011) to Syria (2018) – would attest. On the other hand, the assumptions animating British strategic thinking were wide of the mark: it was simply not grasped how the geopolitical foundations of the Atlantic order would themselves come under challenge as an array of internal and external revisionist forces began to manifest and assert themselves.

⁵⁰ Rogers, J., ““Global Britain” and the Future of the British Armed Forces’, *The Henry Jackson Society* (2017), available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/HJS-Global-Britain-and-the-Future-of-the-British-Armed-Forces.pdf>, last visited: 8 March 2018.

⁵¹ Cooper, R., *The Postmodern State and the World Order* (London: Demos, 1998).

⁵² ‘Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review’, *HM Government*, October 2010, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/62482/strategic-defence-security-review.pdf, last visited: 26 March 2018, pp. 10 and p. 28.

Map 4: The ascendancy of the Atlantic order, 1991–c.2014

Today, beyond the “negative” Atlantic order, Russia and China are either resurging or emerging, leaving the established powers, not least the US, unsure which way to turn.⁵³ Indeed, while Russia’s “little war” against Georgia in 2008 ruffled many European feathers,⁵⁴ its invasion of Ukraine, illegal annexation of Crimea and occupation of the Donbas made it clear that geopolitics has returned with a vengeance in Europe.⁵⁵ Moreover, Germany’s reunification,

⁵³ According to its National Defense Strategy, the US faces “increased global disorder, characterised by decline in the long-standing rules-based international order ... Inter-state strategic competition ... is now the primary concern in US national security.” ‘Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of The United States of America’, *US Department of Defense*, January 2018, available at: <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>, last visited: 29 March 2018.

⁵⁴ Asmus, R. D., *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁵⁵ ‘National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom’, *HM Government*, November 2015, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf, last visited: 3 April 2018.

along with anxiety over its political intent and economic influence and combined with the British decision to withdraw from the European subsystem, has revealed decisively that geopolitics is escalating even *within* the EU.⁵⁶ These developments demonstrate that the Atlantic order – as a contingent geostrategic construct – could itself fracture along geopolitical lines, revealing the continental power bases that it has long overwhelmed and largely disguised. Suffice to say, the geopolitical situation on the European mainland, as well as within the wider Atlantic order, is now more volatile and unpredictable than at any point in the past 20 years. As such, as these changes take hold, the interests of the major powers appear to be falling out of alignment with one another, reopening debates as to the character, durability and legitimacy of the Atlantic order, not least in relation to the European subsystem.

Box 2: The future of geopolitical conflict

Since the end of the Cold War, and particularly since the mid-2000s, strategic analysts have argued that conflict has been undergoing transformation or evolution. At first, the argument was put that, alongside the Cold War's end, “general deterrence” was no longer required. It was thought that the so-called “Revolution in Military Affairs” – based on precision-guided munitions and new communications technologies – would be accelerated, which would greatly extend the ability of Western states to engage in coercive, “out-of-area” operations.⁵⁷ Then analysts argued that conflicts would be increasingly “asymmetric” or “hybrid”, and, more recently, “limited” and “non-linear” in nature.⁵⁸ Indeed, in light of Russia's offensives against Ukraine, as well as the Atlantic order more generally, analysts have sought to identify a “Gerasimov Doctrine” – named after Russia's Chief of the General Staff, Valery Gerasimov – to help explain the new wars.⁵⁹ In most cases, the stress has been placed on the instruments of confrontation – like the so-called “little green men” or the hacking into electoral processes in Western democracies – rather than the objective of the confrontation itself. Insofar as it places emphasis on the instruments of conflict, this “bottom up” focus largely misses the point.

Rather, the focus should be on the *geopolitical objectives* of conflict (“to-down”), because these define the strategy taken. These objectives will sometimes be brazen – like Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea in Ukraine, or China's building of artificial islands to claim the South China Sea – but they will also be more clandestine, involving the infiltration or destruction of economic systems, energy, transport and communications infrastructure, and even political processes and legitimacy.⁶⁰ General Sir Nicholas Carter, Chief of the Defence Staff, recently put it:

We now live in a much more competitive, multi-polar world and the complex nature of the global system has created the conditions in which states are able to compete in new ways short of what we would have defined as “war” in the past.

This kind of environment is far removed from the heady years of the 1990s or even the 2000s, when the general assumption was that the major powers would cooperate for the common good. Instead it points to a new age of geopolitical competition and conflict.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Ikenberry, G. J., ‘The Illusion of Geopolitics: The Enduring Power of the Liberal Order’, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2014, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2014-04-17/illusion-geopolitics>, last visited: 8 March 2018. At the end of the Cold War, it was argued that “chronopolitics”, the relationship between the political behaviours of individuals and groups and their so-called time-perspectives, had trumped geopolitics. For more on this concept, see Wallis, G. W., ‘Chronopolitics: The Impact of Time Perspectives on the Dynamics of Change’, *Social Forces* 49.1 (September 1970): pp. 102-108.

⁵⁷ For more information, see Davis, N., ‘An Information-Based Revolution in Military Affairs’, *Strategic Review*, 24.1 (1996): pp. 43-53.

⁵⁸ Rogers, J. and A. Martinescu, ‘After Crimea: Time for a New British Geostrategy for Eastern Europe?’, *The Henry Jackson Society* (2015), available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/After-Crimea.pdf>, last visited: 29 March 2018.

⁵⁹ McKew, M. K., ‘The Gerasimov Doctrine’, *Politico Magazine*, September/October 2017, available at: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/09/05/gerasimov-doctrine-russia-foreign-policy-215538>, last visited: 10 May 2018.

⁶⁰ According to Britain's Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson, Russia “is [using] ... its growing hybrid capabilities to subvert, undermine, and influence countries around the world”. Cited in ‘Hard as well as soft power: the case for modern defence’, *Gov.uk*, 15 March 2018, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hard-as-well-as-soft-power-the-case-for-modern-defence>, last visited: 29 March 2018.

⁶¹ ‘Dynamic security threats and the British Army: Chief of the General Staff General Sir Nicholas Carter KCB CBE DSO ADC Gen’, *Gov.uk*, 22 January 2018, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/dynamic-security-threats-and-the-british-army-chief-of-the-general-staff-general-sir-nicholas-carter-kcb-cbe-dso-adc-gen>, last visited: 29 March 2018.

Geopolitical confrontation is likely to occur when rising or dissatisfied powers seek to escape the constraints of the “rules-based international order” or “liberal international order” – two euphemisms that are frequently deployed to describe the UK-US backed “negative” geopolitical system that has taken hold over the past 250 years – or, in the European context, the Atlantic order. Those who – for whatever reason – reject this order are likely to seek to change it using one of two approaches: “counter-hegemonic” offensive or “anti-hegemonic” assault.⁶² What distinguishes the two forms of geopolitical conflict is their ultimate objective, either in the form of the establishment of order (whether “positive” or “negative”) or disorder.

For countries engaged in “counter-hegemonic” offensives, the objective is to literally replace, in whole or part, the central tenets of the prevailing order – i.e., in this case, the “rules-based”, “liberal” or “Atlantic” orders – with a different order that chimes with their own requirements. Historically, this has been attempted or achieved through the integration or partial fragmentation of adjacent countries into a definitive geopolitical system, normally structured under the national homeland. This is what both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union tried to do in terms of positioning fascism or communism as alternatives to liberal democracy during the early twentieth century, or what the UK and US have sought to do during the latter twentieth century. Therefore, owing to cost, only the strongest powers in the international system – the potential peer competitors of the established power(s) – tend to pursue “counter-hegemonic” geostrategic offensives. Meanwhile, an “anti-hegemonic” assault aims to dislocate a prevailing order, whether “positive” or “negative”, rendering it visibly ineffective and therefore increasing its likelihood of collapse. Put another way, “anti-hegemonic” offensives aim to spread disorder and pandemonium to weaken an opponent.

3.1 The External Challenge: Russia and China

Notwithstanding its vast power base and nuclear arsenal, Russia has grown progressively weaker in relation to the other major European power centres since the Soviet Union’s liquidation. Today, Russia’s economy is significantly smaller and less productive than all of the other major European economies, to say nothing of that of the US: it is 7% the size of the American economy, 37% the size of the German economy, 49% the size of the British economy and 52% the size of the French economy.⁶³ Indeed, despite some technological capability in the military-industrial sector, the Russian economy is largely antiquated and increasingly reliant on the export of energy and raw materials, with all their inherent price volatility on international markets. Worse, post-Soviet economic mismanagement combined with international sanctions means that the country’s output is now little larger than that of Spain or South Korea – countries with *far* smaller bases of power.⁶⁴

Although frailer than its major European peers, Russia is strong in relation to what the Kremlin has come to describe as its “near abroad”, i.e., the arc of territory including Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan – countries that were formerly part of the Soviet empire.⁶⁵ Owing to its sheer size and entrenched “terrestrial” culture, Russia has continued to treat these countries as semi-independent vassals, a situation exacerbated by the fact that they became home to millions of Russian-speaking minorities during the Soviet period, a geopolitical “residue” that has continued to animate Russian policy. Vladimir Putin, the

⁶² Rogers, J. and A. Tyushka, “‘Hacking’ into the West: Russia’s “anti-hegemonic” drive and the strategic narrative offensive’, *Defence Strategic Communications* 2.1 (2017): pp. 35-59.

⁶³ ‘GDP (current US\$) – France, Germany, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, United States’, *The World Bank Open Data*, 2018, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=FR-DE-RU-GB-US>, last visited: 3 April 2018.

⁶⁴ ‘GDP (Current US\$) – Russian Federation, Spain, Korea, Rep.’, *The World Bank Open Data*, 2018, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=RU-ES-KR>, last visited: 29 March 2018.

⁶⁵ “That phrase [‘near abroad’] was a popular geopolitical label Russian politicians, in the wake of the Soviet Union’s sudden dissolution, gave to the former Soviet Republics that were now independent sovereign countries in their own right. The phrase acknowledged difference yet also enduring proximity.” Toal, G., *Near Abroad: Putin, the West and the Contest over Ukraine and the Caucasus* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2017).

President of Russia, lamented in 2005, “Above all, we should acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century”, because “tens of millions of our co-citizens and compatriots found themselves outside Russian territory”.⁶⁶ Indeed, drawing these people back under Russian rule or authority – or at least preventing them from falling under foreign influence – has been one of the defining policies of Mr Putin’s regime.⁶⁷ It has provided him with an excellent pretext to apply an irredentist and revisionist geostrategic policy, with resulting boosts to Russian military spending.⁶⁸ It has justified, at least in Russia, his wars with Georgia and Ukraine, along with the effective annexations of South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Crimea, allowing him to forge a local Russian-backed “positive” order, bringing his regime into increasing conflict with the Atlantic system.⁶⁹

However, Russia’s irredentism and revisionism expose the country’s integral weaknesses rather than its inherent strengths. For what Mr Putin’s regime fears most, more so even than the threat of foreign troops or tanks rolling across the European Plain towards Moscow, is countries within the “near abroad” seeking admission into the Atlantic order. For the authoritarian Russian President, the new “enemy” takes more the form of liberal and democratic reformers in countries surrounding Russia, not least in Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus and Moldova.⁷⁰ Here, the concern is that the major Atlantic powers, especially the UK and US – with all their economic and cultural strength – will provide such forces with financial and moral assistance that they might, in turn, rise up in new “colour revolutions” to install new governments less amenable to the Kremlin.⁷² Not only would this make it harder for Moscow to pursue its own interests, but it could also, over time, inspire the emergence of a new generation of reformers within Russia itself, posing a direct challenge to the Kremlin’s preference for the oxymoron of “managed democracy”.

So, while Mr Putin’s immediate geostrategic objective has been to incorporate adjacent countries into a “positive” local order – thereby emphasising, in a domestic context, his unassailable power – the parlous state of the Russian economy makes it too costly to extend this order beyond Russia’s immediate vicinage. Thus, as Box 2 shows, the Kremlin’s wider geostrategy is predicated on spreading geopolitical *disorder* by “hacking” into the Atlantic

⁶⁶ ‘Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation’, *Kremlin.ru*, 25 April 2005, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931>, last visited: 4 April 2018. Equally, in 2014, Putin said of the Soviet Union’s collapse, “Millions of people went to bed in one country and awoke in different ones, overnight becoming ethnic minorities in former Union republics, while the Russian nation became one of the biggest, if not the biggest ethnic group in the world to be divided by borders.” ‘Address by President of the Russian Federation’, *Kremlin.ru*, 18 March 2014, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>, last visited: 4 April 2018.

⁶⁷ Makarychev, A. and S. Medvedev, ‘Biopolitics and Power in Putin’s Russia’, *Problems of Post-Communism* 62.1 (2015): pp. 45-54.

⁶⁸ For more information, see ‘Russian National Security Strategy, December 2015’, *The Russian Federation*, December 2015, available at: <http://www.iiiee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>, last visited: 4 April 2018. In a television show, Mr Putin was asked by a young geographer where Russia’s borders ended. The Russian President responded by asking the child where he thought they rested. The child replied with the answer, “The Bering Strait”. Mr Putin responded – half-jokingly – with the answer, “Russia’s border doesn’t end anywhere.” ‘Russia’s border doesn’t end anywhere, Vladimir Putin says’, *BBC News*, 24 November 2016, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-38093468>, last visited: 3 April 2018.

⁶⁹ Kotkin, S., ‘Russia’s Perpetual Geopolitics: Putin Returns to the Historical Pattern’, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2016, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2016-04-18/russias-perpetual-geopolitics>, last visited: 3 April 2018.

⁷⁰ According to Freedom House, an independent US not-for-profit foundation that measures the level of democracy of all countries in the world on an annual basis, Russia has fallen from 4.5/7 “Partly Free” in 1999 to 6.5/7 “Not Free” in 2018. ‘Russia: Freedom in the World 1999’, *Freedom House*, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/1999/russia>, last visited: 4 April 2018; ‘Freedom in the World 2018: Russia Profile’, *Freedom House*, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/russia>, last visited: 4 April 2018.

⁷¹ In Mr Putin’s words, “In the modern world extremism is being used as a geopolitical instrument and for remaking spheres of influence. We see what tragic consequences the wave of so-called color [sic] revolutions led to ... For us [i.e., Russia] this is a lesson and a warning. We should do everything necessary so that nothing similar ever happens in Russia.” Cited in Korsunskaya, D., ‘Putin says Russia must prevent “color [sic] revolution”’, *Reuters*, 20 November 2014, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-putin-security-idUSKCN0J41J620141120>, last visited: 10 May 2018.

system.⁷² With its multifaceted “anti-hegemonic” assaults against the Atlantic democracies, Russia has sought to reposition itself as a victim of Western aggression, while propagating the spread of disinformation and lies to dislocate liberal narratives.⁷³ To sow chaos and confusion, including civil conflict, the Kremlin has adopted “dirty techniques”, such as meddling in democratic elections and constitutional procedures in Atlantic nations. And to confirm its reach and to reveal the impotence of the Atlantic democracies in the face of Mr. Putin’s regime, Russia has indulged in “wetwork”, such as the targeted poisonings or assassination of opponents.⁷⁴ The Kremlin knows that the Atlantic order will be less desirable as an alliance if the UK (or US) is unable to respond effectively to Russian transgressions, particularly if they appear divided and dysfunctional in a domestic context in response.

In this respect, President Putin has made statements from time to time that are deliberately designed to taunt and intimidate not only Russia’s immediate neighbours in the “near abroad”, but also those within the Atlantic order. As he is reported to have told Petro Poroshenko, the President of Ukraine, in 2014, “If I wanted, in two days I could have Russian troops not only in Kiev, but also in Riga, Vilnius, Tallinn, Warsaw, and Bucharest.”⁷⁵ While it is unlikely that Russia could mount such an extensive operation and prevail, not least given the likelihood of nuclear escalation, there is a clear asymmetry of power between Russia and its immediate neighbours, especially the tiny and sparsely populated Baltic states, whose combined population of just 6.15 million is not much larger than that of St Petersburg.⁷⁶ While the impact of UK-US strategic nuclear forces has been enhanced by NATO’s recent deterrence measures, including the “Very High Readiness Joint Task Force” and the “Enhanced Forward Presence” in the Baltic states and Poland, Russia still maintains “escalation dominance” along the entire length and breadth of the “eastern flank” of the Atlantic alliance.⁷⁷ The threat is that, should the Atlantic order – and the UK and the US in particular – let down its guard, the Kremlin may seize the initiative and extend its “positive” order over adjacent regions, while simultaneously discrediting NATO and the UK-US strategic guarantee.

Nevertheless, irrespective of the severity of the Russia’s “anti-hegemonic” menace, in the longer term it will likely be the rise and expansion of China that confronts the Atlantic order with systemic challenge. China’s economic modernisation has already generated an economy that has piggybacked over every Western power, with the exception of the US.⁷⁸ The “enlargement” of the country’s geostrategic interests – into the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean and Central Asia – has continued unabated, with the construction of a series of naval stations on artificial

⁷² Rogers, J. and A. Tyushka, “‘Hacking’ into the West: Russia’s “anti-hegemonic” drive and the strategic narrative offensive’, *Defence Strategic Communications* 2.1 (2017): pp. 35-59.

⁷³ For a good example of the attempt – by Sergei Lavrov, Russia’s Foreign Minister – to rewrite Russia’s place in European history, see Lavrov, S., ‘Russia’s Foreign Policy in a Historical Perspective’, *Russia in Global Affairs*, 30 March 2016, available at: <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Russias-Foreign-Policy-in-a-Historical-Perspective-18067>, last visited: 29 March 2018.

⁷⁴ Foxall, A., ‘Putin’s Peninsula: Crimea’s Annexation and Deterioration’, *The Henry Jackson Society* (2015), available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Putins-Peninsula.pdf>, last visited: 29 March 2018.

⁷⁵ Printed in an internal EU report, testimonies vary. See Huggler, J., ‘Putin “privately threatened to invade Poland, Romania and the Baltic states”’, *The Telegraph*, 18 September 2014, available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11106195/Putin-privately-threatened-to-invade-Poland-Romania-and-the-Baltic-states.html>, last visited: 3 April 2018; alternatively, see Roth, A., ‘Putin Tells European Official That He Could “Take Kiev in Two Weeks”’, *The New York Times*, 2 September 2014, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/03/world/europe/ukraine-crisis.html>, last visited: 3 April 2018.

⁷⁶ ‘Population, total: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania’, *The World Bank Open Data*, 2018, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=EE-LV-LT>, last visited: 4 April 2018 and ‘Russia in Figures: Official Publication, 2017’, *Federal State Statistics Service*, 2017, available at: http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/doc_2017/rusfig/rus17e.pdf, last visited: 4 April 2018, p. 42.

⁷⁷ ‘NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence’, *NATO*, May 2017, available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_05/1705-factsheet-efp.pdf, last visited: 4 April 2018.

⁷⁸ ‘GDP (current US\$): China’, *The World Bank Data*, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=CN>, last visited: 29 March 2018; ‘GDP (current US\$): United States’, *The World Bank Data*, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=US>, last visited: 29 March 2018.

islands, as well as a maritime and terrestrial communication infrastructure known as the “Belt and Road” initiative.⁷⁹ The problem – at least from the perspective of the Atlantic world – is that Beijing rules over a power base of formidable proportions, perhaps even more so than the US. China has a similar scale, abundant raw materials and a population comparable to all the major powers within the Atlantic system put together.⁸⁰ It is also located in the Indo-Pacific, the new centre of global economic growth, meaning that – geographically speaking – it will take less effort to push out of its national homeland to reach areas of strategic and economic priority, even in Africa and the Middle East. For the past 20 years, China has been gaining on its American counterpart, to such an extent⁸¹ that it has already amassed the world’s second largest naval fleet and is projected to overtake the US economy by the early 2030s, making it the first power in 200 years to exceed the economic production of an Atlantic democracy.⁸³

If China can navigate around its many problems, from autocratic corruption and poor governance to environmental degradation and an uneven population balance, it may develop a power base to fundamentally reshape the geopolitics of Eurasia, if not the world (through a “counter-hegemonic” approach).⁸³ Europe – including the UK – should be under no illusions that China will not turn its attention to the “Wider North”, including the Arctic and North Atlantic, or even the European mainland.⁸⁴ Beijing will likely come to look at Europe as just another geopolitical zone that requires “ordering” in accordance with China’s own national interests. Indeed, it may already be focusing on the penetration of the “weak points” in Eastern Europe in its pursuit of extending its global power.⁸⁵

3.2 The Internal Challenge: the US, Germany and France

The external challenge from Russia and particularly China will almost certainly have internal implications for the Atlantic order, as well as for the durability of the European geopolitical system. Given its Pacific seaboard and the growing economic importance of California – the

⁷⁹ Rogers, J., ‘From Suez to Shanghai: the European Union and Eurasian maritime security’, *European Union Institute for Security Studies* (March 2009), available at: <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/op77.pdf>, last visited: 29 March 2018. See also Funaiolo, M. and J. E. Hillman, ‘China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Economic Drivers and Challenges’, *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (March 2018), available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-maritime-silk-road-initiative-economic-drivers-and-challenges>, last visited: 3 April 2018.

⁸⁰ China’s population (1.38 billion) is more than twice that of the combined populations of the US (323.1 million), Germany (82.7 million), France (66.9 million) and the UK (65.6 million). ‘Population, total: China, United States, Germany, United Kingdom, France’, *The World Bank Open Data*, available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=CN-US-DE-GB-FR>, last visited: 4 April 2018.

⁸¹ Keck, Z., ‘The Chinese Military’s Secret Weapon against America’, *The National Interest*, 1 July 2017, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-chinese-militarys-secret-weapon-against-america-21400>, last visited: 4 April 2018.

⁸² Brown, K., *China’s World: What Does China Want?* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2017).

⁸³ Petersen, A., *The World Island: Eurasian Geopolitics and the Fate of the West* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011). See also Mações, B., *The Dawn of Eurasia: On the Trail of the New World Order* (London: Allen Lane, 2018).

⁸⁴ Johnson, K., ‘Why Is China Buying Up Europe’s Ports?’, *Foreign Policy*, 2 February 2018, available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/02/why-is-china-buying-up-europes-ports/>, last visited: 3 April 2018. “While [the] Europe[an Union] was busy squeezing Greece, the Chinese swooped in with bucket-loads of investments that have begun to pay off, not only economically but also by apparently giving China a political foothold in Greece, and by extension, in Europe ... Greece helped stop the European Union from issuing a unified statement against Chinese aggression in the South China Sea ... Athens prevented the bloc from condemning China’s human rights record.” Cited in Alderman, L. and J. Horowitz, ‘Chastised by E.U., a Resentful Greece Embraces China’s Cash and Interests’, *The New York Times*, 26 August 2017, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/26/world/europe/greece-china-piraeus-alexis-tsipras.html>, last visited: 3 April 2018. For Chinese interests in the Arctic, see the country’s new Arctic Policy, released in January 2018: The State Council, The People’s Republic of China, ‘Full text: China’s Arctic Policy’, *English.gov.cn*, 26 January 2018, available at: http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm, last visited: 5 April 2018.

⁸⁵ For example, see Le Corre, P. and A. Sepulchre, *China’s Offensive in Europe* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2014); Eder, T. S., ‘Chinese approaches to the eastern neighbourhood’, Popescu, N. and S. Secieru, (eds.), ‘Third powers in Europe’s east’, *European Union Institute for Security Studies* (March 2018), available at: <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Chaillot%20Paper%20144%20-Third%20powers%20in%20Europe%27s%20east.pdf>, last visited: 27 March 2018; Mackoki, M., ‘China, the new Silk Road and the EU’s eastern neighbourhood’, *European Union Institute for Security Studies*, available at: <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Chaillot%20Paper%20144%20-Third%20powers%20in%20Europe%27s%20east.pdf>, last visited: 27 March 2018.

wealthiest and most populous American state⁸⁶ – the US also has an important Pacific horizon, even if it has mostly prioritised its Atlantic, and thus European, vector over the past century. The rise of a new centre of geopolitical gravity on America's Pacific flank – China – will almost certainly force Washington, DC to gradually, but progressively, refocus its national assets towards supporting its allies and partners in East and South-East Asia, particularly as the core of the global economy continues to move away from the North Atlantic towards the Indo-Pacific.⁸⁷ In this way the US "pivot" or "rebalance" under President Barack Obama, itself building on earlier but haphazard moves by the administration of George W. Bush, was only the start of what will likely become a drawn-out and protracted paradigmatic shift in the US geostrategic approach. In step with China's rise, this will likely last for several decades from now, leading the Americans to concentrate more and more on the Indo-Pacific, starting with East and South-East Asia.

That said, given the vast scale and location of North America as a seat of geopolitical power – which is particularly well suited to the maintenance of a formidable navy – the US is unlikely to relinquish its Atlantic vector entirely, meaning it will retain an interest in European affairs irrespective of its wider agenda, particularly if Eurasia becomes an increasingly "connected" space.⁸⁸ However, what is likely to change is that the US will seek to "untether" itself from the European theatre (and thus from the UK's established post-war geostrategy) to the extent that it comes to see European geopolitics once again from the perspective of an "offshore balancer".⁸⁹ This does not mean it will leave NATO, despite early fears in relation to various statements made by Donald Trump during the US presidential election in 2016.⁹⁰ What it does mean is that America will likely come to expect its European allies – especially the UK – to do more to defend Europe, and especially to "backfill" for US forces in the Gulf and the wider Middle East, perhaps even in parts of the Indo-Pacific, as Washington, DC concentrates its own capabilities in East and South-East Asia to uphold the regional order.⁹¹ In this sense, the repetitive calls by US leaders – presidents, secretaries of state, defence secretaries, diplomats and flag officers – for European countries to increase their military spending are unlikely to abate and will only grow louder and more demanding.⁹²

Moreover, it is not unthinkable that over the next decade or two the US may come to see Russia in a very different light, adding a further level of complexity to European security. Whereas in the past, even during the Cold War, Europe was central to global geopolitics, it no longer holds this position. In this sense, America may not only come to see parts of (Eastern) Europe as supplemental to its wider global agenda, but it may also come to see Russia as a potential partner instead of a competitor. The reason for this is simple: the US will want to prevent the

⁸⁶ Gray, A., 'Which American state has a bigger economy than India?', *World Economic Forum*, 8 July 2016, available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/07/american-state-bigger-economy-than-india/>, last visited: 29 March 2018.

⁸⁷ 'The world's shifting centre of gravity', *The Economist*, 28 June 2012, available at: <https://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2012/06/daily-chart-19>, last visited: 4 April 2018.

⁸⁸ Petersen, A., *The World Island: Eurasian Geopolitics and the Fate of the West*. See also Mações, B., *The Dawn of Eurasia: On the Trail of the New World Order*.

⁸⁹ This approach was put forward by two American "realist" scholars, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt. See Mearsheimer, J. J. and S. M. Walt, 'The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior U.S. Grand Strategy', *Foreign Affairs* July/August 2016, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-06-13/case-offshore-balancing?campaign=JA16-Mearsheimer-Walt&t=1465991575>, last visited: 5 April 2018.

⁹⁰ Gramer, R., 'NATO Frantically Tries to Trump-Proof President's First Visit', *Foreign Policy*, 15 May 2017, available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/05/15/nato-frantically-tries-to-trump-proof-presidents-first-visit-alliance-europe-brussels/>, last visited: 5 April 2018.

⁹¹ Simón, L., 'Europe, the rise of Asia and the future of the transatlantic relationship', *International Affairs* 91.5 (2015): pp. 269-289.

⁹² Baker, P., 'Trump Says NATO Allies Don't Pay Their Share. Is That True?', *The New York Times*, 26 May 2017, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/26/world/europe/nato-trump-spending.html>, last visited: 5 April 2018 and 'U.S. defence secretary tells NATO countries to increase military spending', *CBC News*, 15 February 2017, available at: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/us-mattis-defence-nato-spending-1.3985126>, last visited: 5 April 2018.

formation of a Chinese geopolitical bloc – a “positive” order – over most of Eurasia. Just as it was keen to prise Beijing away from Moscow during the Soviet era, it will be keen to prevent the further formation of a Beijing-Moscow alliance over the coming years, such as the crystallisation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.⁹³ Moreover, the US will likely seek to weaken Beijing’s hand in East and South-East Asia by exploiting China’s terrestrial vulnerabilities, particularly in Central Asia and along the country’s northern frontier.⁹⁴ Indeed, it is not unthinkable that the US may become more accommodating of the Kremlin’s interests in Eastern Europe, particularly if Russia agrees to exert geopolitical pressure on China in Central Asia, to help with its containment.

It is unfortunate, then, that Europe is itself experiencing several internal difficulties, which have assumed a distinctly geopolitical flavour. Chief among these has been the change in the balance of power between the two major continental powers, France and Germany, since the demolition of the Iron Curtain. France and West Germany held a degree of parity as the dual “motor” of European integration during the Cold War, with Bonn having an economic edge and Paris holding a political and military lead. However, the reunification of Germany in 1990 left the new state – Germany – with a far larger and more productive national power base than France.⁹⁵ Whereas in 1990, just before reunification, West Germany was only 10% more populous than France and around 29% more economically productive, today Germany is 25% more populous and more than 40% more economically productive.⁹⁶ In turn, Germany’s position has been further amplified by the construction of a network of EU-funded motorways and railways fanning out into the EU peripheries, first into Southern Europe during the 1990s and 2000s and then into Eastern Europe during the 2000s and 2010s, reducing the time taken to export German goods to peripheral EU markets.⁹⁷

Moreover, while France remains a sizeable naval power, a nuclear weapons state and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, the country’s military resources have been in steady relative decline, in keeping with its economic performance and domestic political priorities. Today, although Germany invests significantly less in its military spending than France as a percentage of national output – 1.24% as opposed to 1.79% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – the larger size of the German economy has steadily reduced France’s preponderance in terms

⁹³ Goldstein, L. J., ‘A China-Russia Alliance?’, *The National Interest*, 25 April 2017, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-russia-alliance-20333>, last visited: 5 April 2018; Green, M. J., ‘Should America Fear a New Sino-Russian Alliance?’, *Foreign Policy*, 13 August 2014, available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/13/should-america-fear-a-new-sino-russian-alliance/>, last visited: 5 April 2018. See also Fulton, J., ‘Could the SCO Expand Into the Middle East?’, *The Diplomat*, 24 February 2018, available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/could-the-sco-expand-into-the-middle-east/>, last visited: 5 April 2018.

⁹⁴ Grygiel, J., *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006), pp. 167-177.

⁹⁵ Both Margaret Thatcher and François Mitterrand were deeply suspicious of the reunification of Germany: “Mr Mitterrand talked about how reunification would see the re-emergence of the ‘bad’ Germans who had once dominated Europe. According to the memo, Mr Mitterrand at one point said that if Chancellor [Helmut] Kohl were to get his way, Germany could win more ground than Hitler ever did and that Europe would have to bear the consequences. Mr Mitterrand goes on to warn Mrs Thatcher that if Germany were to expand territorially in Europe, the continent would be back to where it had been one year before the first world war [sic]. But unlike the British prime minister, he acknowledged that no force in Europe would be able to stop it happening.” Cited in Blitz, J., ‘Mitterrand feared emergence of “bad” Germans’, *Financial Times*, 9 September 2009, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/886192ba-9d7d-11de-9f4a-00144feabdc0>, last visited: 5 April 2018. See Hoffman, S., ‘French Dilemmas and Strategies in the New Europe’, *Centre for European Studies Harvard University* (Working Paper Series 38), available at: http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~ces/publications/docs/pdfs/CES_38.pdf, last visited: 6 April 2018.

⁹⁶ Figures derived from: ‘Gross domestic product (GDP) – West Germany, Germany, France: 1990–2016’, *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*, 2018, available at: <https://data.oecd.org/chart/58Tt>, last visited: 10 April 2018 and ‘Population – Germany, France: 1990–2014’, *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*, 2018, available at: <https://data.oecd.org/chart/58Tu>, last visited: 10 April 2018.

⁹⁷ For a good – albeit slightly outdated – visualisations of these communication networks, see ‘International urban connectivity, 2011’, *European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion* (ESPON), 2011, available at: <http://mapfinder.espon.eu/?p=2553>, last visited: 30 April 2018 and ‘Territorial connectivity by road, rail and airports, 2010’, *European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion* (ESPON), 2011, available at: <http://mapfinder.espon.eu/?p=2503>, last visited: 30 April 2018.

of military expenditure.⁹⁸ Whereas the French military budget – based on NATO calculations – was a little more than 12% bigger than Germany's in 2010, it was a mere 1% larger in 2017.⁹⁹ Equally, whereas France was geographically central to Western Europe during the Cold War, Germany has re-emerged as Europe's geopolitical centre, not least since the enlargement of both NATO and the EU towards Eastern Europe during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Germany has utilised its economic strength and centralised geographic position to pursue, increasingly, what Hans Kundnani, Senior Research Fellow at Chatham House, has described as a "geo-economic" or "coercive" policy against its EU partners to achieve its desired objectives.¹⁰⁰ Despite its fiscal irregularities and ineffective taxation system, Greece was subjected to particularly robust treatment during the country's sovereign debt crisis (2010–2012).¹⁰¹ The British Prime Minister, David Cameron, suffered a "humiliating defeat" when he came up against domestic German politics when trying to prevent the so-called *Spitzenkandidaten* process from gaining ground in 2014 during the appointment of Jean-Claude Juncker as President of the European Commission.¹⁰² Equally, during the UK-EU negotiations in February 2016, it was Germany that prevented a suitable settlement from being reached to satisfy British demands for a more flexible and democratic EU – one that might at least have been acceptable for the British people to vote to remain inside.¹⁰³ German power was further uncloaked during the height of the migration crisis in 2015: Berlin's unilateral decision to invite refugees and economic migrants to Germany completely ignored the pleas of EU countries along the likely transit routes, who were simply left to deal with the consequences, and then told they should provide assistance.¹⁰⁴ So, aside from the fact that scant regard seems to have been given to the longer-term economic and political costs of these decisions – whether in the form of Greece's domestic politics, British withdrawal from the EU, the hardening of support for populist demagogues in Central Europe or even the rise

⁹⁸ 'Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)', NATO, 29 June 2017, available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_06/20170629_170629-pr2017-111-en.pdf, last visited: 5 April 2018.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ For a solid overview of this approach, see Kundnani, H., 'Germany as a Geo-economic Power', *The Washington Quarterly* 34.3 (2011): pp. 31–45. See also Kundnani, H., 'Carta de Europa: El retorno de la historia', *Estudios de Política Exterior*, May/June 2013, available at: <http://www.politicaexterior.com/articulos/politica-exterior/carta-de-europa-el-retorno-de-la-historia/>, last visited: 6 April 2018.

¹⁰¹ As Joseph Stiglitz, a former Chief Economist at the World Bank, puts it, "Of course, the economics behind the programme that the 'troika' (the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund) foisted on Greece five years ago has been abysmal, resulting in a 25% decline in the country's GDP. I can think of no depression, ever, that has been so deliberate and had such catastrophic consequences: Greece's rate of youth unemployment, for example, now exceeds 60%." Cited in Stiglitz, J. E., 'Joseph Stiglitz: how I would vote in the Greek referendum', *The Guardian*, 29 June 2015, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/jun/29/joseph-stiglitz-how-i-would-vote-in-the-greek-referendum>, last visited: 10 April 2018. Stiglitz elaborates further in Stiglitz, J. E., *The Euro: And its Threat to the Future of Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2016).

¹⁰² Lever, P., *Berlin Rules: Europe and the German Way* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2017), p. 10.

¹⁰³ Iain Duncan Smith, the then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, remarked in relation to the negotiations, "It's like they [the Germans] were sitting in a room, even when they were not there. There was a spare chair for them – called the German Chair. They have had a de facto veto over everything." Cited in Dunn, T. N., 'Cam's in her hands: Germany SABOTAGED David Cameron's EU renegotiation and he let them, IDS sensationally claims', *The Sun*, 10 May 2016, available at: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1168015/cams-in-her-hands-germany-sabotaged-david-camersons-eu-renegotiation-and-he-let-them-ids-sensationally-claims/>, last visited: 6 April 2018. Likewise, Daniel Korski, at the time the Deputy Director of the Prime Minister's Policy Unit, lamented, "After the [Brexit] referendum [in 2016], when [David] Cameron met [Angela] Merkel ..., Merkel made clear there would have been no other offer forthcoming – whatever we had offered, threatened or pleaded. Ending freedom of movement for an EU member was, at the time, not possible for her politically or philosophically. We probably expected too much of her [Angela Merkel] but the truth is that in today's EU, you either rely on Germany, or you have nobody to rely on at all. And as it turned out, Merkel was willing to give us some of what we asked for [in the pre-referendum deal], but not all of it. And as a result, other European leaders were willing to go an extra mile, but not two or three." Cited in Korski, D., 'Why we lost the Brexit vote', *Politico*, 20 October 2016, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/why-we-lost-the-brexit-vote-former-uk-prime-minister-david-cameron/>, last visited: 6 April 2018.

¹⁰⁴ Müller, J., *What is Populism?* (Pennsylvania: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), pp. 44–45, 55–56, 64–65; Traub, J., 'The Party That Wants to Make Poland Great Again', *The New York Times*, 2 November 2016, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/06/magazine/the-party-that-wants-to-make-poland-great-again.html>, last visited: 8 March 2018.

in domestic support for *Alternative für Deutschland* in Germany¹⁰⁵ – such episodes have revealed that it has become difficult for any decision to be made in Brussels without the conspicuous or tacit consent of the German political establishment.¹⁰⁶

Germany’s new ascendancy can also be seen by the way in which it has succeeded in “moderating” the EU’s latest package of security and defence initiatives in accordance with its own interests.¹⁰⁷ Over the past two years, the EU has agreed on three key initiatives – the “Coordinated Annual Review on Defence”, “Permanent Structured Cooperation” (PESCO) and a “European Defence Fund” – as part of a so-called “Defence Union”.¹⁰⁸ In the words of Federica Mogherini, the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, these are designed to “build a truly European defence industry, a truly European defence market and a truly European defence research”, which, she asserts, are “the basis for a truly European defence”.¹⁰⁹ The aim of this German-backed “inclusive” approach is not so much the generation of deployable military forces – let alone an “EU Army”; instead, its objective appears to be more geared towards embroiling as many EU countries into an EU defence-industrial base as possible, which in turn would protect them from foreign competition.¹¹⁰ In addition, aside from enhancing the German economy, the institutional provisions within this “inclusive” approach seem intended to gradually draw each EU country’s defence acquisition and procurement processes into an EU framework, potentially making it harder for them to be deployed through other structures.¹¹¹

Having been progressively sidelined by Germany, it can be no surprise that France has grown dissatisfied with its own position, as well as with the direction of European integration more generally. This can be seen in the way that Paris has sought to re-emphasise the Atlantic vector of its geostrategic policy over the past decade, creating more leverage and opportunities with

¹⁰⁵ On the collapse of the Merkel consensus in Germany, see The Editorial Board, ‘A German Coalition of the Losers’, *The Wall Street Journal*, 13 February 2018, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-german-coalition-of-the-losers-1518565207>, last visited: 8 March 2018; see also Erixon, F., ‘Merkel’s left-right coalition has given the AfD exactly what it wanted’, *The Spectator*, 4 March 2018, available at: <https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2018/03/angela-merkel-has-created-germanys-far-right>, last visited: 9 March 2018.

¹⁰⁶ Lever, P., *Berlin Rules: Europe and the German Way*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Stronger together thanks to PESCO’, *The Federal Government*, 13 November 2017, available at: https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Artikel/2017/11_en/2017-11-13-pesco_en.html, last visited: 11 May 2018.

¹⁰⁸ “In June [2017] I [European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker] said it was time to wake up the Sleeping Beauty of the Lisbon Treaty: permanent structured cooperation. Six months later, it is happening. I welcome the steps taken today by Member States to lay the foundations of a European Defence Union. Europe cannot and should not outsource our security and defence. The European Defence Fund that the European Commission proposed will complement these efforts and act as a further incentive for defence cooperation – including potential funding for some of the projects presented today.” Cited in ‘European Commission welcomes first operational steps towards a European Defence Union’, *European Commission Press Release Database*, 11 December 2017, available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-5205_en.htm, last visited: 5 April 2018.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Remarks by High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the 2017 Annual Conference of the European Defence Agency’, *European Union External Action*, 23 November 2017, available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/36123/remarks-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-2017-annual-conference-european_en, last visited: 5 April 2018.

¹¹⁰ For US concerns about the “protectionist” prospects of “Defence Union” and the way in which it might divide NATO, see Mehta, A., ‘US warns against “protectionism” with new EU defense agreement’, *Defense News*, 14 February 2018, available at: <https://www.defensenews.com/smr/munich-security-forum/2018/02/14/us-warns-against-protectionism-with-new-eu-defense-agreement/>, last visited: 6 April 2018. Former NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated, “I welcome the increasing focus by European nations on developing these capabilities. Let me stress: It is not NATO or the EU that possess these assets. They are owned by the individual nations. They benefit the nations that have them. And they allow those nations to make a stronger contribution to addressing crises, in any framework they choose – be it EU or NATO or any other way. We must also get the most out of the resources we have. So that we provide our tax-payers with better security, and more value for money. Because each of our nations only has one set of tax-payers, and one set of armed forces.” Cited in ‘Remarks by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the European Council’, *NATO*, 19 December 2013, available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_105964.htm, last visited: 6 April 2018.

¹¹¹ In this respect, it should be very clear that, for Germany, “Defence Union” is not so much about fostering a European defence-industrial base as it is about asserting German control. Recall that it was Germany that rejected the prospect of a merger between BAE Systems and EADS, the two largest European defence companies in 2012. As Sir Paul Lever argues, “The key lesson of the episode was that in a choice between European vision and German national interest it is not the European vision to which the German government gives priority.” Lever, P., *Berlin Rules: Europe and the German Way*, pp. 189-190.

the UK and the US.¹¹² France agreed to re-enter NATO’s integrated military command in 2009 and signed the Lancaster House treaties with the UK in 2010. Equally, with the election of Emmanuel Macron as President of the French Republic in May 2017 on a platform of EU reform, France has also tried to reassert a renewed moral and intellectual leadership over the future of European integration. Mr Macron proclaimed while outlining his vision for Europe to a packed hall in the Sorbonne University in September 2017:

France’s time for making proposals has returned, so I will be making proposals to everyone who shares this desire for a sovereign Europe, based on the central objectives I have mapped out: the desire for a united, differentiated Europe, for a democratic Europe ... Let’s move forward right now.¹¹³

As part of his master plan, President Macron’s central objectives can be grouped under two categories: strategic and economic.

Economically, given Berlin’s economic and industrial clout, Mr Macron put forward a series of proposals to modernise the French and EU economies through green and digital technologies, to improve their competitive edge. However, his real emphasis, building on one of France’s long-standing objectives, was to propose some form of EU “transfer union”. Potentially, this would facilitate the redistribution of German wealth towards poorer countries on the EU’s southern and eastern peripheries, upholding a longstanding French objective: entangling Berlin deeper into the EU and reducing its leverage. President Macron’s view is that “the German taboo is financial transfers; the French taboo is treaty change. Ultimately, if we want Europe, both will happen.”¹¹⁴ Yet while a compromise with Germany is not unthinkable in this area – witness the recent interventions of Sigmar Gabriel, the former Vice Chancellor of Germany, in support of Mr Macron – Berlin would have to overcome the austere economic orthodoxy of the German financial establishment.¹¹⁵ It would also need to placate the German public’s deep antipathy to the prospect of bailouts and transfers – their tax revenue – from their own country to the EU’s poorer peripheries.¹¹⁶

Strategically, the French president is particularly keen to re-establish his country’s lead over EU foreign, security and defence policy, which has been steadily eroded since the 1990s. To no small extent this is because the geopolitical reorientation of both NATO and the EU towards Eastern Europe, compounded by Russia’s revisionism, has drawn attention away from French strategic priorities, particularly in North and Central Africa. France’s frustration can be seen in Mr Macron’s call for the EU to “consolidate” its geographic effort with “renewed ambition”, to focus more on the Mediterranean – an area he describes as “the heart of our civilisation” – and the Sahel region in North Africa. In addition, given the turmoil unleashed by Germany’s

¹¹² Simón, L., ‘The Spider in Europe’s Web? French Grand Strategy from Iraq to Libya’, *Geopolitics* (2013) 18:2, pp. 403-434. See also Panier, A., ‘From one exceptionalism to another: France’s strategic relations with the United States and the United Kingdom in the post-Cold War era’, *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40.4 (2017): pp. 475-504.

¹¹³ Macron, E., ‘Initiative For Europe’, *President of the French Republic*, 26 September 2017, available at: https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/english_version_transcript_-_initiative_for_europe_-_speech_by_the_president_of_the_french_republic_cle8de628.pdf, last visited: 8 March 2018.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Lever, P., *Berlin Rules: Europe and the German Way*, pp. 30-61; Frymark, K. and K. Poplawski, ‘Germany towards France: superficial compromises and structural differences’, *Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW)*, 25 April 2018, available at: <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2018-04-25/germany-towards-france-superficial-compromises-and-structural>, last visited: 30 April 2018. For Sigmar Gabriel’s intervention, see Gabriel, S., ‘Germany should help, not hinder, Macron’s EU reforms’, *Handelsblatt Global*, 24 April 2018, available at: <https://global.handelsblatt.com/opinion/germany-should-help-macron-eu-reforms-914794>, last visited: 30 April 2018.

¹¹⁶ Kluth, A., ‘The dilemma at the heart of Europe: Germany and the German question’, *Institute for Public Policy Research*, 3 September 2013, available at: <https://www.ippr.org/juncture/the-dilemma-at-the-heart-of-europe-germany-and-the-german-question>, last visited: 6 April 2018. For Sigmar Gabriel’s intervention, see: Gabriel, S., ‘Germany should help, not hinder, Macron’s EU reforms’, *Handelsblatt Global*, 24 April 2018.

unilateral decision to invite migrants from the Levant and North Africa into the country in 2015, the French President argued that EU border security needed to be firmed up. By drawing a link between the two – with statements such as “only stabilisation and development in countries of origin will dry them [migrants] up” – Mr Macron appears to be attempting to build a coalition in an EU context to boost France’s position. He has realised that although EU members to the east and north may be disinclined to focus more on the Mediterranean and North Africa, they nonetheless disapprove of large-scale immigration from those locations.

Moreover, while France is not opposed to the German-led EU “Defence Union”, not least because its own large military-industrial sector is likely to profit handsomely, it has always sought a more ambitious, “exclusive”, approach to strengthen European military power. It has long emphasised “strategic autonomy” (now described as “sovereignty” by Mr Macron), to enable Europeans to undertake sizeable and high-intensity combat operations from a distance, without US support.¹¹⁷ In keeping with the steps taken with the UK at St Malo in 1998, France has consistently preferred the militarily capable EU countries to band together to form a strategic vanguard able to perform “out-of-area” operations, in time developing a robust and active strategic posture and expeditionary mindset.¹¹⁸ However, for Germany, with its “passive” strategic culture and insufficient military expenditure, this was always anathema. And given Berlin’s economic and political heft, it is no surprise that the German perspective prevailed: agreed in phases during Autumn 2017, “Defence Union” took shape as Berlin, and not Paris, had planned it.¹¹⁹ Thus, at the Sorbonne, Mr Macron called for a “European Intervention Initiative”, to develop “a shared strategic culture”, leading ultimately to “a common intervention force, a common defence budget and a common doctrine for action”.¹²⁰ The new French President subsequently vowed to uphold France’s promise – made at NATO’s Newport Summit in 2014 – to increase military spending towards 2% of GDP by 2024. French military spending will now grow by as much as 35% by 2025, though Germany’s significantly larger economy means that – irrespective of these increases – the two countries may remain at relative parity.¹²¹

Thus, carefully wrapped in the French tricolour, each of the French President’s proposals seems less concerned with the deeper integration of the EU per se and more concerned with the empowerment of France in areas where the country has the potential to lead the EU, or in such ways as to “moderate” German influence.¹²² Ultimately, France wants to wrest control over the direction of the EU from Germany, or at least empower itself to such an extent that it (re)joins Germany as the effective co-convenor of the bloc.¹²³ However, it is highly unlikely that Germany

¹¹⁷ It should be recalled that this has long been a French objective, going all the way back to the St Malo Accord of 1998. See Rutten, M., ‘From St-Malo to Nice, European defence: core documents’, *Institute for Security Studies*, May 2001, available at: <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/cp047e.pdf>, last visited: 6 April 2018.

¹¹⁸ Gotkowska, J., ‘The Trouble with PESCO: The Mirages of European Defence’, *Centre for Eastern Studies*, February 2018, available at: http://aei.pitt.edu/93565/1/pw_69_pesco_ang_net.pdf, last visited: 6 April 2018.

¹¹⁹ ‘Defence cooperation: 23 member states sign joint notification on the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)’, *European Council, Council of the European Union*, 13 November 2017, available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/11/13/defence-cooperation-23-member-states-sign-joint-notification-on-pesco/>, last visited: 5 April 2018.

¹²⁰ For a translated transcript, see Macron, E., ‘Initiative For Europe’, *President of the French Republic*, 26 September 2017. For a good overview of the ‘European Intervention Initiative’, see Pannier, A., ‘Macron’s “European Intervention Initiative”: more questions than answers’, *European Leadership Network*, 23 November 2017, available at: <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/macrons-european-intervention-initiative-more-questions-than-answers/>, last visited: 29 March 2018. See also Major, C. and C. Mölling, ‘France Moves From EU Defense to European Defense’, *Carnegie Europe*, 7 December 2017, available at: <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/74944>, last visited: 6 April 2018.

¹²¹ ‘France commits to boosting defense spending by 35 percent over six years’, *Reuters*, 8 February 2018, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-defence/france-commits-to-boosting-defense-spending-by-35-percent-over-six-years-idUSKBN1FS18Q>, last visited: 15 April 2018.

¹²² Quencez, M., ‘Unapologetically French’, *Berlin Policy Journal*, 2 March 2018, available at: <https://berlinpolicyjournal.com/unapologetically-french/>, last visited: 9 March 2018.

¹²³ Tombs, R., ‘Emmanuel Macron’s Vision and the “Remainer” project’, *Briefings for Brexit*, February 2018, available at: <https://briefingsforbrexit.com/macrons-vision-and-the-remainer-project-a-crisis-for-what/>, last visited: 30 April 2018.

will budge to the extent that Mr Macron desires. Therefore, despite his authority in France, the French President's ambitions are likely to get watered down; indeed, his proposal for the establishment of a “European Intervention Initiative” will now take place outside of the EU framework, not least because it requires the UK to work, a point France understands and actively acknowledges.¹²⁴ Meanwhile, the French President's proposal for a “Group for the Re-foundation of Europe” has not yet even gotten off the ground. Here, Andrés Ortega, a Senior Fellow at the Royal Elcano Institute in Madrid, sums up France's predicament aptly, if somewhat bluntly: “Macron has the ideas, but Merkel has the red pen.”¹²⁵

3.3 The UK, the European Subsystem and the Future of the Atlantic Order

With its decision to leave the EU after a “transition period” lasting until December 2020, the UK has thrown a curveball on to the pitch of European geopolitics. It should be no surprise, then, that British withdrawal has been met with near universal condemnation on the European mainland, as a plethora of EU officials and other pro-EU forces have lined up to denounce the British decision.¹²⁶ Their attempt to put in place their own narrative – that the UK will weaken and wane – is understandable: in reality, it is the EU, and not the UK, that has looked exhausted and unstable in recent years. The British decision to leave is a consequence of that fatigue and not its cause, even if the decision itself will have an impact on the future direction of European integration, as well as the wider Atlantic order in which it is nested.¹²⁷ Indeed, given the new developments in relation to France, Germany and the US, to say nothing of the challenges confronting the Atlantic order, from Russia to China, it might seem misconstrued or even perverse for the UK to have decided to leave the EU at the moment when its stabilising function was needed more than ever. For not only has the looming British withdrawal revealed that European integration can be *reversed*, but it will also challenge the EU on at least two different – but deeply connected – levels.¹²⁸

First, Britain's withdrawal is likely to expose further the EU's “democratic deficit”, a point even President Macron alluded to during his speech at the Sorbonne.¹²⁹ This deficit is not the “design flaw” it is often constructed to be: it is fundamental to the very enterprise of European integration. This deficit was brought into sharp relief during Greece's recent sovereign debt crisis in 2015 when Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, told the Greeks, “There can be no democratic choice against the European treaties.”¹³⁰ Notwithstanding

¹²⁴ Chazan, D. and P. Foster, ‘Macron email leak: British military ties to France “more important” than flawed Germany-EU plan’, *The Telegraph*, 31 July 2017, available at:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/07/31/macron-email-leak-british-military-ties-france-important-flawed/>, last visited: 29 March 2018. See also: Lindley-French, J., ‘Schuman, Galileo and the Return of Great Power Europe’, *Julian Lindley-French's Blog Blast*, 9 May 2018, available at: <http://lindleyfrench.blogspot.co.uk/2018/05/schuman-galileo-and-return-of-great.html>, last visited: 10 May 2018.

¹²⁵ Ortega, A., ‘Macron, Merkel and the new European sovereignties’, *Elcano Blog*, 24 April 2018, available at: <https://blog.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/macron-merkel-and-the-new-european-sovereignties/>, last visited: 26 April 2018.

¹²⁶ For an overview of the new “declinism”, see Rogers, J., ‘Towards “Global Britain”: Challenging the New Narratives of National Decline’, *The Henry Jackson Society*, September 2017, available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Towards-Global-Britain.pdf>, last visited: 10 April 2018; Tombs, R., ‘The crippling illusion of decline’, *Briefings for Brexit*, March 2018, available at: <https://briefingsforbrexit.com/crippling-illusion-decline/>, last visited: 10 April 2018.

¹²⁷ Simms, B., ‘The world after Brexit’, *New Statesman*, 1 March 2017, available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/2017/03/world-after-brexit>, last visited: 10 April 2018; Simms, B., ‘Europe's hidden fractures’, *New Statesman*, 27 November 2017, available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/2017/11/europe-s-hidden-fractures>, last visited: 12 April 2018.

¹²⁸ To be clear, Algeria (1962), Greenland (1985) and Saint Barthélemy (2012) have left the European integrationist project, although they were overseas departments or territories of existing member states, rather than member states themselves. For a succinct overview, see ‘Exiting the EU? Algeria, Greenland and Saint Barthélemy experiences’, *Nationalia*, 23 February 2016, available at: <https://www.nationalia.info/new/10722/exiting-the-eu-algeria-greenland-and-saint-barthelemy-experiences>, last visited: 15 April 2018.

¹²⁹ Macron, E., ‘Initiative For Europe’, *President of the French Republic*, 26 September 2017.

¹³⁰ Cited in Hewitt, G., ‘Greece: The dangerous game’, *BBC News*, 1 February 2015, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-31082656>, last visited: 9 March 2018.

the abysmal level of Greek economic mismanagement, this statement could be seen to define the essence of European integration. Each formal act of integration – when codified in treaty text – is *de facto* a permanent choice, even if it was made by a particular generation in a particular period because of a particular set of circumstances. This is precisely what Mr Juncker was referring to: once entered into, European integration binds its members, making it almost impossible to change European law without entering into new treaty negotiations, a movement that would require the support of other member states. In this sense, to draw from the work of Mark Leonard, the Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, the EU has come to resemble a kind of “Panopticon”, the perfect “self-disciplining” prison dreamt up by Jeremy Bentham, the eighteenth-century philosopher.¹³¹ It permanently incarcerates and exerts disciplinary “surveillance” on its members to ensure that they meet the obligations they have previously agreed to uphold. For the zealous integrationist, then, every act of European integration is a final destination, with each act providing the foundation for the next.

Put simply, Britain’s “maritime” nature and outlook, with its deep desire for democratic sovereignty, sits uneasily with the notion of European integration and its various structures. Whereas Britain continues to yearn for the centrality of an organically rendered and self-regulating liberal and democratic culture, realised and expressed through the nation state, the EU is deeply suspicious of the national community and seeks to suspend it in a plethora of constitutionally derived but immutable laws that are upheld by supranational and intergovernmental regimes, institutions and structures.¹³² While many factors appear to have influenced the British people’s decision to seek withdrawal from the EU, two – which are interwoven – stand out among all the others: firstly, a desire to reverse in part the ability of citizens from other EU countries to move to the UK freely; and, secondly, disenchantment with the inability of the national democratic system to modify existing EU law.¹³³ The inability of David Cameron, the then Prime Minister, to reassert national sovereignty during his negotiations with his EU counterparts in February 2016 merely revealed the British government’s own impotence, which was the final straw. As Theresa May, the British Prime Minister, explained in September 2017:

The strength of feeling that the British people have about this need for control and the direct accountability of their politicians is one reason why, throughout its membership, the United Kingdom has never totally felt at home being in the European Union ... So the British electorate made a choice. They chose the power of domestic democratic control

¹³¹ Leonard, M., *Why Europe will rule the 21st century* (London: Fourth Estate, 2005), pp. 40-41. See also Kundhani, H., ‘The troubling transformation of the EU’, *The London School of Economics and Political Science, Europa: European Politics and Society*, 28 March 2017, available at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2018/03/28/the-troubling-transformation-of-the-eu/>, last visited: 11 April 2018.

¹³² Both Edward Heath, the former British Prime Minister and Jean Monnet, the first President of the European Coal and Steel Community’s High Authority, explained this forcefully in their various ways in 1975 and 1978 respectively. When debating the motion ‘This House would vote “yes” to Europe’ at a televised debate at the Oxford Union on the eve of the first referendum on Britain’s continued membership of the European Community in 1975, Mr Heath declared, “What really divides us is that those who are opposing this motion are in fact content to remain with the past development and institutions and organisation of the nation-state. And those on this side are those who want to move forward into a new organisation which is going to have greater success in meeting the needs of its peoples than the nation-state has done in the past. That is what clearly divides us.” Likewise, Mr Monnet put it in his *Memoirs*, “The sovereign nations of the past can no longer solve the problems of the present: they cannot ensure their own progress and they cannot control their own future. And the community itself is only a stage on the way to the organised world of tomorrow.” Heath, E., ‘This House would vote “yes” to Europe’, *Oxford Union*, June 1975, accessed from ‘Oxford Union debate EEC referendum 1975 – Edward Heath, Barbara Castle, Jeremy Thorpe’, *YouTube*, 29 June 2016, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2jUYryRYII>, last visited: 12 March 2018; Monnet, J., *Memoirs* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1978), p. 524.

¹³³ Nelson, F., ‘With some sadness, I’ll vote to Leave an undemocratic and decaying institution that stopped helping Europe some time ago’, *The Telegraph*, 23 June 2016, available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/23/with-some-sadness-ill-vote-to-leave-an-undemocratic-and-decaying/>, last visited: 12 March 2018.

over pooling that control, strengthening the role of the UK Parliament and the devolved Scottish Parliament, Welsh and Northern Ireland Assemblies in deciding our laws.¹³⁴

In this sense, far from being motivated by fear, or illiberal urges, the British people's decision to leave the EU could be seen as a ringing endorsement of the UK as a political project, both in terms of nationhood and democratic accountability.¹³⁵ This will likely re-emphasise the potency of the liberal-democratic nation-state as a model for effective socio-political and economic organisation, challenging the vision of EU integration as the principal framework for peace and prosperity on the European continent.¹³⁶

Secondly, as it leaves the EU, the UK will almost certainly destabilise further the internal EU power structure, particularly in relation to Germany and France, but also in relation to lesser powers. Already for some years, owing to its rise in power, Germany has been described as a “reluctant hegemon”, a “semi-hegemon” or an “accidental hegemon”, which asserts itself in Europe only because it *has* to, not because it *wants* to.¹³⁷ Some Europeans have even come to expect Germany to lead. As Radek Sikorski, the then Polish Foreign Minister, famously told his German colleagues in 2012, “I fear German power less than I am beginning to fear its inactivity. You have become Europe's indispensable nation. You may not fail to lead.”¹³⁸ There is of course some truth in this: the weakness of surrounding countries, both in terms of capability and in terms of their willingness to assert moral and intellectual leadership over the future of European integration, notwithstanding the recent re-emergence of France under President Macron, has been striking.¹³⁹

Yet at the same time, Germany *has* led actively: the problem is simply that its leadership does not always chime with the interests of other EU countries, which have often looked to the UK instead. As Sir Paul Lever, a former UK Ambassador to Germany, carefully explains:

Germany's leadership of the EU is geared principally to the defence of German national interests. Germany exercises power in order to protect the German economy and to enable it to play an influential role in the wider world. Beyond that there is no underlying vision or purpose.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ For a full transcript, see ‘PM's Florence speech: a new era of cooperation and partnership between the UK and the EU’, *Gov.uk*, 22 September 2017, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-florence-speech-a-new-era-of-cooperation-and-partnership-between-the-uk-and-the-eu>, last visited: 12 March 2018.

¹³⁵ The repressed but potent sense of British (or English) national identity, particularly among the so-called “working class”, is one of the defining matters dealt with by George Orwell in *England Your England*. Orwell, G., *England Your England* (London: Penguin, 2017 [1941]).

¹³⁶ John Gray, Emeritus Professor of European Thought at the London School of Economics, explains, “As long as there is confusion about that, we can't understand the European situation. In the period from the 1880s up to the First World War and afterward, America pursued a policy of extremely intensive assimilation, through the school system and other ways, to force immigrants into a cohesive national culture. It's a classical European nation-state and the most successful nation-state in the world. And that essentially seems to me why Europe's project is going nowhere. It's yesterday's project, in a way. It's a project that basically responds to the catastrophic history of Europe in the twentieth century, not to the situation now. Half of twenty-first-century Europe is suffering to address the twentieth-century German question.” For a full transcript, see Galbraith, J. K., J. Gray, U. Guérot, C. Lemke, J. Madrick and E. Todd, ‘How Germany Reconquered Europe: The euro and its discontents’, *Harper's Magazine*, February 2014, available at: <https://harpers.org/archive/2014/02/how-germany-reconquered-europe/?single=1>, last visited: 11 April 2014.

¹³⁷ Green, S., *Reluctant Meister: How Germany's Past is Shaping Its European Future* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). See also Beddoes, Z. M., ‘Europe's reluctant hegemon’, *The Economist*, 15 June 2013, available at: <https://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21579140-germany-now-dominant-country-europe-needs-rethink-way-it-see-itself-and>, last visited: 6 April 2018.

¹³⁸ Cited in Sikorski, R., ‘I fear Germany's power less than her inactivity’, *Financial Times*, 28 November 2011, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/b753cb42-19b3-11e1-ba5d-00144feabdc0>, last visited: 6 April 2018.

¹³⁹ See: Simms, B., ‘Germany's triumph: from the ruins of war, how a new European empire was built’, *New Statesman*, 30 July 2015, available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/07/germany-s-triumph-ruins-war-how-new-european-empire-was-built>, last visited: 6 April 2018.

¹⁴⁰ Cited in Lever, P., *Berlin Rules: Europe and the German Way*, p. 268.

For Berlin, then, the “European” interest only exists insofar as it is compatible with the German one.¹⁴¹ Put simply, as Philip Stephens, the Chief Political Commentator at the *Financial Times*, argues, Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, has been actively pursuing a policy of “Germany First” – long before President Donald Trump announced his American version.¹⁴²

It is in this context that the UK’s withdrawal from the EU may accelerate the consolidation of German power. Here, there are perhaps two possible futures, neither of which is entirely benign. In the first future, Germany would simply continue to condense its leadership role within the existing framework: while the EU would look increasingly “German”, it would nevertheless remain subordinate to the Atlantic order, which Germany would continue to support rhetorically, if not substantially (i.e., in terms of defence spending). However, there is no reason to imagine that this future would remain unproblematic. As the UK Ministry of Defence’s Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre points out in *Global Strategic Trends – Out to 2045*:

If a European country financially out-performed the rest of the EU to a significant extent, domestic political concerns could prompt the country’s leaders to use its leverage to dominate Europe not only economically but also politically, severely challenging the EU’s cohesion. In such a situation, Europe could split between those countries who are dependent on the large power and those who resent its influence. There is a risk that NATO could become less effective, as European countries may place loyalty or opposition to the economic power above any other alliances.¹⁴³

This future may therefore contain the seeds of its own demise: Germany appears to have taken advantage of the British and American decisions during the post-Cold War era – namely to enlarge of the Atlantic order – by reducing substantially its defence spending. Over the past five years, Germany has underfunded its armed forces by some US\$142 billion (£101 billion), comparable to around 0.78% of the country’s national output over the same timeframe.¹⁴⁴ Germany has otherwise spent these “savings” on other things, such as enhancing its economic competitiveness and productivity, theoretically giving the German economy an edge over its competitors, not least the UK and US, while igniting arguments over burden sharing.¹⁴⁵

The second future would be more radical. A Germany drunk on its own success and frustrated with British or American policy choices, may decide to extend – albeit gradually, and subtly – the reach of the EU into areas once considered the exclusive preserve of NATO. The EU would therefore become more “autonomous” and “sovereign”, to such an extent that it is gradually decoupled from the Atlantic order. In this sense, the emergence of what has been described

¹⁴¹ Upon losing the British premiership, for having vowed to keep Germany partitioned, Margaret Thatcher had loathed the European tendency to couch selfish interest within the rhetoric of progressivism: “The concept of Europe has always ... lent itself to a large measure of humbug. Not just national interests, but (especially now) a great array of group and class interests happily disguise themselves beneath the mantle of synthetic European idealism. Thus we find an almost religious reverence for ‘Europe’ accompanied by a high degree of distinctly materialistic chicanery and corruption.” Thatcher, M., *On Europe* (London: William Collins, 2017 [2002]), p. 9.

¹⁴² Stephens, P., ‘After Donald Trump’s America First, Angela Merkel’s Germany First’, *Financial Times*, 26 April 2018, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/b3eb2c2a-47dd-11e8-8ae9-4b5ddcca99b3>, last visited: 26 April 2018.

¹⁴³ Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, *Global Strategic Trends – Out to 2045* (Ministry of Defence: London, 2014), p. 117.

¹⁴⁴ Rogers, J. and J. Wright, ‘What the European Union Owes the United Kingdom’, *The Henry Jackson Society*, December 2017, available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/HJS-Policy-Briefing-What-the-EU-Owes-the-UK-Final.pdf>, last visited: 10 April 2018.

¹⁴⁵ Smith, D., ‘Trump and Merkel tried – and failed – to hide their differences in Washington’, *The Guardian*, 28 April 2018, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/apr/27/angela-merkel-donald-trump-white-house-visit>, last visited: 11 May 30 April 2018.

as “post-Atlanticist” thinking in Germany – and elsewhere in the EU – over recent years is particularly alarming.¹⁴⁶ This post-Atlanticism contains three principal strands:

1. A feeling of German and/or European cultural, political and economic superiority vis-à-vis the “buccaneering” UK and US, which has grown stronger since the Financial Crisis in the late 2010s when their relative economic performance began to falter.
2. A belief that Germany and/or the EU increasingly have different interests to the UK and the US, a perspective that has been strengthened by the election of Donald Trump in the US and the UK’s decision to leave the EU. Indeed, in one opinion poll taken by Forsa Institute in Germany in April 2018, when asked the question, “Who is the greatest threat to world peace?”, 79% of respondents opted for the US President, while only 13% selected the Russian leader, despite the Kremlin’s continued attempts to destabilise Ukraine.¹⁴⁷
3. A notion that Germany can better protect its own interests through further European integration, to the extent that the European subsystem should be prioritised and slowly decoupled from the Atlantic order. This component has been taken furthest with the emergence of a debate in Germany since 2016 on the issue of nuclear weapons, both in terms of the removal of US tactical weapons from German territory, alongside the need for a European (or even, German) nuclear deterrent.¹⁴⁸ It has also been animated by Chancellor Merkel’s recent claims that Germany and the EU should begin taking “fate” into their own hands owing to their supposed inability to “fully rely” on the UK and the US to uphold the defence of Europe.¹⁴⁹

Although it is not clear to what extent this “post-Atlanticist” turn in Germany will strengthen over the coming years, not least because it may be part of internal party-political coalition building, it has nevertheless grown progressively louder. If it begins to capture more German political and economic elites, it could have substantial implications for the future of the Atlantic order, and for the European geopolitics that it has helped to pacify since the end of the Second World War.

¹⁴⁶ Kundnani, H. and J. Puglierin, ‘Atlanticist and “Post-Atlanticist” Wishful Thinking’, *The German Marshall Fund of the United States*, 3 January 2018, available at: <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/atlantacist-and-post-atlantacist-wishful-thinking>, last visited: 6 April 2018.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Russia and the West’, *Forsa Institute*, 13 April 2018, available at: http://wiese-consult.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Russland-und-der-Westen_130418.pdf, last visited: 20 April 2018, p 10.

¹⁴⁸ For example, during the run-up to the federal election, Martin Schulz, the former leader of the Social Democratic Party in Germany, committed to remove the remainder of the US tactical deterrent from German soil. See: Kroet, C., ‘Martin Schulz wants US nuclear weapons out of Germany’, *Politico*, 23 August 2017, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/martin-schulz-wants-us-nuclear-weapons-out-of-germany/>, last visited: 10 May 2018. For an overview of the “nuclearisation” debate, see: Kundnani, H., ‘The New Parameters of German Foreign Policy’, *Transatlantic Academy* (2017), available at: http://www.transatlanticacademy.org/sites/default/files/publications/Kundnani%20-%20The%20New%20Parameters%20of%20German%20Foreign%20Policy_1.pdf, last visited: 10 May 2018. See also: Studemann, F., ‘Thinking the unthinkable on Germany going nuclear’, *Financial Times*, 7 February 2017, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/277695dc-ec52-11e6-ba01-119a44939bb6>, last visited: 10 May 2018 and ‘The Germans are debating getting their own nuclear weapon’, *The Economist*, 4 March 2017, available at: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2017/03/04/germans-are-debating-getting-their-own-nuclear-weapon>, last visited: 10 May 2018.

¹⁴⁹ As Angela Merkel put it during the federal elections in Germany in 2017: “The era in which we could fully rely on others is over to some extent. That’s what I experienced over the past several days. We Europeans truly have to take our fate into our own hands – naturally in friendship with the United States of America, in friendship with Great Britain, as good neighbors [sic] with whoever, also with Russia and other countries. But we have to know that we Europeans must fight for our own future and destiny.” Cited in: Paravicini, G., ‘Angela Merkel: Europe must take “our fate” into own hands’, *Politico*, 28 May 2017, available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/angela-merkel-europe-cdu-must-take-its-fate-into-its-own-hands-elections-2017/>, last visited: 6 April 2018. She expounded this idea again in 2018 when she declared: “It’s no longer the case that the United States will simply just protect us ... Rather, Europe needs to take its fate into its own hands. That’s the task for the future.” Cited in: Delfs, A. and G. Viscusi, ‘Merkel Says Europe Can’t Count on US Military Umbrella Anymore’, *Bloomberg*, 10 May 2018, available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-10/merkel-says-europe-can-t-count-on-u-s-military-umbrella-anymore>, last visited: 12 May 2018.

So as the UK leaves the EU, the battle lines appear to be emerging across multiple vectors: between those who wish to uphold the existing order and those who want to change it; between those, not least the French, and particularly the Germans, who see a lever to enhance the influence of their own countries and those who wish to place emphasis on the importance of the EU; and between those who believe democratic sovereignty is paramount and those who believe that their national survival depends on intergovernmental and supranational structures. And, although more distant, the resurgence of Russia and the rise of China and the continuing and evolving geostrategic response of the US – which may lead to an eventual alteration in Washington's European focus – is likely to buffet the Atlantic order as the years draw on.

4. A New British Geostrategy for the European Mainland

As it leaves the EU, the UK plans to become a more globally focused country – a “Global Britain” – capitalising on its established relationships and historical connections.¹⁵⁰ As the economic and political significance of the non-European world grows, particularly “East-of-Suez” in the Indo-Pacific zone, the UK would be well advised to “enlarge” its geostrategic focus.¹⁵¹ Undoubtedly, as the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee has pointed out, the British government would do well to flesh out this “Global Britain” vision further, and diffuse it both to the public and to the wider world.¹⁵² That said, some consideration has already been given to the establishment of the broad conceptual parameters: in her annual speech on foreign affairs to the Lord Mayor’s Banquet in November 2017, Theresa May proclaimed that “Global Britain” would be structured along three lines: upholding the “rules-based” liberal international order globally; dampening zones of tension overseas; and capitalising on economic growth, particularly in emerging markets.¹⁵³ Equally, the *National Security Capability Review* – released in March 2018 – asserted that, in light of the rise in “Hostile State Activity”, particularly from Russia, the UK would “harden” its defences, using a new “Fusion Doctrine” to “improve our collective approach to national security ... so that we use our security, economic and influence capabilities to maximum effect”.¹⁵⁴

And yet, although a “Global Britain” is both desirable and possible, the UK’s sovereignty and freedom of action will always depend on the geopolitical situation on the other side of both the English Channel and the North Sea. The British Isles will always remain – as a base of power – far smaller than the adjacent continental landmass, particularly should it fall under the influence of a single political authority with the means to mobilise vast resources and use them to further its own interests. It may be the case that, even if the European mainland falls primarily under the control of a “positive” order like the EU, so long as it remains broadly constitutional and liberal – if not democratic – even under the leadership of a particular member state, the UK is highly unlikely to face an existential threat in the way that it did in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, this does not mean that Britain will not face determined political opposition given that the EU (a European subsystem) represents a different, more exclusive – “positive” – ordering project to the “negative” order of NATO (an Atlantic order). This, then, is still an issue of *geopolitical order*. Indeed, over the coming years, a truculent EU, under the influence of a progressively empowered Germany, confident that it should alone ensure the security and prosperity of mainland Europe, smarting from British rejection and keen to make an example of the UK to discourage other members from thinking that withdrawal from the European suborder is an option for them also, might seek to constrain the UK, as well as the Atlantic order it upholds, across multiple vectors.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Johnson, B., ‘My vision for a bold, thriving Britain enabled by Brexit’, *The Telegraph*, 15 September 2017, available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2017/09/15/boris-johnson-vision-bold-thriving-britain-enabled-brexit/>, last visited: 22 March 2018.

¹⁵¹ There has been a flurry of British diplomatic tours of the Gulf and South-East Asia recently. See Johnson, B., ‘Foreign Secretary speek: “Britain is back East of Suez”’, *Gov.uk*, 9 December 2016, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretary-speech-britain-is-back-east-of-suez>, last visited: 28 March 2018. See also ‘Prime Minister’s speech to the Gulf Co-operation Council 2016’, *Gov.uk*, 7 December 2016, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-speech-to-the-gulf-co-operation-council-2016>, last visited: 28 March 2018.

¹⁵² ‘Global Britain, Sixth Report of Session 2017–2019’, *House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee*, 12 March 2018, available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmfaaff/780/780.pdf>, last visited: 22 March 2018.

¹⁵³ ‘PM speech to the Lord Mayor’s Banquet 2017’, *Gov.uk*, 13 November 2017, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-to-the-lord-mayors-banquet-2017>, last visited: 22 March 2018.

¹⁵⁴ Cabinet Office, ‘National Security Capability Review’, *HM Government*, March 2018, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696305/6.4391_CO_National_Security_Review_web.pdf, last visited: 10 April 2018.

¹⁵⁵ Wolf, M., ‘Europe’s strategic choices on Brexit’, *Financial Times*, 5 March 2018, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/99435038-2059-11e8-a895-1ba1f72c2c11>, last visited: 9 March 2018.

Of course, that would be a nightmare scenario. But elements, or parts of them, are possible, and could readily snowball together into an avalanche, not least owing to the changing nature of conflict, which increasingly blurs the traditional distinction between war and peace (insofar as such a distinction ever really existed). And, with continued Russian pressure, or the emergence of China as an extra-European power, as well as the prospective return of the US as an “offshore balancer” in European affairs, it is entirely possible that – with the UK (self-)isolated and the Atlantic order breaking down – European geopolitics could slip back in time to a different era.

For the UK, then, the task of extracting itself from 45 years of integration with the EU is almost certain to remain fraught with challenges. Moreover, difficulties could also come from within as domestic British politics comes into play. The current internal British “culture war”, resulting from the polarisation between “Remainers” and “Leavers”, may not subside for many years, blurring further an already complex canvas.¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, should the British people come to feel that the EU is deliberately seeking to frustrate UK interests, they may rescind their support for the British military presence on the European mainland, even in defence of friendlier NATO allies like Estonia and Romania. And some Eurosceptics would relish the opportunity to poison relations further, not least as they turn up the heat to further dislocate their nemesis – the EU – in the event of any conflict of interests with the UK.¹⁵⁷

Thus, faced with such a daunting task and so many political divisions, it is quite possible that the UK runs the risk of strategic malfunction, meaning that strategic mistakes are both possible and likely. This danger defines the context in which the UK should seek to establish a new geostrategic approach as it leaves the EU and as the Atlantic order comes under mounting strain. Indeed, while easy, the UK would be mistaken to revert to one of its past strategic approaches to mainland Europe, whether in the form of “splendid isolation”, “offshore balancing” or even “onshore tethering”. Reverting to one of these redundant or fading approaches could even accelerate the country’s malfunction, while reducing its ability to hold European geopolitics in check.

Table 1: British geostrategies in relation to the European mainland

	Splendid isolation	Offshore balancing	Onshore tethering	Onshore bonding
Engagement	None	Temporary	Permanent	Persistent
Geography	British Isles	Continental	Regional	Extended regional
Institutionalisation	None	Weak coalitions	Permanent alliance	Alliances and groups
Power centre	British Isles	British Isles	North Atlantic	North Atlantic
Forces	Maritime	Primarily maritime	Comprehensive	Comprehensive
Global focus	Extensive	Strong	Weak	Strong

¹⁵⁶ Goodhart, D., *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (London: C. Hurst and Co. Ltd., 2018).

¹⁵⁷ Lusher, A., ‘Nigel Farage says he hopes Brexit victory will bring down the whole “failed project” of the EU’, *The Independent*, 24 June 2016, available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nigel-farage-says-he-hopes-brexit-victory-will-bring-down-the-whole-failed-project-of-the-eu-a7099041.html>, last visited: 12 March 2018.

Attempting to revert to “splendid isolation” (i.e., “Little England”) would be particularly misguided. Not only would this strategy leave Europeans (not least Germany) with free reign on the continent, but it would also fail in the contemporary environment, just as it failed, abysmally, in the past. Put simply, in the global, integrated world, self-isolation from one’s own neighbourhood is not an option. Alternatively, the UK could seek to move to a geostrategy of “offshore balancing”. Indeed, there is already mounting evidence that this is the government’s favoured approach. Boris Johnson, the Foreign Secretary, has actively called for the British role in Europe to be one of a “flying buttress”: in his words, “supportive of the EU kirk but not particularly fussy about exactly how the masonry interlocks”.¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, David Davis, the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, and Theresa May have both signalled that they favour forging a new security relationship with the EU, less than membership (in keeping with the 2016 referendum decision) but allowing the UK to support specific EU policies, agencies and military operations.¹⁵⁹ The UK has also pledged to support or even underwrite an array of multilateral and bilateral initiatives with important European countries. For example, at the British–French Summit in January 2018, the UK formally announced that it planned to participate in President Macron’s “European Intervention Initiative”.¹⁶⁰ Outside the EU framework, this initiative sits alongside an array of others, including the pre-existing Lancaster House Treaties with France and the Joint Expeditionary Force with the Nordic and Baltic states, as well as the recently signed defence treaty with Poland and prospective bilateral security and defence agreements with Germany and Spain.

On the one hand, it is easy to see how a renewed phase of “offshore balancing” might be attractive. After all, there is nothing necessarily wrong with any of these proposals. Indeed, as it leaves the EU, the UK would be well advised to pursue actively deeper cooperation with like-minded countries, particularly those with a keen interest in their own geographic regions. With compatible strategic cultures, complementary military postures and global interests, both France and the UK are especially well-suited to continue working together to retain influence and clout in North Africa, the Middle East and the broader Indo-Pacific region, not least to help prevent China from overreaching itself.¹⁶¹ Likewise, with a deep interest in the “Wider North”, including the Arctic, Scandinavia and the Baltic,¹⁶² as well as the eastern flank of NATO, the UK is also likely to want to work with the Nordic and Baltic states, as well as Poland (in relation to the north and east) and Romania (in relation to the east and south-east) to continue to deter Russia’s “anti-hegemonic” offensives. And, through its territories in Gibraltar and Cyprus, the UK is likely to seek to remain – alongside Italy and Spain – a key stakeholder in the wider Mediterranean, especially in light of the ballistic missile threat from the Middle East.¹⁶³ Insofar as it will almost certainly remain Britain’s largest single trading partner for many years to come, deeper cooperation – either formally or informally – with the EU also makes sense. There is no

¹⁵⁸ Cited in Kidd, P., ‘Boris tales off on a flying buttress’, *The Times*, 2 November 2017, available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/boris-tales-off-on-a-flying-buttress-bqbxsf5t>, last visited: 8 March 2018.

¹⁵⁹ See Department for Exiting the European Union, ‘Foreign policy, defence and development: a future partnership paper’, *HM Government*, 12 September 2017, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643924/Foreign_policy_defence_and_development_paper.pdf, last visited: 12 March 2018. See also ‘PM speech at Munich Security Conference: 17 February 2018’, *Gov.uk*, 17 February 2018, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-at-munich-security-conference-17-february-2018>, last visited: 12 March 2018.

¹⁶⁰ ‘United Kingdom–France Communiqué, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst’, *UK Government*, 18 January 2018, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674880/2018_UK-FR_Summit_Communique.pdf, last visited: 22 March 2018.

¹⁶¹ ‘Macron warns over China dominance in Indo-Pacific’, *The Straits Times*, 3 May 2018, available at: <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/australian/macron-warns-over-china-dominance-in-indo-pacific>, last visited: 5 May 2018.

¹⁶² Rogers, J., ‘Geopolitics and the “Wider North”: The United Kingdom as a “Strategic Pivot”’, *RUSI Journal* 157.6 (2012): pp. 42–53.

¹⁶³ Samaan, J.-L., ‘The missile threat in the Mediterranean: implications for European security’, *Elcano Royal Institute*, 25 October 2017, available at: http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/ri/elcano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/ari79-2017-samaan-missile-threat-mediterranean-implications-european-security, last visited: 5 May 2018.

reason why the UK and the EU could not coordinate their foreign, security and defence policies, particularly if their interests align. There is no reason why joint UK-EU operations could not occur, particularly in regions of shared concern, like the Western Balkans and the Red and Arabian Seas. And there is no reason why the UK could not even assume command of joint UK-EU military operations, despite EU claims to the contrary.¹⁶⁴ By working with the EU, the UK could strengthen its capacity to shape European preferences, despite withdrawal from the bloc.

And yet, on the other hand, a new form of “offshore balancing” is unlikely to maximise British influence or uphold the Atlantic framework. In particular, proposals to “plug” the British “in” to the EU’s foreign, security and defence policies, as well as the attendant strands of “Defence Union”, are highly misguided.¹⁶⁵ Although, the (Modified) Treaty of Brussels essentially animates the EU’s security and defence structures through its effective incorporation into the 2007 Treaty of Lisbon – meaning that the UK could continue to claim, even outside the EU, a common inheritance – those structures will come to protect and extend, exclusively, the political and economic influence of the EU. So while on a case-by-case basis *cooperation* with the EU would be desirable, Britain should be reluctant to join the EU “Defence Union” or to engage in any kind of formal participation in EU agencies or structures, especially if it has no direct control over their direction or policies. Despite its military clout, which, in some cases, accounts for 100% of what the EU or European countries could provide, the UK would be put at a disadvantage in relation to any institutional inclusion in the rigid EU structures.¹⁶⁶ Britain would be, in effect, surrendering its superior military, intelligence and diplomatic resources – always precious, and required to support “Global Britain” – getting back little or nothing in return.

Moreover, for all the fanfare the EU has made about its advances on the military front since the British decision to withdraw, it is not clear to what extent the latest defence policies and proposals, like their many predecessors, will actually lead to improved capabilities or a willingness to deter or fight.¹⁶⁷ Given that Germany has gained ascendancy over the direction and character of the EU’s “Defence Union” – revealed by the fact that the latest initiative, PESCO, has adopted an “inclusive”, as opposed to an “exclusive”, approach – it is unlikely that enhanced military capacity, to say nothing of the political will, will be generated. The EU will likely continue to engage in little more than the most rudimentary operations, and will do little to help member states so they can engage in British-, French- or American-style “high-tempo” or “out-of-area” missions. Save for the pursuit of relatively limited defence-industrial collaboration – the European Defence Fund will be allotted just £4.5 billion (€5 billion) per year to begin with – the EU’s military initiatives are unlikely to enhance Europe’s ability to dissuade or deter, to say nothing of coerce.¹⁶⁸ Julian Lindley-French, Senior Fellow at the Institute for Statecraft, and William Hopkinson, a former Assistant Under-Secretary of Defence (Policy) at the Ministry of Defence, point out that “such gestures in fact weaken European defence because it is more tinkering than it is proper strategic thinking, and thus demonstrates all too clearly that Europe’s

¹⁶⁴ ‘UK-EU defence and security cooperation’, *Institute for Government*, updated 16 February 2018, available at: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/uk%E2%80%93eu-defence-and-security-cooperation>, last visited: 29 March 2018.

¹⁶⁵ Besch, S., ‘Plugging in the British: EU defence policy’, *Centre for European Reform*, April 2018, available at: https://www.cer.eu/sites/default/files/pbrief_plugin_def_25.4.18.pdf, last visited: 30 April 2018; Bond, I., ‘Plugging in the British: EU foreign policy’, *Centre for European Reform*, 6 March 2018, available at: <http://www.cer.eu/publications/archive/policy-brief/2018/plugging-british-eu-foreign-policy>, last visited: 9 March 2018.

¹⁶⁶ Giegerich, B. and C. Mölling, ‘The United Kingdom’s contribution to European security and defence’, *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, February 2018, available at: <https://www.iiss.org/en/militarybalanceblog/blogsections/2018-f256/february-1c17/uk-contribution-to-european-security-and-defence-3848>, last visited: 29 March 2018, p. 7.

¹⁶⁷ van Ham, P., ‘The Power of War: Why Europe Needs It’, *Netherlands Institute of International Relations*, Clingendael Diplomacy Papers No. 19 (2008), pp. 10-12, available at: https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20081203_cdsp_power_war.pdf, last visited: 29 March 2018.

¹⁶⁸ Major, C. and C. Mölling, ‘Franco-German Differences Over Defense Make Europe Vulnerable’, *Carnegie Europe*, 29 March 2018, available at: <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/75937?lang=en>, last visited: 29 March 2018.

elites do not really believe future war possible and so are not serious about investing in deterring it or preventing it”.¹⁶⁹ What is needed are the funds for serious military modernisation at the national level; as it stands, the spending increases as currently envisaged (incidentally, via NATO) will be spent initially on nothing more than putting right the many years of neglect.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, British participation in the “Defence Union” would deliver little military effect. What it would do, however, is to simply empower the European integrationist project – shaped increasingly by Germany – as the referential order around which the UK should rotate, while simultaneously, and unnecessarily, weakening and undermining the Atlantic order.

And yet, at the same time, as Lord Owen and David Ludlow argue, the UK should refrain from policies designed to deliberately and destructively undermine the EU.¹⁷¹ For while the EU has its own in-built democratic deficit, it may play a role, paradoxically – as the “Panopticon” – in preventing liberal values and constitutional structures within some of its member states from imploding or decaying as rapidly as they otherwise might. While NATO has reduced the influence of the continent’s “terrestrial” geography, consequently smothering European geopolitics, it has only done so in a traditional context: Russia’s new “anti-hegemonic” offensive is designed to get beneath the UK-US security guarantee and generate chaos and disorder. Indeed, in almost all cases, it should not be forgotten that many European countries remain vulnerable: their respective political transitions have occurred within a single human lifetime and may not be sufficiently rooted to remain permanent.¹⁷² So despite its democratic deficiencies, it cannot be denied that European integration has provided almost all EU countries – except for the UK and the Republic of Ireland – with a distinct “horizon” to move towards in their attempt to escape non-alignment, occupation and/or authoritarianism.

But what of “onshore tethering”, i.e., strengthening the connections with North America – through NATO – to prevent European countries from adopting policies that are considered antithetical to British interests? Unfortunately, by itself, this geostrategic approach is unlikely to work either, for the simple reason that the underlying foundations on which NATO was established appear to be shifting – and fast. Although NATO has been given a shot in the arm by the Kremlin’s irredentism, it is quite likely that the alliance will be progressively buffeted over the coming years by the changing internal political situation in the US, as well as China’s rise and Washington’s resulting Indo-Pacific outlook. The US is likely to remain a superpower, protected on either flank by a vast ocean, and with a continental scale and resources. Yet it may come to lose the advantages it held in relation to the Soviet Union. China, with a population four times larger, and a continental scale of its own, it is a potential peer competitor to the US in a way that the Soviets never were. Unfortunately, this means that, in time, the balance of global power could tilt decisively in Beijing’s favour. This may even mean that the US comes to see NATO as more important than in the past, but in a different way. In the new environment, it is not unlikely that the US will ask the UK – its closest European ally – to do more to underwrite not only the Atlantic order as it rescales assets to reinforce its Pacific flank, but also to mobilise other European countries so they can help uphold the rules-based order

¹⁶⁹ Lindley-French, J. and W. Hopkinson, ‘Von Kriege, or Clausewitz revisited: The Shape of Future War’, *Institute for Statecraft*, 1 February 2018, available at: <http://www.statecraft.org.uk/research/vom-kriege-or-clausewitz-revisited-shape-future-war>, last visited: 27 March 2018.

¹⁷⁰ Rogers, J. and J. Wright, ‘What the European Union Owes the United Kingdom’, *The Henry Jackson Society*, December 2017, available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/HJS-Policy-Briefing-What-the-EU-Owes-the-UK-Final.pdf>, last visited: 12 March 2018. See also Chassany, A., ‘France to increase military spending’, *Financial Times*, 8 February 2018, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/fede4e5a-0cb0-11e8-8eb7-42f857ea9f09>, last visited: 12 March 2018.

¹⁷¹ Owen, D. and D. Ludlow, *British Foreign Policy After Brexit* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2017), p. 274.

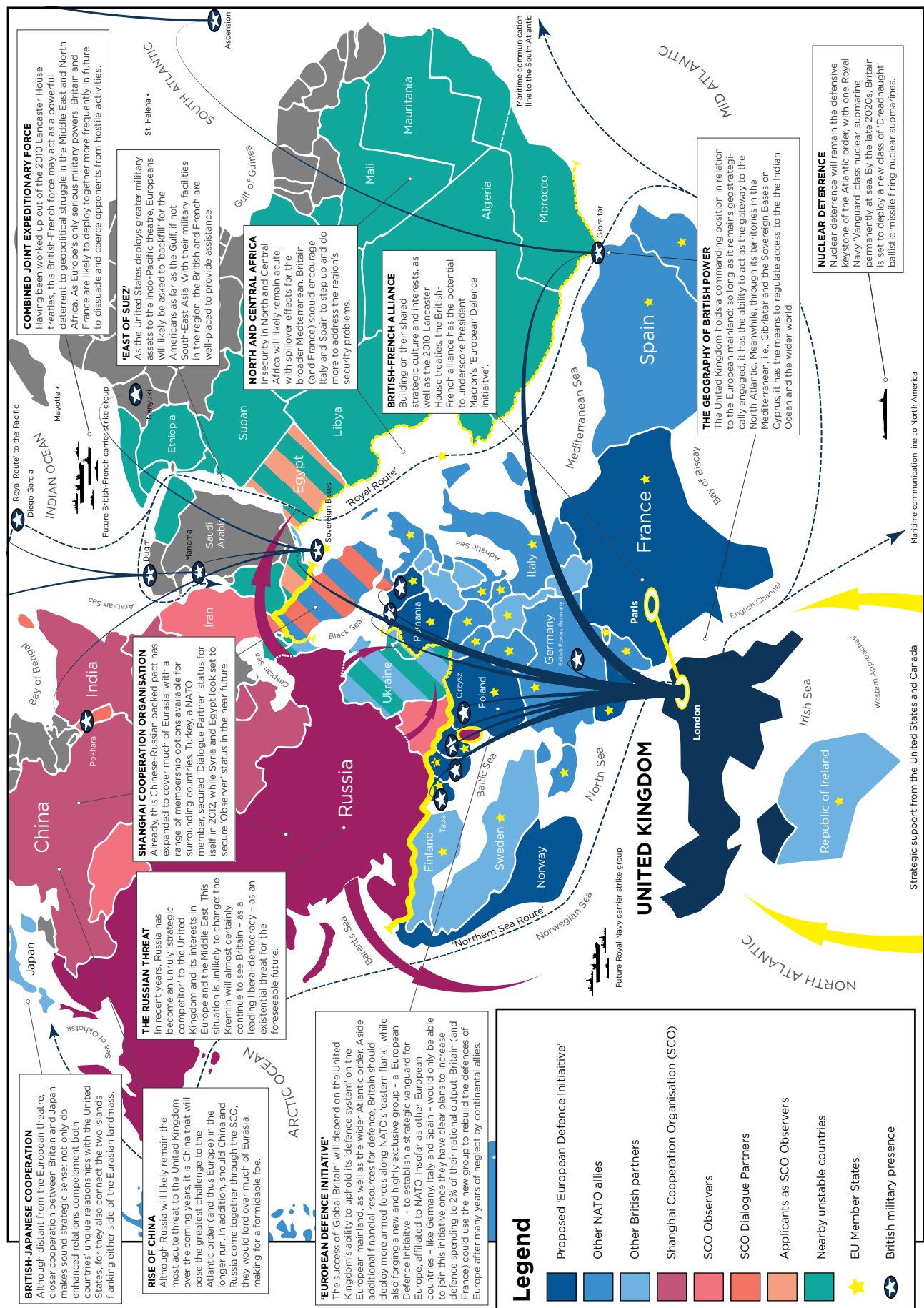
¹⁷² For example, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit’s “Democracy Index”, well over half of the EU’s member states remain “flawed democracies”, and, unlike the UK (a “full democracy”), many have witnessed “backsliding” in recent years. See: ‘The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index’, *The Economist*, 2018, available at: <https://infographics.economist.com/2018/DemocracyIndex/>, last visited: 10 May 2018.

elsewhere, certainly in the Gulf, and perhaps as far as South-East Asia. Undoubtedly, the UK should continue to strongly re-emphasise the importance of NATO for the defence of Europe, but it should only do so while acknowledging that the central prop behind its twentieth-century geostrategic approach is itself in transition.

Therefore, no matter how enticing and/or easy they might be to return to, the UK should not dust down its old geostrategic approaches, whether in the form of “splendid isolation”, “offshore balancing” or “onshore tethering”. Each of these was itself the product of a particular set of geopolitical circumstances, and for a specific period of time; as such, each would fail over the coming years to achieve Britain’s desired geopolitical impact on the European mainland (and globally). A return to “offshore balancing”, above all, would leave the UK – by geographic design, capable of remaining the strongest military power in Europe – supporting, to varying degrees, several agendas simultaneously, uncertain of which way to turn, flip-flopping here and there, with little to no vision of its own as to how the European space should itself be ordered.

The time has therefore come for the UK – as an “ordering power” – to provide a renewed moral and intellectual leadership, as it did in 1948 with the establishment of the Five-Power Pact. But first, the UK needs to reappraise its geopolitical interests and how best to secure them: since the mid-twentieth century, the primary British objective has been to work with the US (and Canada) to maintain “democratic geopolitics” on the European mainland, primarily by preventing one or more of the three continental bases of power – France, Germany and Russia – from establishing its own “positive” order as the principal form of European geopolitical organisation. The emergence of the new *global* geopolitics means this fundamental interest must be modernised, not least because the UK now faces a Russia that seeks to spread *disorder* in Europe and the Middle East; a China that does not recognise the established rules and seeks to penetrate much of Eurasia, including Europe; a US that has already started to rebalance its global geostrategic posture, increasingly towards the containment of China in East Asia; and a France and Germany jostling to determine the shape and trajectory of European integration, of which the UK will soon no longer be part.

As Map 5 shows, to counter these trends, “Global Britain” needs to enact a new approach that might best be described as “onshore bonding”. This would still aim to uphold the Atlantic order, but also enhance its resiliency in relation to the emerging challenges and threats. In a nutshell, “onshore bonding” would involve the UK redoubling its support for NATO, behaving as a “buttress” to the EU, but also an advocate of its democratic reform; and crafting a new arrangement to ensure that the two (NATO and the EU) remain bound together, while ensuring that the former remains superior to the latter. This would ensure the deterrence of Russia’s “anti-hegemonic” impulses; the dissuasion of China’s potentially “counter-hegemonic” urges; and the prevention of the EU’s two power bases, namely Germany and France, from seeking to utilise and empower the EU as an extension of themselves, either independently or in unison. It would also put in place mechanisms designed to encourage other European countries to enhance their armed forces so that they can better contribute in assisting the UK and US in the thankless task of upholding the international rules-based order. With this approach, the UK would seek to forge a “Global Europe”, even a “British Europe”, across normative, political and geostrategic vectors.

Map 5: A new British geostrategy for Europe

In pursuit of “onshore bonding” the UK would do well to establish a new European caucus – let it be called the “European Defence Initiative” (EDI) – affiliated to NATO. While this proposal may sound radical and unnecessary, further cluttering the pre-existing array of European structures, institutions and organisations, it would nevertheless solve several emerging problems:

1. Unlike the EU, the EDI would include the UK, with its “active” and “expansive” strategic culture, as well as all the capabilities – military, intelligence and diplomatic – it can bring to the table. Consequently, it may eventually allow for the transfer of certain strategic assets from the EU to the EDI, such as the Galileo global navigation satellite system, where they might be better utilised.
2. Unlike NATO, it would include a non-military dimension to better enable Europeans to defend themselves against the new forms of “anti-hegemonic” assault, such as those practised by Russia, which rest between war and peace.
3. Unlike both NATO and the EU, it would be future-oriented, with a distinct zone of geographic priority covering the European continent, the adjacent seas and supplementary areas extending deep into North Africa, the Middle East and – to an extent – the Indian Ocean, even as far as South-East Asia (the route of the main European maritime communication line – the so-called “Royal Route” – to East Asia).
4. Unlike both NATO and the EU, where questions surrounding commitment and burden sharing have become progressively louder, membership of the EDI would be strictly conditional on meeting agreed thresholds in terms of defence and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) spending, as well as upholding basic liberal and democratic standards. The EDI would therefore serve as a tool to rebalance burden sharing in NATO overall, and uphold liberal values.
5. Unlike the EU, which the US continues to distrust,¹⁷³ the EDI – insofar as it would be affiliated to NATO – would throw down the gauntlet to President Donald Trump, as well as to future US leaders, demonstrating that Europeans are prepared to step up and do more to take care of their own security, as well as to assist the US as it seeks to focus more on the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific.
6. Unlike the British-French alliance, the UK-Nordic-Baltic Joint Expeditionary Force, or other bilateral initiatives, which, while valuable, remain too exclusive, the EDI would be open to other participants and allow for the realisation of much of President Macron’s “European Intervention Initiative”.
7. And, unlike the “European Intervention Initiative”, the EDI would also focus on deterrence in support of NATO. It would therefore include another arm involving Poland, Romania and the Baltic states, as well as – potentially – the Nordic states, to further compound and extend deterrence along the eastern flank of NATO, i.e., the outer perimeter of the UK’s defence system.

As such, it would be vital for the EDI to be a *highly exclusive* group, underpinned by strict conditionality: only stable, liberal and democratic European countries would be able to gain admission, and even then, only if they could demonstrate their willingness to economically underpin the new framework. They would be obligated to spend at least 2% – and efficiently – of their national output on their armed forces by 2025, in league with NATO’s commitment in

¹⁷³ Manson, K. and M. Peel, ‘US fears closer EU defence ties could undermine Nato’, *Financial Times*, 12 February 2018, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/70aaf9c-1018-11e8-8cb6-b9ccc4c4dbbb>, last visited: 10 May 2018.

Newport in 2014.¹⁷⁴ In addition, insofar as ODA is an increasingly important tool of statecraft for enhancing security, the wealthier members would be obligated to spend 0.7% of national output in this area by 2025, while coordinating their spending with one another. Any members of the EDI whose expenditure slips beneath both spending thresholds (with the exception of those less-wealthy members that would not be obligated to maintain ODA spending levels) would be given a set period to make amends or risk ejection. Moreover, ODA would not only be spent for the purposes of “development”: it would also be utilised strategically, even in less affluent allies to enhance their resiliency and national cohesion. In exchange for these commitments, the EDI would be founded on provisions not unlike Article 4 of the 1948 Treaty of Brussels (or Article 5 of the 1954 modified version), (re)confirming the extension of the British (and, potentially, French) nuclear umbrella over all members. This may even provide a stepping stone for those countries – such as Sweden and Finland, should they pursue membership of the EDI – to move closer to NATO. In addition, the strengthening of the European nuclear pillar under NATO affiliation would bolster the alliance overall, particularly in the event of a crisis in East or South-East Asia that might draw in or distract the US.

The success of this EDI, as with both the Western Union and WEU before it, would depend on the willingness of the UK (potentially, also France) to act as its ultimate custodian. In particular, this would require a reappraisal of the level of Britain’s diplomatic, military and ODA spending, leading to necessary and long-due increases to suit the new geopolitical circumstances. In particular, an increase of UK defence spending to as much as 3% of GDP should not be unthinkable, allowing the British armed forces to act as the strategic “framework” for all other European military forces.¹⁷⁵ By 2025–2030, the EDI should be able to mobilise a large force for any conceivable form of military operation short of territorial defence – which would remain NATO’s prerogative – needed to intervene in the established zones of geographic priority, not least if the envisaged operation was beyond NATO’s mandate.

¹⁷⁴ ‘Wales Summit Declaration: Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales’, *NATO*, 5 September 2014, available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm, last visited: 12 March 2018.

¹⁷⁵ Rogers, J., ‘Global Britain and the future of the British Armed Forces’, *The Henry Jackson Society*, November 2017, available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/HJS-Global-Britain-and-the-Future-of-the-British-Armed-Forces.pdf>, last visited: 8 March 2018.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

As the geopolitical knot within the Atlantic constellation, and as one of the four power bases in Europe, the UK cannot afford to become disengaged from the European mainland after it leaves the EU. To no small extent, the ability of the country to “globalise” its commercial footprint and strategic posture will depend – heavily – on the continued and active cultivation of a favourable European geopolitical order. Moreover, in an age of increasing geopolitical competition, where the major powers’ ability to project themselves beyond their own national homelands is greater and more multifaceted than at any time in history, the UK cannot – indeed, *must* not – return to “offshore balancing”, let alone “splendid isolation”. If these approaches failed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they will fail even more spectacularly in the nuclear age, unnecessarily risking strategic escalation. As such, in the face of aggressive “anti-hegemonic” offensives by Vladimir Putin’s regime in Russia, the UK has a vital obligation and interest in protecting its own allies – not least the Baltic states, Poland and Romania – which form part of NATO’s outer perimeter and therefore the UK’s first line of defence.

In addition, given the desire in Germany, as well as other European countries, to push forward with the development of the EU “Defence Union”, it is vital that the UK provides the necessary strategic leadership to ensure that its allies remain fully aligned to the wider Atlantic order. The UK should of course remain prepared to cooperate with the EU on an ad-hoc, even a formal treaty-based, basis, but it should reject all proposals to remain inside any form of EU structure or agency, particularly if it has no control over the development or operation of EU policy. And owing to the growing US engagement in the South China Sea and the broader Indo-Pacific to constrain the expansionary impulses of China, the Americans may come to look to NATO to provide support, upending Britain’s post-war geostrategy of “onshore tethering”.

Set against these threats and challenges – some unlike any the country has faced in many decades – the UK needs to modernise its European geostrategy to uphold the Atlantic orientation of the European mainland. Insofar as its old approaches are unsustainable, a new approach – “onshore bonding” – is required. This would require the UK to stand out, in the sense that it is clearly obvious that the country has the means and will to lead.

Consequently:

1. As a first step, Britain ought to boost spending on its armed forces to such a degree that it remains – by some margin – the leading European military power, irrespective of the future decisions of France, Germany and Russia. It should not be unthinkable that British defence expenditure could exceed as much as 3% of GDP by the mid-2020s, as it did for most of the twentieth century, when a similar number of challenges and threats existed to British and European security.
2. Equally, insofar as ODA is now – if it is allocated carefully and strategically – considered an important tool of statecraft, the UK should be prepared to reallocate resources from other regions to its less affluent European allies, particularly those such as Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and the Baltic states, which might see a reduction in EU funding owing to British withdrawal. This could be given specifically to help them to develop their logistics, transport and communication infrastructure, and to reduce the economic disparity between their rural and urban areas, and thus to integrate their respective national homelands more rigorously, making them less vulnerable to “anti-hegemonic” attack. In other areas, UK ODA should be given more conditionally, in such a way as to prevent further liberal and/or democratic backsliding in Southern and Eastern European countries.

3. The UK needs to re-establish the geopolitical initiative as a leading European power. This means reasserting leadership in NATO and preventing itself from being bound into EU structures or policies over which it would end up having no control. Moreover, while there is no reason to undermine existing structures, there is no need to accept them as the only options. As it leaves the EU, the UK should be prepared to propose new initiatives, which may better shape European geopolitics in a way that keeps hostile forces out or down and upholds liberal democracy, thereby maintaining the centrality of the Atlantic order.
 4. In light of the internal challenges and external threats to the UK's own neighbourhood, ensuring Britain's position as a major guarantor of European defence should be a central priority for the British government. The country should draw its most capable European allies into a remodelled geopolitical framework – the “European Defence Initiative” (EDI) – based on a new version of the (Modified) Treaty of Brussels, and integrated into the Atlantic order, i.e., NATO:
 - a. The UK should insist that this group be strictly *exclusive*: only European countries that are committed to liberal democracy and invest 2% or more of their national output on their armed forces (and, for wealthier members, 0.7% on ODA) – or have concrete proposals to do so by 2025 – and spend it efficiently, should be eligible to join. Indeed, so important is it to prevent members from shirking their financial responsibilities that a mechanism should be established to discipline or eject members that fail to meet the spending and efficiency thresholds.
 - b. France and the UK would form the EDI's maritime and amphibious projectors: building on the November 2010 Lancaster House Treaties and the development of the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, the EDI – if fully exploited – would represent the foundation for the realisation of President Macron's more focused “European Intervention Initiative”, providing the means for Europeans to arrest threats in their extended neighbourhood or even assist the US and other partners in upholding the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific zone.
 - c. With Poland and Romania, the UK would act as the EDI's terrestrial “redoubts”: the springboard for greater UK-Polish cooperation has already been laid in the form of the December 2017 British-Polish Treaty on Defence and Security Cooperation. With Warsaw's agreement, additional British forces should be persistently, if not permanently, redeployed from Germany and elsewhere to Polish territory to entrench the UK commitment to Eastern Europe and to deter Russian aggression. Romania should be offered a similar formation. In addition, Polish and Romanian logistical facilities and communications systems should be improved so they can act as an entry point for UK and other NATO forces if required for the rapid reinforcement of the Baltic states in the event of an elevated threat on the north-eastern flank.
 - d. The UK should deepen its relations with the Baltic states, which would become the “bulwarks” of the EDI: in addition to the forces already garrisoned in Estonia, both Latvia and Lithuania should receive a UK battlegroup to complement NATO's pre-existing “Enhanced Forward Presence”, compounding its impact by underwriting it with forces from a nuclear power.
 - e. Those European countries seeking deeper cooperation with the EDI, but which nevertheless fail to meet the strict criteria for admission, should be able to acquire “associate status”. They would be allowed to contribute to EDI operations, but there would be no obligation on the part of the full members to come to their aid if they were to come under attack.
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