



UK IN A
CHANGING
EUROPE

GLOBAL BRITAIN:
VIEWS FROM ABROAD

KING'S
College
LONDON

**SCHOOL OF
SECURITY STUDIES**

FOREWORD

‘Global Britain’ is the term coined to denote the UK’s approach to the world after Brexit. In purely rhetorical terms, it was intended to underline the fact that the decision to leave the European Union would usher in an era not of entrenchment, but of renewed global engagement. More concretely, the ambitions of the government have been laid out in a series of statements, not least the recent [Integrated Review](#).

However, the success of the project depends not simply on the energy and resources devoted to it by the government in London, but also on the reactions of potential partners. To consider what these reactions might be, The UK in a Changing Europe teamed up with Dr David Roberts and colleagues from the School of Security Studies at King’s College London to consider perceptions of Global Britain across a range of different states.

As ever, I am immensely grateful to all those who contributed to this report. They have tolerated numerous (and repeated) questions and comments with efficient good humour.

In addition, I would like to thank David, for having the idea for this report in the first place and being an invaluable collaborator during the publication process. In addition, my heartfelt gratitude to Joël Reland and Sarah Overton, who edited and commented on a number of early drafts, to Lizzie Ellen, Communications Manager in the School of Security Studies, to Alison Howson and John-Paul Salter, who checked the manuscript, and Navjyot Lehl who, once again, coordinated the project and took care of the design and publication process with her usual efficiency.

I hope you find what follows interesting and informative.

Anand Menon

21 September 2021

The School of Security Studies is dedicated to the understanding of security issues in an increasingly complex and uncertain world. Harnessing the depth and breadth of expertise across the War Studies and Defence Studies Departments, and the King’s Institute for Applied Security Studies, we are one of the largest multi-disciplinary communities of scholars in the world engaged in the teaching and research of all aspects of conflict, war, security and defence.

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INTRODUCTION

David Roberts and Anand Menon

The UK government has steadfastly maintained that Brexit is not about pulling up the drawbridge and retreating into a twenty-first century version of splendid isolation. Quite the contrary. Both Ministers since, and pro-Brexit campaigners during, the referendum campaign of 2016 argued that, on the contrary, freedom from EU entanglements would allow the UK to cast a wider net.

‘Global Britain’ is the term given to the UK’s post-Brexit foreign policy ambitions. The Global Britain agenda has engendered a small avalanche of critique and discussion with commentators striving to disentangle pragmatic plans from the rhetorical flourishes. It has been dismissed by critics as nothing more than a rhetorical ploy intended to give the impression of an international influence that is largely illusory.

Of course, the way the UK approaches foreign policy — particularly the political attention paid to it and the resources invested in it — will be crucial in determining whether Global Britain ever amounts to anything more than a slogan. The government has already begun to put some flesh on the rhetorical bones of the concept with its [Integrated Review](#) and [Defence Command Paper](#).

Yet, foreign policy is a two-way street. The success of the UK’s Global Britain strategy rests not merely on what the government does, but also on how policy and business communities in Tokyo, New Delhi, and elsewhere receive and react to it. Partnerships require the consent of at least two parties, and perceptions of what the UK means by its Global Britain undertaking will help shape attitudes around the world.

This report attempts to assess what other countries make of Global Britain. It systematically addresses the Global Britain issue from the other side — reflecting on how key capitals around the world see the UK as it seeks to transform its foreign policy approach. Our contributors are a mixture of leading academics and PhD students who share a deep understanding of the countries and regions about which they write. To help us to compare the different approaches of different countries more effectively, we asked each contributor to address the same questions. After setting the scene, including reflecting on the pre-existing nature of UK relations, they focus on the most salient concerns liable to affect the Global Britain agenda. Subsequently, potential opportunities for mutual benefit (and indeed points of tension which could hamper better relations) are discussed. It is worth adding that the contributions were finalised before the US withdrew its forces from Afghanistan.

What emerges is a complicated mixture of constraints and opportunities. Interestingly, Brexit is a live issue only for a couple of states. For Germany, there are fears that the UK might use the bilateral relationship to divide the EU. In the US, because Trump was a supporter of Brexit, the instinctive reaction of his political opponents is to dislike it. President Biden's Irish ancestry, moreover, means that the fate of the Northern Ireland Protocol will help shape the bilateral relationship. Moreover, Brexit means the UK has lost one of its main advantages in dealing with the US — acting as a bridge with the EU. Beyond this, it is interesting to note that Global Britain has received little attention in the US, a country that tends to assume UK interests and actions will be aligned with its own.

Not all European states view Brexit as a constraint on cooperation. For Italy, there is good reason to work with the UK given shared interests in countering the influence of China and Russia. Seen from Paris, Global Britain is a good thing, with the narrative around universal values and decisive action making the UK 'more French than before'. There is significant scope for future cooperation on security in particular, particularly in areas where France perceives that the EU cannot deliver.

For other countries, Brexit provides real opportunities. The Brazilian intellectual and diplomatic establishments have tended to be strong proponents of European integration for largely geopolitical reasons. However, Brazil has long fretted about what it sees as the EU's protectionist tendencies. Consequently, Brexit and Global Britain open the possibility of more far-reaching agreements with London in areas such as investment and trade facilitation than was possible while the UK was a member state. Opportunities to further consolidate trade and security relations lie open with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which views the UK as an important partner in these areas, however inter-GCC disagreements mean the region lacks a united approach to Global Britain.

Others are less positive. China sees Global Britain as directed against Beijing. The UK needs to find a way to reconcile its relatively new tougher stance towards Beijing with a desire to preserve economic ties. It must also, not least as part of its much-heralded 'Indo-Pacific tilt,' forge relations with like-minded partners in the region.

Japan is one such potential partner though Tokyo, while welcoming the UK's Indo-Pacific tilt, views Beijing as a more immediate military threat than does London. The UK's cooler relationship with China could also enhance prospects of deepening security relationship with India, which is looking to create an alliance in the Indo-Pacific. Yet while there are opportunities, these could be mitigated if the UK is not prepared to offer more visas to Indian professionals.

Turning to regions in which the UK has perhaps tended to show relatively little interest, Central Asia might, in the light of events in Afghanistan, become more of a focus and a real test of the UK's ability of Global Britain to be truly global. Mexico-UK relations have primarily been based on trade, and while Brexit could mean fewer tariffs on certain goods, this is an issue of secondary interest to a country working on deepening its ties with the EU, and for whom the US remains the most significant actor.

When it comes to sub-Saharan Africa, which does not seem a priority for Global Britain, the UK faces competition for influence, partly because of the growth of intra-African trade, and partly because of the increased role of India, Japan and particularly China. In the case of South Africa, the ongoing consequences of the unrest following the trial of former president Jacob Zuma present an opportunity for the UK to become a leading ally in reconstruction. Meanwhile when it comes to the continent's most populous country, Nigeria, trade will be key to the evolving relationship, though there is potential for closer cooperation on security, healthcare and attracting Nigerian students to study in the UK. Much will depend on the UK's willingness to treat Nigeria as an equal partner, and an open question is whether, under the rubric of Global Britain, the UK will be more vocal when it comes to improving electoral processes in the country.

This is, of necessity, merely a rapid overview of what are rich and detailed contributions to the debate about Global Britain. It serves, however, to underline the tremendous variation in the responses to the concept from different states in different parts of the world. Geography, history, and cultural ties all play their part in shaping perceptions of the UK but ultimately, of course, interests are key. Whatever the government wants Global Britain to mean, it is clear that its foreign policy agenda will only be a success if it understands and addresses the diverse and at times conflicting interests of other states in a rapidly evolving world.

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BRAZIL

Vinicius Mariano de Carvalho

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, Peter Wilson, the newly appointed UK Ambassador to Brazil, [highlighted](#) five priorities for the UK's relationship with Brazil: trade, climate, science, security and the promotion of open societies. He [asserted](#) that the UK wants 'broad and deep relations with Brazil and a partnership for the 21st century, based on the historical relations between the two countries'. What, however, does such a partnership look like? The UK answer to this question will define the Brazilian view of Global Britain.

CONTEXT

Relations between Brazil and the UK have a long history. As early as 1825, the UK recognised Brazilian independence (proclaimed in 1822). In 1919, Brazil and the UK made their delegations in London and Rio de Janeiro into embassies. The two countries have always maintained stable diplomatic and trade relations. In the two hundred years since independence, Brazil has viewed the UK as a partner, because of the convergence in their values and interests.

UK officials have expressed support for Brazil's accession to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Brazil was and still is the UK's main trading partner in Latin America. [Trade](#) in goods was \$5.3 billion in 2019 (exports to the UK of \$3 billion and imports of \$2.3 billion). The UK was also, in 2019, the third largest destination for Brazilian service exports and the third largest source for Brazilian service imports. The UK is Brazil's 16th largest trading partner and the third most important when it comes to services; it is the seventh largest direct investor in Brazil, with \$23.4 billion in direct investments, according to the [Brazilian Central Bank](#). In 2019, the UK was the largest direct investor in the electricity, gas and other utilities sectors, accounting for \$2 billion or 40% of the total invested in this [sector in 2019](#). Looking the other way, the UK is, for its part, the main destination for Brazilian exports of high-tech products to the European continent, in sectors such as aeronautics and aerospace, automotive vehicles and electronic and communications devices. In the first half of 2020, in the context of the pandemic, exports of goods from Brazil to the UK totalled \$1.1 billion — a decrease of 30.3% compared to the same period in 2019. Brazilian imports of British products totalled \$1.1 billion, having increased by 13.4% compared to the first half of 2019.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Brazil views post-Brexit Britain in both geopolitical and commercial terms, yet the two perspectives do not converge.

From a geopolitical point of view, Brexit was seen by many scholars and [political analysts](#) as a worrying manifestation of nationalism and isolationism. This perception has been expressed both in the [diplomatic environment](#) and in [academia](#), more explicitly in the latter. European integration tends to be viewed positively by the Brazilian intelligentsia and the diplomatic establishment; Brexit was thus interpreted as a severe blow to the stable multilateralism that the European Union represents and viewed as a rekindling of the kinds of nationalist ideas that have caused considerable global upheavals. Some Brazilian analysts [consider](#) British foreign policy after Brexit to be based on the illusion that the UK could exert the same influence in Europe and in the world as it did beforehand.

In general, however, the UK's foreign policy has continued to reflect a commitment to multilateralism, demonstrating that its global interests continue to be pursued through its participation in the main international decision-making bodies (the UN Security Council, G7, G20 and WTO).

From an economic-commercial point of view, however, perceptions of the UK after Brexit have been positive. This is particularly true for agribusiness, a sector in which Brazil is [competitive and a global player](#) (the country is the biggest producer of soya beans, coffee and citrus in the world). Although there is admiration for the European integration process, there has always been discomfort with the way the EU treats Brazil (and Mercosur) in the commercial context. There is a sense of injustice in Brazil about the way Europeans treat certain Brazilian productive sectors and much of the private sector suffers from trade restrictions imposed by the EU, including the imposition of rigorous sanitary rules, giant subsidies for European agricultural products and restrictive technical requirements for Brazilian products. Brazilians tend to regard such restrictive measures as indicative of the EU's protectionist instincts. The UK has always been seen by Brazil as an ally within the EU, although it has not been able to avoid these barriers considered abusive by Brazil — the hopes are that, outside the EU, the UK will adopt a less protectionist approach.

OPPORTUNITIES

Brazil views Brexit as an opportunity to negotiate a new set of agreements with the UK. The two economies have a number of interests in common. In addition to renegotiating import quotas previously set within the scope of the EU directly

with the UK, Brazil is hoping to secure a [series of agreements](#), including a free trade deal, as well as agreements on investments, trade facilitation, double taxation and social security. The UK is seen as less protectionist than the EU and there is significant UK domestic demand for Brazilian products.

A commercial relationship between Brazil and the UK cannot be raised without including Mercosur. It does not appear that the Mercosur-EU agreement will be approved anytime soon, largely because of environmental issues not properly addressed by Brazil. This negotiation has been ongoing for many years and has proven difficult and complex; however, it offers a good starting point for an agreement with the UK, because lessons have been learned by both countries. Negotiations for a free trade agreement between the UK and Mercosur are a priority for both sides after Brexit. Both the UK and Brazilian government have signalled an interest in deepening trade relations through a [future agreement](#). In the view of the Brazilian private sector, this commitment should seek to equalise conditions of access to markets in goods, services, public procurement and investments vis-à-vis partners who already have trade agreements with the British.

At the [meeting](#) of the Joint Economic and Trade Committee between Brazil and the United Kingdom (JETCO), held in November 2020, the issues of market access and an intensification of preparations for a Free Trade Agreement were discussed.

The two countries also recognised that an agreement to avoid double taxation would facilitate a substantial increase in bilateral trade and investment flows. Among the main European economies, the UK and Germany are the only ones with which Brazil has not entered into this type of agreement.

The changes needed to reach a consensus with the British government are mainly related to Brazil's tax treatment of income from technical services and to transfer pricing rules. The latter relate to transactions in the purchase and sale of goods and services made between companies belonging to the same economic group but operating in different countries. Brazil and the United Kingdom have promoted a more intense exchange of views on access to markets, services, intellectual property, trade facilitation and the business environment to increase bilateral cooperation and trade and investment flows.

In addition, there is a Brazilian interest in implementing a work plan on regulation, within the scope of the UK Prosperity Fund's [Trade Facilitation Programme](#). The British government's inter-ministerial fund has a pre-approved allocation for the development of projects in Brazil in the areas of trade facilitation, business environment, energy, smart cities, green finance and health. The Prosperity Fund operates several branches in Brazil and can contribute

to boosting the development of sectors important to the British, such as sustainability and health.

CONCLUSION

The British Ambassador, Peter Wilson, will not face a hostile reception in Brazil when promoting post-Brexit Britain, especially in commercial terms. British diplomacy has a good reputation in Brazil and historically has demonstrated an ability to preserve the UK's interests in the country. The complex world setting today, with the pandemic, the post-Brexit UK, and the internal political issues facing Brazil, requires sophisticated diplomatic skills. Ambassador Wilson's biggest challenge will be to ensure his definition of a partnership for the 21st century is understood as a real partnership, and not simply an arrangement convenient for the UK. Brazil is undoubtedly open to engaging the post-Brexit UK, especially if it feels it is being seen and treated as an equal partner.

CENTRAL ASIA

Emmanuel Karagiannis

INTRODUCTION

The Central Asian region, largely ignored by Western powers for most of the 20th century, has stepped into the political limelight in recent years. The disintegration of the USSR in December 1991 led to the establishment of five independent Central Asian republics: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The new states have struggled ever since to build viable political systems and economies. The events of 9/11 and the US invasion of Afghanistan increased their visibility and strategic importance considerably.

CONTEXT

Following the unexpected defeat in the Crimean war by the British and French in 1854, the Russian army invaded the region of Transoxiana. Russian control of Central Asia triggered a standoff with the British Empire, which sought to safeguard its interests in the Indian subcontinent — with this competition widely known by Rudyard Kipling's phrase the 'Great Game'. The First and Second Anglo-Afghan Wars (1878-80) resulted from British fears of Russian penetration into Afghanistan, a neutral country at the time. Russia and Great Britain ended their border dispute in Central Asia in 1886, dividing the Tajik-populated territories along the line that later became the Tajik-Afghan border in the Pamiri Mountains.

British influence in Russian-controlled Central Asia declined rapidly in the early 20th century, as the Red Army forcibly incorporated the region into the new Soviet state. After many experiments and changes of borders, five new Soviet socialist republics — or SSRs — were formed in Central Asia: those of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were declared in 1924, Turkmenistan in 1925, Tajikistan in 1929 and Kirgizia in 1936.

For 70 years, the region was practically forgotten and overshadowed by the Cold War. The collapse of communism and disintegration of the Soviet Union led to the establishment of five Central Asian republics in December 1991. In Central Asia there are few checks and balances restraining political elites. The independence of the judiciary remains delicate. The absence of a strong opposition, a robust political party system and independent media all reflect and reinforce the fact of political repression in the region. Although an emergent middle class demands participation in the decision-making process, regimes have adopted a strategy of authoritarianism to maintain power.

Kazakhstan is the largest country in the region, with a multi-ethnic population of 18.5 million and significant energy reserves. With an estimated 33 million inhabitants, Uzbekistan has the largest population, and it has become less authoritarian following the death of Islam Karimov in 2016. Kyrgyzstan has a population of 6.5 million, which is the smallest in the region, yet it has been viewed by the international community as an island of democracy and stability. Tajikistan is the only country to experience a civil war following the break-up of the Soviet Union. It has a population of nine million, with the majority aged under 25, in part due to high unemployment pushing Tajik men to emigrate to Russia. Turkmenistan is rich in natural gas, holding the world's fourth largest reserves. Yet, the country of six million has remained isolated, often described as the North Korea of Central Asia due to the highly repressive nature of the regime.

During the premiership of David Cameron, the UK attempted to build a strategic partnership with [Kazakhstan](#) for three reasons. First, the country played an important role for the withdrawal of British troops from Afghanistan. Second, the UK is one of the biggest investors in Kazakhstan's economy. Third, the regime avoided massive crackdowns such as those carried out in neighbouring Uzbekistan. Indeed, British foreign policy in the region can be characterized as Kazakhstani-centric. Although London has not reached out to other Central Asian republics with the same enthusiasm, there is tentative evidence that this may change soon. In 2019, [the British-Uzbek Partnership and Cooperation Agreement](#) was signed to foster relationships in various fields.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Central Asia will represent an important test of London's ability to act globally due to geographical distance involved, competition from Russia and China, and the lack of UK vital interests in the region. Indeed, the UK does not yet have a strategy towards the region's security; whereas the situation in Afghanistan has preoccupied British attention for decades, Central Asia has not, even though it faces numerous problems.

The Ferghana Valley is a hotbed of inter-ethnic conflict. Home to more than 14 million people, the valley is divided among Uzbekistan (60% of the valley's territory), Tajikistan (25%) and Kyrgyzstan (15%). Complicating the boundary issue in the Valley is the presence of seven small enclaves. Moscow drew its borders in the 1920s, based mainly on political considerations, and with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, these lines became the international borders of three sovereign countries, thus disrupting the ordinary flow of people, goods and trade in the Ferghana Valley. It is hardly a coincidence that all major outbreaks of ethnic violence in the region have taken place there.

Moreover, the region has experienced its share of terrorist attacks organised by Islamist extremists [affiliated to al-Qaeda](#). The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) was the most active terrorist group in Central Asia. Rather than its original goal of establishing an Islamic state in Uzbekistan, the group sought the creation [of an Islamic state](#) in Central Asia, which would include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and China's Xinjiang province. Eventually, the IMU disintegrated into different subgroups, which are based in the tribal areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The threat from Islamist militancy has become more severe since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war. Thousands of Central Asian Muslims have [joined jihadi groups in Syria](#). The international spill-over of regional conflicts into domestic terrorist attacks presents a unique challenge to British officials.

The British government has been viewed as a stakeholder in the regional security architecture because it is a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Yet, the UK has showed little interest in regional security. British indifference is not surprising because Central Asia was largely perceived as a Russian sphere of influence for many years.

OPPORTUNITIES

Since the early 1990s, the UK has opened embassies in all Central Asian countries to foster bilateral relations. The major British interests in the region are to ensure access to oil and gas produced in the Caspian Sea, to promote British economic interests in the region and to prevent the spread of Islamist extremism. Yet despite wanting to ensure good relations with all the countries in the region, the UK does not want to become diplomatically engaged in Central Asia. As it has prioritised other regions (such as the Indo-Pacific), the UK has been reluctant to commit resources to this volatile part of the world.

Consequently, the UK government has placed greater emphasis on trade and investment than on security and geopolitics. London has traditionally focused the bulk of its attention on the need to ensure access to the region's vast oil and gas supplies. Increasing demand for consumer goods and various infrastructure projects in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are sources of revenue for British companies. In fact, British exports to some countries in the region have been steadily increasing, if only because of strong demographic growth that is bound to continue for at least the next twenty years. In addition, Turkmenistan has huge potential as there is an enormous need for investment in economic infrastructure, including energy. In contrast, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are projected to remain small economies with limited opportunities.

Opportunities originate from the region's economic potential that as yet remain outside the circuits of the world economy. However, the advent of Global Britain alone will not make British companies more competitive in the region; [widespread corruption](#) hinders trade and development.

CONCLUSION

The UK policy towards the region is based on security and predominantly its economic concerns. The pursuit and protection of British interests demand a level of relative stability and predictability and, as far as possible, the existence of governments well-disposed towards the UK. Nevertheless, Central Asia is not of paramount importance in the framework of Britain's overall foreign policy. The EU and transatlantic relations, as well as relations with China and India, have far greater political and economic significance. However, following the withdrawal of US and coalition troops from Afghanistan, the region will inevitably become more important for British policy makers.

CHINA

Zeno Leoni

INTRODUCTION

The UK's post-Brexit strategy for engaging with the world, at a time when the global geopolitical landscape is [changing](#), has been strongly criticised by Chinese sources because, in their view, it aims to contain China. China regards Global Britain as confirmation of the UK standing on the side of the United States in a new Cold War between Washington and Beijing. China also [believes](#) that a 'declining Britain' does not have the capabilities to become an influential player in the Indo-Pacific region. For China, therefore, Global Britain is more a question of rhetoric rather than of reality.

CONTEXT

Sino-British relations have shifted remarkably over the past decade, progressing from a so-called 'Golden Era' under [David Cameron](#) to far frostier relations during Boris Johnson's premiership. The 'Golden Era' saw the UK join the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and London host one of the first renminbi (RMB) clearing banks outside China, in addition to [significant Chinese investments](#) in strategic British infrastructure — such as the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station and Thames Water.

However, the imbalanced strategy of the Cameron era — in which economic interests undermined security calculations — increasingly came to be seen as unsustainable following China's human rights violations in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, the ongoing militarization of the South China Sea and the [new cold war](#) between China and the US, among other tensions. The UK now faces an economy-security dilemma in its relationship with China. The pro-China camp has financial stakes and spans a broad economic spectrum, including HSBC, Standard Chartered, Shell and Jardine Matheson, together with many other businesses. Meanwhile, in the anti-China camp, where security concerns are prioritised, one finds GCHQ, UK spy agencies and a group of Conservative MPs in the China Research Group, among others. Moreover, the view that China acted in an unhelpful and opaque manner during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic ['has given ... momentum'](#) to the anti-China camp to end the 'Golden Era'.

The first notable victim of this shift was the Chinese tech giant Huawei. In 2020, Boris Johnson came under intense pressure from around fifty Conservative MPs who [wanted to](#) reduce the presence of Huawei to a 35% share of the

British network. Further pressure also emanated from abroad, with other reports [intimating](#) that the British government killed the 5G deal with Huawei due to pressure from US President Donald Trump. Additionally, Sino-British relations were shaken by reports of China's violation of human rights in Xinjiang and Hong Kong throughout 2019 and 2020, which led the Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, to [declare](#) that the treatment of Uighurs amounted to 'one of the worst human rights crises of our time'.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

China's perception of Global Britain reveals its geopolitical concerns. An official Chinese [white paper](#) published in 2019 described the security environment as increasingly hostile towards Beijing, stating that 'strategic competition becomes more acute' while there is a 'Cold War mentality of encirclement', '[h]egemonism and power politics', and '[t]he law of the jungle and zero-sum games have found new soil in which to breed'.

The Chinese government sees Global Britain as representing the UK's support for an anti-China military coalition in the Indo-Pacific, a perspective that hardened in the Chinese media between 2020 and 2021. In early January 2020, responding to the announcement that the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth would be deployed to the Pacific region, a Chinese Ministry of Defence spokesperson [warned against](#) the dispatch of British navy warships to the South China Sea. In February 2021, the Global Times — a paper that reflects the views of the Chinese Communist Party — [stated that](#) the UK sees this era as 'one of a major-power competition, where there is disorder it can take advantage of to increase its strength and expand its influence'. It added that post-Brexit Britain 'has shown a tendency to take sides with Washington against Beijing'; because the UK is '[f]eeling more insecure'. Global Britain according to this analysis, is a means for the UK to 'increase, its international status', to exploit '[g]lobal disorder' and 'make trouble'.

Since the Integrated Review, China's view of Global Britain has become increasingly negative. The [review](#) stressed that 'China's military modernisation and growing international assertiveness within the ... [Indo-Pacific] region ... will pose an increasing risk to UK interests'. Again, the Global Times [reported](#) that Global Britain represents an 'immature' decision stemming from 'London's fantasy of reviving its past glory as a world superpower' but that it 'downgrades itself as a toady of the US' and 'exposes [its] over-optimism of its current international status'. The same article denounced the UK's new focus on the Indo-Pacific region as a means 'to moderate China's global dominance', but concluded that 'the so-called "competition" launched by a declining UK' is merely a 'war of words'.

This rhetoric was echoed in Chinese reactions to the Huawei ban in the summer of 2020. The China Daily — often described as the CCP’s ‘mouthpiece’ — [argued](#) that ‘London capitulated to Washington’s demand’, adding that ‘[r]ather than “taking back control”, as one of the Brexit slogans misleadingly claimed, the UK is now dancing like a puppet as Washington pulls the strings’. The UK was described as ‘chief cheerleader’ in the US-led anti-China coalition, while ‘truly global Britain ... rings as hollow as the snappy slogans’ used by the UK government ‘which spoon-feeds them like Valium to the British public’.

OPPORTUNITIES

There are three areas that the UK should consider in its relationship with China. On a grand strategic level, Britain and the West must rebalance their economic and security priorities compared to the post-Cold War years. The Integrated Review marks a step in the right direction, at least on paper, because it updates the British government’s view of the recent international system. The UK government needs to (re)build state-led resilience in the face of debilitating events and regain control over sensitive industrial areas. Plans such as ‘Project Defend’, a strategy that seeks to securitise Britain’s critical supply chains, [should be realistically financed](#). At the G7 in June, however, it seemed that Boris Johnson was keen [not to make this policy about China](#), whereas President Biden sought to coalesce Western allies against Beijing.

On a diplomatic level, the new cold war between Washington, D.C. and Beijing represents a source of tension for the UK, which must address the clash between its economic and security interests in its relationship with Beijing. Yet, there are opportunities to partner with alternative coalitions rather than taking sides. To influence China, the UK must coordinate with its European partners to take common actions — as in the case of recent [sanctions over Xinjiang](#). Given the scale of Chinese economic and political power, the UK will have to work with an inclusive group of allies if it wants to influence the PRC, and from this viewpoint Brexit offers no benefits. Similarly, the UK should leverage its former colonial ties and learn from ASEAN members as to how to manage such tensions. ASEAN’s strategy is one of [neutrality](#) and the UK should share best practices with this group to address the economy-security dilemma in Sino-British relations. British military endeavours in the Indo-Pacific should be coordinated multilaterally with local powers and not be conducted ‘[purely to demonstrate military power](#), or as a sign of Britain’s global presence’. Nonetheless, current Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) have been seen to achieve little success vis-à-vis China’s subthreshold and island-building activities. Although the British government is keen to maintain these operations, a review is required over the next few years if an impasse is to be avoided.

CONCLUSION

China's view of Global Britain is not a friendly one. To Beijing, it sounds like geostrategic encirclement. So, what may the future hold? There are two aspects to consider. Firstly, the future relationship will depend on whether the current deterioration in Sino-British relations is a short-term issue triggered by Covid-19 or if it has been caused by geopolitical issues such as the US-UK special relationship. In reality, the posture of Johnson's government remains ambiguous: whereas China is described as a 'systemic competitor' in the Integrated Review, there have been several statements confirming that the UK does not want diplomatic tensions to undermine economic relations with Beijing. For instance, Dominic Raab [stated in a \(leaked\) message](#) to civil servants that the UK 'ought to be trading liberally around the world' regardless of whether commercial partners comply with human rights standards. In addition, the G7 demonstrated that, at the moment, the UK is less excited about the special relationship with the US: ahead of the summit it was reported that [Johnson does not find the phrase adequate](#). For the time being it appears UK-China relations will be binary and played out on two different levels, one diplomatic and the other economic.

FRANCE

Gesine Weber

INTRODUCTION

For Paris, the long-awaited Integrated Review is good news. It finally outlines the kind of partnership France can expect from the UK, with Global Britain primarily viewed from a security perspective. Although other major areas of cooperation — such as trade — have been institutionalised through the EU, military cooperation has always been [considered](#) the cornerstone of Franco-British bilateral relations. Since Brexit, both sides have affirmed their willingness to maintain close ties through government statements and parliamentary [declarations](#).

The Review suggests that the UK remains limited in its ambitions for future cooperation with the EU, asserting somewhat tersely that ‘we will work with the EU where our interests coincide’. However, Global Britain offers major opportunities from a French perspective. London and Paris have many shared interests and might, despite or perhaps even because of the Brexit, find common ground for close future cooperation. Potentially, the future of Franco-British cooperation might lie in policy areas where the UK and France share objectives that France cannot achieve via the EU. In Paris, there is little doubt that the UK and France will need strong and reliable partners to realise their aspirations and to avoid relative decline. The inclusion of the UK in flexible and ad hoc coalitions is a priority for the French Foreign Ministry.

CONTEXT

Since the [signature](#) of the *Entente Cordiale* in 1904, France and the UK have repeatedly joined forces to ensure their respective security and prosperity. Despite different domestic nation-building processes and economic and social models, France and the UK share many characteristics that partly account for their common global aspirations and help explain why Paris and London often agree on objectives while disagreeing on methods.

Both long-standing European nations founded in the 18th century, France and the UK were involved in colonialism and power projection abroad. Both have distinctive ties with their former colonies, reflected in their immigration histories and also in strategic priorities and interests abroad. France, for example, describes stability in Africa as a central French national security [interest](#).

As nuclear powers and permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, France and the UK consult regularly on global security and diplomacy, and Security Council resolutions are frequently co-sponsored by them. Furthermore, the foreign policies of both countries are underpinned by two of the world's [most extensive](#) diplomatic networks, equipping France and the UK with similar resources for engagement abroad and securing their status as global middle powers. Thanks to similar population sizes and GDPs, the partnership can be considered one of equals. Indeed, these shared characteristics put France and the UK in similar positions in the international system and consequently explain their similar aspirations.

However, their contrasting views on European integration, especially with regard to security and defence, has historically rendered the Franco-British relationship challenging. Whereas France has always wanted the EU to become a global power — not least to enhance French power through the EU — the UK has often blocked this.

However, the pragmatism that prevails in Franco-British relations has been an indispensable catalyst for European integration and, paradoxically, even for European defence: a Franco-British initiative paved the way for the creation of the Western European Union in 1948 — an intergovernmental organisation that, from the 1970s, mostly focused on military security in Europe. The 1998 Saint-Malo declaration calling for more European military action and capabilities, and the Le Touquet summit of 2003, organised to overcome intra-European divergences over the Iraq war, were important Franco-British initiatives to navigate European defence cooperation out of impasses. A Franco-British consensus has often constituted a meaningful middle path between US and European visions for security cooperation that other EU member states could agree on (much as Franco-German cooperation on economic questions could often be the basis for pan-EU consensus). The most recent treaty advancing bilateral cooperation — the 2010 Lancaster House treaty — constitutes a comprehensive framework for Franco-British security cooperation, for instance through the deployment of a Comprehensive Joint Expeditionary Force or cooperation on nuclear issues.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Early in 2019, French President Macron [announced](#) that he wanted to establish a 'very special relationship' with the UK after Brexit. The Integrated Review makes it clear that Global Britain will only work if this relationship is established. Aside from the US, no other country is [mentioned](#) as often in the Review as France — a fact received with great satisfaction in Paris.

The Integrated Review also points to a convergence of interests in areas such as multilateralism and the focus on the Indo-Pacific. Despite differences regarding preferred institutions and the potential of diplomacy — France has always been more interventionist than the UK — French and British strategic cultures have demonstrated a high degree of convergence in so far as both take their influential positions in the international system for granted. The French self-perception was shaped by De Gaulle’s understanding that ‘France can never be without greatness’, and French Presidents of whichever [party](#) have sought to live up to this ambition. With its aspiration to translate Global Britain into palpable diplomatic action, the UK’s narrative seems bolder and — in the eyes of Paris at least — more French. British foreign and security policy might, at least in terms of methods, align more with French foreign policy in the coming years: although trade remains one of the most important tools of British influence worldwide, the UK might seek to take a leadership role among Europeans and like-minded states, for example in international organisations, and especially on topics of global governance such as climate change or cybersecurity. The Integrated Review’s narrative of the promotion of universal values chimes with the French approach to international relations.

Global Britain is thus good news for France. Yet, with rising powers striving for their own global influence and new theatres emerging for the pursuit of French and British interests, mitigating relative decline will for both become more challenging than ever. Joining forces appears less like a desirable optional extra and more like [an indispensable strategy for both partners](#).

OPPORTUNITIES

Paradoxically, Brexit may serve as a catalyst for greater Franco-British cooperation. During its EU membership, the UK frequently blocked intra-EU security cooperation because the British regard NATO as the primary European hard security organization. As many of the initiatives to bolster European defence through the EU were sponsored by France, this led to major frustrations with London. France and the UK often managed to cooperate bilaterally, but this collaboration was undermined by the lack of a common strategic doctrine or their incompatible or insufficient capabilities — for instance in [Libya](#) in 2011.

Brexit and the UK’s quest for Global Britain may alter this. On the one hand, Paris can push for more ambitious projects for EU security and defence integration, and President Macron constantly [underlines](#) how France has recently done so. On the other, the quest for Global Britain provides France with an alternative when the EU fails to meet expectations — as was the case with Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). London has joined several

French-led initiatives that deepen European security cooperation outside the EU's institutional framework — such as the European Intervention Initiative that aims to build a common strategic culture through joint operations, or Task Force Takuba in Mali (composed of European anti-terror special forces and fully integrated in the French mission Barkhane).

This willingness to contribute to French initiatives is welcomed with open arms in Paris, as the UK's military capabilities have much to contribute to these formats. Furthermore, Paris views such initiatives as confirmation of French leadership in European security and defence. These flexible cooperation formats also constitute a major opportunity for the UK. Outside the EU's institutional framework and operating on a purely intergovernmental, often ad hoc basis, they align with London's strategic priorities and serve as a relatively uncomplicated way of showing that the UK is still a meaningful power and credible partner for other European states. Substantively, these formats can make a real contribution to ensuring European security, particularly in the Southern neighbourhood.

France and Britain both plan to shift their geopolitical focus to the Indo-Pacific in the coming years. Joint action to ensure the respect of international law in the South China Sea and to secure the respective territorial and trade interests of the UK and France is to be expected. Yet, cooperation will pose challenges: despite worsening relations between London and Beijing, economic cooperation between the two countries remains crucial, and decreasing UK [trade](#) with European countries to the benefit of China sparks French concerns about strategic dependence.

Nevertheless, French policy makers are aware that European action in the region will necessitate the pooling of expertise and capabilities, which will in turn require London's participation. The UK's ties with countries in the region, its capabilities and strategic assets, including several military bases in the region, represent a necessary component of any a European approach. The UK should be aware of this and proactively seize this opportunity by making concrete proposals for Franco-British cooperation in the region, which could, as in the past, constitute the starting point for broader cooperation with Paris.

CONCLUSION

The Integrated Review underlines significant convergence in terms of geopolitical strategic interests between Paris and London. Whereas the Indo-Pacific, as the most important theatre of international security in the years to come, almost imposes close coordination in terms of strategic objectives and policies, the first concrete results of UK cooperation could be generated through flexible forms of European defence cooperation in the European neighbourhood. Policy makers in

France are keenly aware that maintaining the role of France as a global middle power will require greater effort in the upcoming years, and that cooperation with the UK, thanks to similar objectives and aspirations, will be of mutual benefit. At the same time, French aspirations to strengthen European defence cooperation — outside the institutional framework of the CSDP when the latter fails to deliver — can open the way to more flexible cooperation with the UK. How this might progress during the 2022 French presidency of the Council of the European Union, immediately ahead of the French election, will be a decisive moment for the future of French foreign and security policy in Europe. This constitutes a major opportunity that the UK ought not to waste.

GERMANY

Nicolai von Ondarza

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Germany and the UK has become more complex in the wake of Brexit. On the one hand, the UK remains one of Germany's closest international partners, with shared values and interests, membership of international organisations like NATO, the G7, G20 and the United Nations as well as flexible formats like the E3 (France, Germany and the UK). With a substantial history of joint diplomatic initiatives, the two countries recently signed a [joint declaration](#), in which they reaffirmed their shared values and strategic interests and put in place a regular strategic dialogue.

On the other hand, the Brexit process has placed strain on the relationship. For Germany, the decision by the usually 'pragmatic' Brits to leave the EU was a huge shock and, together with Donald Trump's election, provided an impetus to focus on safeguarding the EU27's cohesion. Consequently, Berlin was careful to avoid bilateral talks with the UK over Brexit and put its weight behind a united EU strategy focused on protecting the integrity of the Single Market. For the German public, the Brexit process severely damaged the UK's trustworthiness as a foreign policy partner. A 'Global Britain' that for ideological reasons is unwilling to cooperate with the EU is viewed with a high degree of scepticism in Berlin. This tension, together with the ongoing difficulties between the EU and the UK in their post-Brexit relationship, weighs heavily on an otherwise strong relationship.

CONTEXT

Germany and the UK share deep political, military and cultural ties. As one of the three Western Allies, the UK played a key role in the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany as well as its *Westbindung* ('Western Orientation') in foreign and security policy after World War II. North-Rhine Westphalia, by population Germany's largest state and established by the British, recently [celebrated](#) 75 years of friendship with the UK. To this day, UK military forces remain stationed in Germany. Despite a few high-profile disagreements — for instance over interventions in Iraq (2003) and Libya (2011) — Germany and the UK have been on the same side of most international questions in recent decades. Notable from a German perspective, this continued throughout the Trump administration, when the UK and Germany, often together with France, remained aligned on issues such as the Paris climate agreement, the Iran deal and sanctions against Russia.

Militarily, although Germany and the UK do not have integrated forces, the two countries have jointly contributed to, and often shaped NATO operations such as those in Kosovo and Afghanistan, or the Baltic Air Policing. Their armed forces regularly exchange officers and cooperate in training exercises. Economically, Germany is the UK's second largest export market after the USA, whereas the UK was Germany's third until the 2016 referendum — but has since slipped to fifth place.

However, the last decade has also been characterised by British-German misunderstandings around the Brexit process. From a German perspective, Brexit has been accepted but still makes little sense. In 2016, the German public expected the UK to vote narrowly in favour of remaining in the EU. After the initial shock, the prevalent expectation in Germany was that the UK would opt for a close (economic) relationship with the EU and try to cherry-pick from the existing arrangements. As a result, Berlin worked to safeguard the Single Market's and EU27's integrity. German President Steinmeier characterised Boris Johnson, then Foreign Secretary, as an ['irresponsible politician'](#) who gambled with his country's future and weakened its international standing. After Johnson became Prime Minister, German public confidence in the UK as a ['trustworthy' ally dropped to 37%](#), still above Trump's America at 19%, but far below France with 89%. When the UK formally left the EU in January 2020, German defence minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer [said](#) the democratic decision was to be accepted. However, Kramp-Karrenbauer added it was a 'sad day for Germany and Europe' and that 'this exit, in my conviction, is to the strategic detriment for all countries in Europe'. German politicians continuously misjudged the UK government's willingness to opt for a hard Brexit and the extent to which the UK wanted to continue to work with the EU.

Meanwhile, successive UK governments overestimated Germany's willingness to push for an EU position more aligned to British interests. During his 'renegotiation' of the UK's status in the EU, then-Prime Minister David Cameron built his strategy largely on convincing Chancellor Angela Merkel to support his agenda. During Theresa May's premiership, the UK intensified its diplomatic activities towards Germany while Brexiteers infamously expected German car makers to lobby the Chancellery to open the EU's markets to the UK. On both occasions, the UK misjudged not only the German government, but also German industry lobby groups, who put their focus on maintaining the Single Market and the EU (which they regard as foundational to the German economic model). Mutual misunderstanding, as well as close cooperation, have been hallmarks of the relationship in recent times.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Looking forward, the biggest challenge for the UK-German relationship will be finding a balance between three conflicting aims. First, the maintenance of a close bilateral relationship is imperative. In its [2021 Integrated Review](#), the UK classifies Germany as an ‘essential ally’, highlighting the close economic ties and ‘growing foreign policy partnership’. Special emphasis is placed on shared values, including strengthening democracy, the rule of law and the multilateral rules-based order. Germany’s strategic [White Paper](#), albeit from July 2016, also counts the UK as its third major foreign and security partner after the US and France. For the upcoming September 2021 elections, most of Germany’s major parties regard the UK as key partner but they also explicitly state that the UK should stick to its commitments in the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) on the level playing field and Northern Ireland. Germany’s largest party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU/CSU), which is likely to lead the next German government, [calls](#) for a ‘flexible European security architecture that includes the United Kingdom’.

Second, however, from a German perspective this is complicated by the current UK government refusing institutional cooperation with the EU on foreign and security policy. Whereas the [Political Declaration](#) on the future EU-UK relationship signed by Boris Johnson in January 2020 included the aim of a security partnership, the UK government’s February 2020 [negotiation approach](#) excluded foreign, security and defence cooperation. Much to the regret of Germany, which had campaigned in the EU for close EU-UK foreign and security policy ties, the UK has rejected structured dialogue on sanctions, coordination on foreign policy issues such as Russia, or participation in EU defence programs like permanent structured cooperation ([PESCO](#)). The UK’s refusal to continue participation in the EU’s student programme Erasmus and the end of free movement for EU citizens has also made cultural exchange challenging.

Finally, the German government wants to avoid being used by London to divide or weaken the EU. Immediately after the 2016 referendum, Chancellor Merkel established that there should be no bilateral Brexit negotiations, which should be dealt with exclusively at the EU-UK level, and stuck to that position steadfastly throughout the talks. Even during the German EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2020, which coincided with the negotiation of the TCA, Merkel avoided being dragged directly into the talks. Although foreign and security policy action was outside the scope of the TCA, unlike France Germany was reluctant to upgrade its bilateral relationship with the UK in this area. As early as March 2018, Boris Johnson, then Foreign Secretary, and his German counterpart Heiko Maas announced they would formulate a joint declaration on closer foreign

and security policy cooperation. However, Germany held back on signing the declaration until the summer of 2021 and the end of the formal Brexit process, as it tried to find a balance between the aims of keeping the UK as a close partner, the UK's desire for a hard Brexit and Berlin's desire to avoid bilateral arrangements with London that threaten EU unity.

OPPORTUNITIES

The 2021 joint declaration provided a real upgrade to the bilateral relationship on foreign and security policy. At a declaratory level, both countries confirmed their shared interests and values, their position as 'strong and like-minded global partners' and their commitment to the strategic unity of Europe and to Euro-Atlantic security. Importantly for Germany, the joint declaration recognises that its EU membership remains key, and it will ensure the bilateral relationship's transparency for the EU and its member states. Although Berlin informed its EU allies of the declaration in advance of signing, it does risk some suspicion on the part of its partners about the lengths it will go to in order to maintain close relations with the UK.

On a policy level, the declaration highlights the many areas where Berlin and London want to continue to cooperate. These include tackling global challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change, reinforcing NATO (including NATO-EU cooperation), strengthening the transatlantic relationship, coordinating on Russia, China and the Indo-Pacific, and striving for a common approach on regional policies in the European neighbourhood, including the Western Balkans — where Germany and the UK previously jointly led EU efforts. From a German perspective, however, the EU will remain the primary framework for addressing these policy challenges, with bilateral cooperation with the UK at best a parallel strand, but in most cases of secondary relevance — and thus relegating the UK to the status of a second-tier partner.

Finally, with the joint declaration the two countries establish a strategic dialogue, which includes annual foreign minister dialogues and regular consultations at the working level and at international organisations such as the UN. Although these consultations will not replace the regularity and intensity of coordination both countries had as EU members, they will make the UK Germany's most closely consulted partner outside the EU. The most likely areas of British-German cooperation in the coming years will be on climate change, at the G7 (where Germany takes over the Presidency from the UK in 2022) and on issues of hard security, where NATO plays a bigger role and the UK's military capabilities are more relevant.

CONCLUSION

The British-German relationship will remain in tension between their shared interest in a strong partnership and their opposing conceptions of what the EU's role should be. Germany is likely to view a UK that defines itself in opposition to the EU and that continues to — from an EU perspective — store up tensions as a difficult partner. For instance, the worse the tensions between the EU and the UK over the implementation of the Northern Ireland protocol become, the more reluctant Germany will be to deepen its bilateral relationship with the UK, as this would weaken and divide the EU27. Berlin will also insist that issues of EU competence — such as the trade relationship or justice and home affairs cooperation — are dealt with by EU negotiators.

The more the EU-UK relationship leaves the wounds of Brexit behind, the more comfortable Berlin should become about a deepened bilateral relationship with London. Foreign and security affairs, still a core national competence where each EU member state retains its full sovereignty, will be the area where the potential for cooperation is greatest. The joint declaration paves the way for regular strategic dialogue and coordination on almost all major foreign and security policy issues. The UK will remain an important partner for Germany. For this reason, coordination in international organisations and in flexible groupings like the E3 will continue. The best option for Germany, though, would still be a partnership between the EU and the UK in foreign and security policy, where the bilateral relationship could fit in with EU-UK coordination on sanctions, participation in PESCO projects and thus the [‘strategic unity of Europe’](#) Berlin strives for in the face of the great power competition between the US and China, and a Russia that is seemingly determined to remain a disruptive force.

THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

Sara Almahri

INTRODUCTION

In its post-Brexit foreign policy, some have [argued](#) that it is only natural for the UK to fall back on its longstanding strategic and commercial ties with the monarchies of the Gulf states. Formed in 1981, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is an economic and political grouping of six countries — Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar — intended to promote unity based on their shared Arab and Islamic identity.

All GCC members have historical ties with the UK. But what might the UK have to gain from renewing its relationships with its former protectorates in the Arabian Gulf? Are there incentives for GCC countries to foster closer links with the UK?

CONTEXT

The historical relationship between the UK and the GCC has developed into close economic connections through trade and investment. According to one [analysis](#), the GCC countries ‘always think of the UK as a strong ally, not only at the economic level but also on political and military fronts’.

Military cooperation has also been a critical feature of relations. The UK has run the Saudi Arabia National Guard Communication Project since 1978. It signed a Defence Cooperation Accord (DCA) with the UAE in 1996 and a similar defence cooperation agreement with Bahrain in October 2012. Oman and the UK inked an [agreement](#) in 2016 whereby 45 British training teams were to be deployed in the country. As David Roberts points out, this and other recent actions align with the British 2010 [National Security Strategy](#), which prioritises ‘security, trade, and promoting and expanding British values and influence as perennial [British raisons d’état](#)’.

Of course, relations have not always been amicable and collaborative. The Qawasim fleet based at Ras Al-Khaimah and Sharjah [was destroyed](#) by British forces in 1820. Although more peaceable now, as with all international relations, UK-GCC relations can fluctuate. In recent decades there has been a steady consolidation of links between the two: the UK has always been an essential trade partner for the GCC, accounting for \$50.83 billion of the total \$57.19 billion in

UK trade with the Middle East as a whole. The United Kingdom also accounts for nearly one-third of the [trade](#) between the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council States. Arab investments in Britain amount to more than \$60 billion dollars.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

The ability to pursue free trade agreements with countries where the EU has a limited or no relationship has long been proclaimed as one of the principal benefits to the UK of Brexit. It was swift to seal deals with Japan and Australia. The Gulf countries are another prominent potential FTA-partner.

Security offers a potential avenue for closer links in the region. The GCC has long enjoyed close relations with the US. However, since President Obama's 'Pivot to Asia', and its continuation under Trump and into the Biden Presidency, the Gulf's perception is that the US is slowly disengaging in order to address the threat posed to it by China. Although the US is unlikely to disappear from the Gulf soon, and the UK would be unable to replace the US entirely, there certainly is room to expand UK security and defence activity in the region. The Omani-British coordination and creation of a deep-water port fit for the UK aircraft carrier at Duqm is an example of the kind of security engagement that would benefit both parties.

Although still heavily engaged in European security matters, Global Britain will need to expand its horizons and identify potential partners beyond the EU. It stands to reason that, owing to its commercial, political and military relations with the GCC, the UK may tap further into this goodwill and continue to work with the GCC as a robust, reliable partner. [Zaydan Khoulif](#) suggests that, with Brexit, the UK is no longer compelled to toe the EU line, and it will most likely seek to align itself more with the US foreign policy. In this sense, as opportunities present themselves, the UK could assist the US in their rebalancing towards the east and step up activity where it reduces its presence.

There are other reasons why the GCC may be interested in consolidating its partnership with the UK. London may be a helpful partner when it comes to economic reform within the GCC, given its vast experience of privatisation. The GCC needs to diversify its income sources away from oil and gas to other sectors such as finance, services and manufacturing, and it has to change from the [rentier state model of governance](#), boost the role of the private sector and tackle its unemployment problems. British expertise might well be helpful in this regard.

However, it is far from clear whether the GCC will be united in its approach. Inter-GCC relations are riddled with conflict and disagreement, such as the status of relations with Iran, inter-country border disputes and the GCC

monetary union. As [Ali and Ibrahim](#) note, despite its existence as a regional entity for 37 years, the GCC has yet to consolidate itself as a political and military unit capable of maintaining good neighbourly relations among its members when misunderstandings arise.

OPPORTUNITIES

There is no shortage of tangible and fruitful avenues for cooperation, including trade, defence and security, tourism, and artificial intelligence, to name just a few.

As [Vagneur-Jones](#) notes, the six GCC countries and the UK have been discussing strategic and commercial agreements since 2012, even while the trade volume between the two sides has increased steadily. The economic cost of Brexit and the subsequent loss of influence, emanating from the dissolution of agreements signed by the EU with the rest of the world, mean that the UK is more likely to look to capitalise on its relations with the Gulf states and to reaffirm its engagement and presence in the region. In February 2021, Minister for the Middle East, James Cleverly, and Trade Minister, Ranil Jayawardena, met with their GCC counterparts and discussed the UK-GCC joint trade and investment review, launched in November 2020. During this meeting, they expressed keen interest in the prospect of a [Free Trade Agreement](#).

Liam Fox, former Secretary of State for International Trade, sees tangible [opportunities](#) for the GCC and the UK to work together and for the GCC to be ‘a gateway for exporting goods and services to the European continent and Central Asia’. [Al-Isoumi](#), a research fellow at the Emirati FARAS think tank, contends that the GCC countries need large markets for their non-oil goods, particularly aluminium and consumer goods. For the UK [exports to the GCC could be expanded in](#) health products, financial and legal services and the service sector in general.

There is also great potential to be tapped in defence, security and anti-terrorism. The UK has always played a vital role in GCC security. In her speech at the GCC summit in 2016, Theresa May stressed the UK’s historical ties and repeated the Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond’s 2014 slogan that ‘[your security is our security](#)’. The threat posed by Iran and the Arab-Israeli conflict both loom over GCC countries. The UK may have a role to play in pacifying the region and forging more deeper military cooperation, realising its assertion that ‘[Britain is back east of the Suez](#)’.

Finally, there is also an important opportunity to influence human rights in the region as UK foreign policy places human rights, media freedom, women’s rights at the heart of its dealings with all countries, including the GCC. All indices

on these issues notwithstanding, British policy makers seem to be inclined to [strengthen Britain's alliances with the GCC](#).

CONCLUSION

A comprehensive free trade agreement would be a positive step for all involved, and there is already a solid foundation of collaboration to achieve this. The UK needs to give substance to its 'back East of Suez' declaration by bolstering its partnerships with the GCC. For its part, the GCC will be keen to construct a solid strategic, commercial and military alliance with a country that still ranks as a [soft global superpower](#), particularly after [America's 'Pivot to Asia'](#).

Whether the UK prefers to deal with GCC countries as a bloc with cohesive policies or as a set of individual countries via bilateral agreements remains an open question. In the long term, it would seem that signing separate bilateral agreements would over burden UK foreign policy resources. A more cohesive GCC would offer better and more streamlined opportunities for collaboration, although this might be more of an aspiration, given the difficulty the GCC has in collectively reaching broad strategic agreements. In the meantime, and until rifts are healed within the GCC itself, the UK could use its goodwill offices to reduce tension and find common ground among the members of the region.

The UK will have to consider the discourse surrounding its partnership with the GCC. Overtones of a Global Britain reminiscent of its imperial past may be anathema to GCC countries. Although it is legitimate for any country, including the UK, to want '[to be a global and proactive power in the world](#)', this agenda should not be concretised at the expense of mutually beneficial cooperation between the UK and the GCC. The GCC will also need to be mindful of their need to make further steps in addressing the UK's human rights concerns in the region.

For their part, the GCC countries should consider whether they are likely to gain more approaching the UK together or separately. Perhaps, as the UK-GCC Joint Statement on UK-GCC Joint Trade and Investment specifies, GCC-UK type agreements should be prioritised, whereas bilateral agreements will be a second-best route for the future. However they are achieved, the results should be positive for both sides.

INDIA

Saawani Raje-Byrne

INTRODUCTION

The rise of India over the past two decades has resulted in a shift in its relationship with the UK. From a relatively poor country in need of British development aid, India is now seen as an economic partner with the potential to benefit British strategic aims, especially in the post-Brexit landscape. Yet, to realise the potential of this relationship, both sides must go further than the language of partnership — a mainstay of British-Indian diplomatic ties since 2004 — to actions. Discussions of economic potential dominate the India-UK relationship. However, a strong relationship built on specific areas of cooperation — in scientific research, medicine, or increased defence cooperation — can lay the foundations for a more effective alliance, not least in the context of the UK's [‘tilt’](#) towards the Indo-Pacific.

CONTEXT

In the first decades after independence in 1947, the UK-India relationship was shaped mainly by colonial legacies and international politics. India's presence in the Commonwealth made it a bulwark of British influence east of Suez. However, tensions over South Africa, India's push for non-alignment during the Cold War and its subsequent signing of a treaty with the Soviet Union cooled relations between the two nations. The Indian government also felt the UK was too favourable to Pakistan, especially when it came to Kashmir. Consequently, the trajectories of the two countries diverged, with development aid from Britain to India providing the mainstay of the relationship. At the same time, India's links with nations such as the US and France intensified markedly.

John Major's visit to India in 1997 marked the first point since independence when the UK recognised India's economic potential. In 2002, the language of 'partnership' [defined](#) the New Delhi Agreement. Diplomatic engagement intensified in the 2000s, with the relationship [upgraded](#) to a 'strategic partnership' in 2004. This identified areas for future cooperation such as civil nuclear energy, defence, combating terrorism, space exploration, science and technology, academic and cultural links, and most importantly, economics. Around the time of the first visit of the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, to India in 2010, the language of 'enhanced partnership' started to be used to describe the bilateral relationship. This was embedded in the [Queen's speech](#) in May 2010.

More recently, bilateral engagement has increased still further. Theresa May, the former Prime Minister, visited India in 2016; the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has visited London twice (in 2015 and 2018) — his 2015 visit being the first state visit by an Indian Prime Minister in over a decade. Multiple Cabinet-level UK delegations have travelled to India in the past two years. Bilateral engagement has focussed on political, economic, scientific and commercial relations, disarmament and non-proliferation, counterterrorism and [cybersecurity](#). Boris Johnson has been invited as a chief guest for India's 2021 Republic Day parade.

Yet despite this increased engagement, the relationship remains suboptimal. Although trade was central to bilateral engagement, Britain's importance as a trading partner for India has [declined rapidly](#): from being its second-largest trade partner in 1998, to its 17th by 2016. This slump can be attributed to various issues, starting with enduring legacies of colonialism. A British Council report has argued that 'the colonial legacy ... presents a barrier for the UK in forging relationships with India today and in the future', leading to a 'growing sense of frustration in India as some feel that a colonial mindset still lingers...in the [UK](#)'. For India, statements by UK politicians about Kashmir are nothing more than colonial meddling in India's internal affairs. This has exacerbated historic Indian suspicions of a British [tilt](#) towards Pakistan.

Second, the UK has failed to 'give [the UK-India] relationship the attention it [deserves](#)'. The UK's foreign policy priorities, highlighted by the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2017, included the Middle East and Russia, China and the United States — omitting [India](#). However, the recent 'Roadmap 2030', signed by both nations after the virtual summit in May 2021, opens up new opportunities for deeper engagement at a time of increased [reciprocity](#) from the Indian government. Indian Prime Minister Modi's renewed [interest](#) in the Commonwealth — a forum traditionally considered largely irrelevant in Indian strategic circles — as well as a renewed discussion of India's place as an important member of the '[Anglosphere](#)' also hint at a reimagining of the Indian relationship with the UK.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

The virtual talks that led to the Roadmap 2030 were reported in the Indian media as 'a new milestone', opening 'a new chapter' in bilateral relations between the two [countries](#). The issues identified — trade, people and migration, defence and security, and more recently health — clearly contain great potential, but equally present challenges. With respect to trade, the House of Commons inquiry on UK-India relations pointed to three limitations that impede trade

and investment: trade barriers, such as a number of high-value trade disputes requiring international [arbitration](#), challenges in India's business environment and UK restrictions on the movement of [Indian nationals](#). The Indian national budget, tabled on 1 February 2021, takes some steps towards addressing the second of these, raising the maximum stake that foreign investors can take in insurance companies from 49% to 74% and offering new opportunities in healthcare and [agribusiness](#).

The most significant aspect of the 2030 Roadmap is an 'enhanced trade partnership' and [move towards](#) a free trade agreement (FTA). However, the road to an FTA is challenging, with one of the biggest blockages being the free movement of Indian nationals: the UK's resistance to visa liberalisation was a long-standing impediment to progress in talks on an FTA between the [EU and India](#). The recent 'Migration and Mobility Partnership', offering young professionals from the UK and India an opportunity to live and work in each other's country for up to two years certainly marks a [positive](#) step in this regard. Nevertheless, it needs to be bolstered with other moves to address Indian concerns, not least that the scheme is limited to 3,000 applicants per year. Long-term migration has created an Indian diaspora some 1.5 million strong in the UK, providing a source of soft power for the Indian government. However, tensions surrounding short-term migration risk undermining India's perception of 'Global Britain' as a nation welcoming engagement with other nations. This has repercussions beyond the economic sphere — note the unhappiness in India at the UK's special arrangements for [Chinese student visas](#).

Conversely, the UK's increasingly frosty relationship with China has enhanced the prospects of India engaging with the UK as a [strategic partner](#). The UK's 'tilt' to the Indo-Pacific, as outlined in the recent Integrated Review, is an opportunity for India to build a collective alliance in this region of significant geopolitical [concern](#). Strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific provides another possible avenue for action.

As compared to France, Israel and the US, the UK lags behind in its share of the Indian [defence](#) market. India's current move towards reducing the import of defence equipment may prove to be an obstacle to [greater engagement](#). However, there is an opportunity for Britain to collaborate in Indian manufacturing processes rather than increasing its share of direct sales to India's defence market. Creating investment opportunities is a long-term ambition, and the maintenance and enhancement of current bilateral ties in research, technology and defence can all contribute in this regard.

Successful collaboration in research, science and technology between Britain and India can be seen in health sector collaboration between Oxford University,

AstraZeneca and the Serum Institute of India in Pune, which is now investing in vaccine [production](#) in the UK. Health security has been a growing area of cooperation, accelerating in the past year. During the pandemic, 11 million face masks and three million packets of paracetamol were sent from [India to the UK](#). The UK reciprocated by sending oxygen concentrators, ventilators and oxygen generation units [to India](#). Deeper engagement within the health sector therefore has the potential to diversify bilateral ties between the UK and India.

Finally, Roadmap 2030 outlines climate change as an area for engagement. Joint UK-India actions for ‘regional and global climate action’ are supposed to take place through participation in various multilateral institutions focused on tackling climate change. Both nations seek to co-lead global climate action, working to launch the Global Green Grids Initiative as part of the [COP26](#) in 2021. This increased collaboration will extend to research in science and technology, with both nations aiming to work together to share best practice on developing offshore wind energy and electric vehicles. The two nations are also co-chairing the India-led Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure—a multi-stakeholder partnership of governments, UN agencies and other multilateral institutions working together to build infrastructures for sustainable [development](#). Collaboration over initiatives such as these provide opportunities for both nations to become a part of a network of like-minded nations seeking to uphold the rules-based international order, which in turn could help them access other such structures to protect economic and geopolitical interests.

OPPORTUNITIES

By creating opportunities for deeper UK-India engagement, Roadmap 2030 presents an important opportunity for both nations to move beyond the official language of partnership and invest in practical actions that will build ‘Global Britain’ as a brand. Economically, it gives Britain access to a 1.3 billion-strong population and sizeable trading market. A free trade agreement with India would enhance this ease of access further.

Increased engagement with India in defence matters would have a two-fold effect. First, it would build a strong relationship with a relatively stable state in a strategically important location. This is particularly significant given the increased tensions between the West and China. Secondly, increased engagement with India in the Indian Ocean would allow the UK to become a significant presence in the Indo-Pacific, in keeping with its stated strategic goals.

Long-term investment and collaboration with India in science, technology, education and innovation also offers an opportunity for the UK to make its presence felt as an entity separate from the EU. The UK and India’s common

language, pre-existing educational links and academic networks can all smooth such cooperation. Although challenges remain in navigating the bilateral relationship, India's feared economic shrinkage after Covid-19 and the pandemic's potential geopolitical repercussions may mean the state becomes more receptive to overtures from the UK than ever before. It will be important however to listen and engage with Indian concerns about free movement to build a partnership based on trust.

Separate to Roadmap 2030, both nations can capitalise on collaboration within multilateral fora. The [D10](#) for example, a proposed 'club of democracies' consisting of the G7, Australia, South Korea and India has been mooted by the UK government for the past year. According to initial reports, this network would primarily aim to create alternative supplies of technology like 5G networks, to avoid overreliance on [China](#). However, the opportunities for the UK and India to collaborate within this forum could go beyond technological engagement amid security concerns about China. Geopolitically, such a grouping would help position Global Britain as a leader of a network extending beyond the Western hemisphere, bringing together great and middle powers. Second, it would increase the UK's influence in the Indo-Pacific. For India, this network would be a recognition of its elevated status in the world order today, while also having the potential to address its apprehensions about China.

CONCLUSION

India and Britain have shared values and a shared history, the legacy of which manifests in language and institutional designs. Roadmap 2030 presents an important step forward in the bilateral relationship. However, it is important to avoid falling into the historical trap that has characterised UK-India relations to date — that of demonstrating engagement in official language and documents, but little in terms of concrete action. Both nations stand to gain significant advantages from cooperation in various sectors and it is therefore important to capitalise on this to revive the bilateral relationship. To have a truly Global Britain, actions must match the language of intent. Continued engagement with India only holds benefits for Britain, both geopolitical and economic.

ITALY

Michele Groppi

INTRODUCTION

The notion of [Global Britain](#) has sparked significant controversy, not least for its alleged lack of substance. Important questions remain about the precise nature of British foreign policy, about the difficult choices that still need to be made, and about whether the UK will be as influential internationally now it has left the EU. However, viewed from Rome, there is immense potential for the UK to increase and enhance ties with an important ally, Italy, rendering ‘Global Britain’ something more than an empty slogan.

CONTEXT

Italians and Britons go way back, at least to the Roman invasion of Britain in AD 43. Over the course of 400 years, the Romans named the acquired land Britannia, founded London, built baths and Hadrian’s Wall, and contributed heavily to the enrichment of the English [language](#). In spite of a ‘reverse Brexit’ — featuring a Roman departure from an impoverished and almost undefendable Britannia in AD 410 — frequent interactions remained the [norm](#) throughout the subsequent centuries. More recently, dissidents and patriots, such as Giuseppe Mazzini, started their struggle for modern Italy in 19th-century London, which had then turned into a prime destination for [Italian migrants](#). Due to high demand in manufacturing and mining sectors after World War II, Italian migration moved to the Midlands. In the 1980s, however, London’s financial sector again attracted skilled [Italian workers to the capital](#). Since then, relations have been warm. The UK and Italy have been close partners within NATO, the Council of Europe and the G7, and the Queen has visited Italy [five times](#).

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Anglo-Italian relations rest on solid foundations. As a 2019 study commissioned by the UK Embassy in Rome [observes](#):

Young Italians like and trust the UK, which ranks as the major European country they find most attractive, well above France and Germany. This attraction is reciprocal. In turn, young people in the UK identified Italy as the most attractive non-English speaking country amongst the G20, again above France and Germany.

Six out of ten Italians have been to the UK at least once and 93% of them would return [there](#). The year before the Covid-19 pandemic, Britain welcomed nearly two million Italian [tourists](#). In 2018, in turn, almost four million Britons [visited Italy](#). In terms of permanent residency, about 700,000 Italians, including 16,000 students, reside in the UK, making London the fifth largest Italian city, while 60,000 British citizens have chosen Italy as their home.

This friendship is sustained by close trading relations. In 2019, for instance, business between the two countries totalled €35.5 billion. Britain was then Italy's [fifth](#) most important trade partner, behind Germany, France, the USA and Switzerland, whereas Italy ranked as Britain's [tenth](#) most important trade partner. Britons make good use of Italian food, Prosecco, design, fashion brands, cars and pharmaceutical products. [In turn](#), Italians import British cars and special vehicles, chemical products, computers and cyber devices.

As for foreign direct investment, both countries have invested largely in defence, aerospace and advanced engineering. Italy has been one of the principal European states to invest directly in Britain's aerospace sector, as the cases of [Leonardo](#) and the so-called [Tempest programme](#) show. Equally, the UK government's aerospace team in Italy has established strong relationships with multiple local trading associations, attending major air shows, including Farnborough, to 'help UK companies source opportunities in research and development and in [business](#)'. Finally, bilateral relations between the City of London and key Italian financial institutions have greatly consolidated, as evidenced by the inclusion of Borsa Italiana in the London Stock Exchange. In addition to companies dealing with private equity and hedge funds, prominent [Italian banking groups](#) operating in London include Unicredit, Intesa Sanpaolo, Banca IMI, and Mediobanca.

In spite of strong historical, social, cultural and economic ties, both countries currently face hard times. Between January and July 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic there was an 18.2% drop in Italian exports to Britain as compared to 2019. British exports to Italy decreased even further (26.6%), as did overall trade (20.7%). The Italian economy is slowly recovering, but there is still a long way to go. Although the Covid-19 vaccination campaign has progressed significantly, hundreds of businesses and firms have closed. Italians witnessed the collapse and formation of yet another government in little more than a year. [Political tensions](#) are rising in Italy, as is resentment towards the EU. Across the English Channel, uncertainty persists. Both Brexit and the pandemic will have long-term effects and serious doubts remain over Britain's global position in the future.

OPPORTUNITIES

Drawing on Robin Niblett's [six goals](#) for a Global Britain, London and Rome share key interests and incentives to promote their mutual cooperation such as the war on terror, and relations with Iraq, China and Russia.

Despite Brexit and the pandemic, the British commitment to NATO remains solid. During an official visit to Brussels for the NATO summit, [Boris Johnson](#) declared that 'NATO is not just important to the UK's security, it is our security' and that 'NATO is still the bedrock of global defence for generations to come'. Although cooperation between the [E3](#) might leave Rome out of key security European conversations, Britain could still support the 8,000 Italian personnel stationed in Iraq and Kuwait. As US troops gradually disengage from the Middle East, Italy has been granted [command](#) of the NATO mission to Iraq. Italy's Minister of Foreign Affairs, [Luigi di Maio](#), affirmed that Rome will apply its energies to 'enable the country [Iraq] to counter threats in full autonomy'. With its considerable experience of major combat operations, intelligence and situational awareness, not to mention the training of local forces, UK assistance to the Italian-led mission would allow Britain to underline its commitment to NATO while containing ISIS.

In this respect, both countries are determined to counter the rise of the Islamic State in Africa. At the Rome [Anti-Dayesh Coalition Summit](#), di Maio proposed the creation of an African desk to monitor the rise of ISIS in the Sahel and other regions, including Nigeria and Eastern Africa. Despite ISIS's repeated threats, Italy has forces stationed in the Horn of Africa, Nigeria and the Sahel. Given its strategic interests in several African countries, Britain could work with the Italians. The two countries could also increase cooperation when it comes to counter-piracy operations, narcotics and other illegal practices sponsoring terrorism. This would demonstrate London's serious commitment to tackling Dayesh and terrorism through cooperation and the sharing of best practices with Italy.

Another area of potential for cooperation is the containment of China. For the first time, NATO has put the Asian country at the centre of its agenda. In its [communiqué](#), NATO maintained that China's 'stated ambitions and assertive behaviour present systemic challenges to the rules-based international order and to areas relevant to Alliance security'. Like the current British administration, Italy has voiced concern at China's rise. Not only has Rome been concerned about aggressive investments in [Italian ports](#) and infrastructure through the Belt and Road Initiative, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi even labelled China an actor that 'spreads misinformation, kidnaps, kills and doesn't respect human rights... it's an autocracy that does not respect multilateral norms and does not

share the same vision democracies have. We need to cooperate, but we [have] got to be frank about things we don't share or accept'. Unlike in the recent past, London and Rome have a shared interest in working together to strike a proper balance between economic opportunity and the preservation of the rules-based international order.

Russia presents another reason for increasing Anglo-Italian cooperation. In recent times, Moscow has significantly permeated Italian affairs. The Kremlin has allegedly wired significant funds to anti-EU parties, including the [Lega Nord](#). Russian hackers are alleged to be behind the spreading of [fake news](#) and cyber-attacks against [major hospitals](#) researching Covid-19. In an escalation of tensions, a high-level Italian [naval officer](#) was arrested for espionage and for transferring sensitive information to the Russian military. Considering NATO's preoccupation with Russia's aggressive [expansion](#) in the Eastern Mediterranean, Italy and Britain should continue joint military exercises similar to the one that took place in [June 2021](#). In this context, the UK could also help Italy strengthen its cyberdefence capabilities.

All of this could be enhanced and facilitated through British soft power assets. As illustrated in a [survey](#) commissioned by the UK Embassy in Rome, despite toxic political narratives, Italians remain naturally attracted to Britain. As British music, history and culture scored an 80% appreciation rate amongst respondents, it comes as no surprise that one city in Veneto, [Schio](#), pretends to be British for one day a year. English language schools have emerged across the country. In fact, [English](#) has permeated virtually all advertising and entertainment sectors in Italy. British cultural programmes and institutions could support and promote British cultural festivals not just in Schio, but also in Shakespeare's Verona, for example, improving post-Brexit public perception.

CONCLUSION

The UK and Italy have shared interests and incentives to cooperate. Key strategic challenges such as Iraq, the war on terror, China and Russia require attention and vision, which both London and Rome can maximise if they work together.

JAPAN

William Reynolds and Eitan Oren

INTRODUCTION

In January 2019, during the state visit of the then Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, to the United Kingdom, Theresa May [declared](#) that the ‘UK and Japan are natural partners. We face many of the same challenges. But also, the same immense opportunities. By agreeing to forge a new, dynamic partnership, we... will also improve people’s lives and shape the 21st Century for the better’. This momentum has been sustained to the present day. ‘Global Britain’ shares many similarities with Japan’s world view and is welcomed by Tokyo. Moreover, should the British Government calibrate its policies towards Japan correctly, it could facilitate a significant upgrade in bilateral relations between the two countries.

CONTEXT

Much of the relationship following the Second World War has been described as ‘[unspectacular](#)’. Although there had been no shortage of initiatives, such as Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru’s ‘[middle way](#)’ approach to China in the early 1950s and notions of Anglo-Japanese [defence cooperation](#) in the early 1960s, none ever bore real fruit. There were regular [ministerial meetings](#) — more between Japan and the UK than with [any other European nation](#) — but these would not match the latter twentieth century and twenty-first century in terms of substance. When it came to [economic matters](#), the UK seemed [intent](#) on [defending itself](#) against the [ascent](#) of the Japanese economy.

By the 1980s, however, the two countries found a way to make their [economies symbiotic](#) rather than purely competitive. Sir Geoffrey Howe, Foreign Secretary at the time, [argued](#) that this symbiosis made the UK ‘the keystone in the arch of Japan’s relations with the European Community’. The statement was echoed, though not in such grand terms, by Toyoda Shoichiro, former chairman of the Toyota Motor Corporation, when, [in his memoirs](#), he noted that Toyota’s manufacturing of products in the UK during this period allowed them to export to the EU.

Improving economic links were reflected in a marked improvement in the political relationship between the two countries. A slow, though not always steady, progression [from enmity to amity](#) was evident from the mid-20th century. In

the 1980s, the relationship entered a new era, with cultural links such as the [UK-Japan 21st Century Group](#) and the UK's inclusion in the [Japan Exchange Teaching Programme](#) (JET). Subsequently, there were moves towards greater strategic ties, including the [joint prime ministerial statement](#) on cooperation (on matters of climate change, cybersecurity and the promotion of global peace), the [UK-Japan Defence Cooperation Memorandum](#) of 2012, and the [July 2013 Outline Agreement](#). Although this cooperation has been [described](#) as 'piecemeal, ad hoc and relatively low-profile', the level of cooperation was significantly greater than it had been previously. Its substance has only increased in the post-Brexit period, with successive ministerial and [prime ministerial](#) visits, [no less than](#) three joint Anglo-Japanese declarations and statements in 2017, capped with Shinzo Abe's [visit](#) to London in early 2019.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

The UK and Japan seek a closer partnership today than at any point since 1945. Indeed, '[Global Britain](#)' shares [similarities](#) with the concept of 'Proactive Contribution to Peace', outlined in Japan's 2013 [national security strategy](#). Underlying both is the realisation that to uphold core components of the rules-based international order, the UK and Japan need to play an active global role, and increase their cooperation with like-minded nations that share the values of freedom, democracy, respect for basic human rights and the rule of law.

The differences reflect each nation's own historical heritage, with 'Global Britain' emphasising [British leadership](#) in these matters whereas 'Proactive Contribution to Peace' serves as an extension of Japan's movement away from the relatively low-key [Yoshida Doctrine](#) that underpinned Cold War foreign policy and towards a more [pro-active, shaping](#) policy, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. Indeed, highlighting this growing activity, the modern-day notion of Indo-Pacific is itself [originally a Japanese conception](#).

An uptick in diplomatic and defence engagement at various levels has occurred in recent years. Since 2015, Japan and the UK have held routine [2+2 dialogues](#), in which foreign and defence ministers meet to discuss a range of issues.

This increased engagement has translated into closer coordination on a range of foreign and security-policy issues ranging from capacity building for countries in Southeast Asia and Africa to the realisation of the '[Free and Open Indo-Pacific](#)' vision and a closer relationship between their respective armed forces.

Tokyo has [welcomed](#) a greater British security commitment to the Indo-Pacific, including [British vessels sailing through](#) the South China Sea, joint military exercises in the [Gulf of Aden](#), early warning surveillance activities in [seas](#)

[surrounding Japan](#) and the [planned visit](#) of HMS Queen Elizabeth and her carrier strike group to East Asia later this year. These new avenues for cooperation constitute an important development, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Motegi Toshimistu, [stating](#) that security and defence cooperation will be taken to a ‘higher level’, and should be viewed within the context of Japan’s efforts to develop defence ties with like-minded nations, as an attempt to counter the growing clout of China in the region and beyond.

The [economic relationship](#) between the two countries is also evolving. Japan is currently the UK’s 11th largest trading partner and accounts for 5.8% of the total UK inward foreign direct investment stock. The two countries were quick to ink the [Japan-UK Economic Partnership Agreement](#) (EPA) to replace the [Japan-EU EPA](#), [thereby limiting](#) any adverse economic impact of the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, with the agreement being [particularly strong](#) on e-commerce provisions.

OPPORTUNITIES

The UK has made no secret of its [desire to join](#) the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), with negotiations having started [on 22 June 2021](#). As the third largest trading bloc in the world, linking 11 nations of the Pacific Region and constituting 13% of the global economy, there are both political and economic [opportunities](#) for Britain. Indeed, the CPTPP provides both an [entry point](#) into the wider Indo-Pacific and a tool to facilitate the UK’s [aims](#) to take part in shaping the norms of the international environment. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly for the UK-Japan relationship, UK accession and championing of the CPTPP — ultimately a Japanese brainchild salvaged from the failed Trans-Pacific Partnership — would go a [long way in lending legitimacy](#) to Japanese actions in the Indo-Pacific and developing mutual trust between the two states.

However, perhaps the largest long-term opportunity is the potential to solidify a greater cultural affinity between the two countries. Interests may vary, but cultural understanding and greater affinity can go a long way to creating a sympathetic environment, even when ideas clash. Capitalising on bases already established, such as the [‘Japan House’](#), funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the JET programme, the two countries could facilitate [closer cooperation at the strategic level](#) through greater exposure of their respective populaces to each other’s culture and way of thinking.

There is potential to focus on students looking to pursue careers that are either directly or indirectly related to Anglo-Japanese relations. In the 1950s, for example, much of the Japanese elite had a strong sympathy [for the British](#), despite the war, due to their pre-war education or work experiences in the UK;

[Yoshida Shigeru](#), Prime Minister of Japan at the time, is an exemplar of such an effect. More recently, former Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt was able to [greet](#) Shinzo Abe in Japanese thanks to the year and a half he [spent](#) in Japan learning the language, a first for a British minister. Be it another Shigeru or Hunt, cultivating a growing shared understanding of each other remains the most powerful opportunity at both nations' disposal.

At the same time, however, there is still some uncertainty about the activity of Japanese businesses in the UK as well as about the overall political relationship between the UK and the EU. [One leading Japanese academic](#) has recently reminded Whitehall that it is very much in the UK's interest — and Japan's — that London maintain close economic and trade relations with the EU. The Japanese government made the same [point](#) in 2016, publicising it [in the form of a 15-page memo](#).

[Another scholar](#) has observed that, although the UK-EU trade agreement was superior to similar agreements the EU has with, say, Canada, the new post-withdrawal economic relationship between the UK and the EU is 'fairly estranged'. From Tokyo's perspective, a further unravelling of the UK's economic and political relationship with the EU is unwanted: a strong European influence in the international system is conducive to Tokyo's core interests.

Moreover, while both countries share security concerns, they diverge on their perceptions of state-based threats as well as on key foreign and economic policy-objectives. It is unclear, for example, whether or how they would support each other were tensions with Russia and China to further escalate.

Japan's reluctance to adopt punitive diplomatic measures against Russia in the aftermath of the Skripal poisoning in March 2018 is a case in point. Although it [condemned](#) Russia's actions, Japan [did not join](#) the 24 countries that expelled Russian diplomats, nor did it recall the ambassador in response to the incident. This was the result of Japan's campaign to maintain a smooth relationship with Russia: as the former [Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe](#), recently put it, Japan wants to resolve its [long-standing territorial dispute with Russia](#) and avoid pushing it further into China's orbit. So long as Tokyo seeks to court Moscow, [which admittedly is currently unclear with the new administration](#), it is unlikely that it will fully toe the Western line against Russia.

The UK, for its part, is less concerned than Japan about the military threat posed by China. Indeed, the UK's recent Integrated Review listed China as a '[systemic competitor](#)', rather than an '[acute threat](#)' like Russia. An incident involving Chinese and Japanese maritime forces near the disputed [Senkaku/Diaoyu](#) islands in the East China Sea, for example, could entail potential risks for the resilience

of the relationship. How far would the UK go in supporting its global strategic partner in case of a military conflict in the East China Sea?

Both governments need to communicate openly about their policy objectives towards Russia and China and coordinate their wider strategic orientation. Being clearer on expectations from a global strategic partner might play into the resilience of the bilateral relationship.

CONCLUSION

The UK-Japan relationship has come a long way from the distrust of the 1950s. High levels of political engagement and policy coordination in recent years mean that Japan and the UK are [already](#) 'each other's closest security partners in Asia and Europe respectively'. Global Britain can be seen as the logical next step in this already positive relationship.

There is room for a substantial upgrade of relations between the two, and it is here where Global Britain can help. Both countries share core national interests, including upholding the current international order, be it '[free and open](#)' or '[open and resilient](#)'. Both London and Tokyo's threat perceptions overlap to some extent, as concerns about nuclear proliferation, climate change, threats in cyberspace and to the international liberal order posed by hostile states are high on their respective agendas.

Such affinities do not represent cast-iron guarantees of proactive friendship. Economic uncertainty and limits to cooperation pose important risks. To fully capitalise on the opportunities and manage these risks, cultivating understanding is vital. As outlined, these can be achieved through a mixture of short- and long-term policies, but most importantly by clearly communicating the opportunities as well as the constraints both governments face.

MEXICO

Raúl Zepeda Gil and Roberto Vargas Pineda

INTRODUCTION

The UK is one of Mexico's oldest diplomatic and economic partners. However, although it was the first great power to recognise Mexican independence after its legal formalisation in 1821, the demands of global power competition meant that it has subsequently enjoyed only a [distant relationship](#) with the Mexican Government. While great powers such as France and Spain competed for influence over the Mexican economy, the UK kept its distance. Although the UK could have used its diplomatic links with Mexico to gain access to the Mexican economy once these competitors lost influence, it was the United States that gained the most significant influence in Mexico. Since the late 1980s, Mexico has been an open economy with geography providing the basis for solid relations with the US. This relationship overshadows all others. Indeed, trade has become the focus of Mexican foreign policy. It still deals with the European Union when it comes to other political agendas and Brexit could change Mexico's relationship with the UK.

CONTEXT

The UK's recognition of Mexico as an independent state was intended to counterbalance the US and European presence in Latin America. There have been times when the US and continental European states have dominated Mexican domestic economic policies, as they did the mining business during the Spanish Colonial dominance of Latin America. At others, a closer trade relationship with the UK has helped strengthen Mexico's sovereignty against encroachment by the US and European powers — notably when the UK granted debt payment extensions, which eventually resulted in the French invasion of 1964.

The changing nature of the bilateral relationship was noticeable after the Mexican Revolution, of 1910–20. Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas nationalised the oil industry in 1938, which impacted some British companies, and resulted in both the US and the UK boycotting Mexico. However, the 'good neighbourhood' policy of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the need for Mexican support during World War Two, resulted in a [return](#) to relations and commercial negotiations with both countries.

By the late 20th century, Mexico had experienced an economic transformation as it participated in new free trade agreements. The North America Free Trade

Agreement (NAFTA) signed in 1994 between Mexico, the USA and Canada meant a new economic model for Mexico, opening an economy that previously had been closed to commerce in favour of national industry. In 1997, Mexico also signed a free trade agreement with the European Union (FTA-EU). However, even though this [agreement](#) resulted in a closer relationship with Europe — and the UK by extension — Mexico's priority remained the developing relationship with the United States.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

The UK government will have to [work hard](#) to foster closer trade relations with Mexico after Brexit. There are few gains to be had from dispensing with tariffs. Politically, Mexico has prioritised either its constitutional foreign policy principle of non-intervention or bilateral cooperation with the US. It has aligned its migration and security agenda on matters such as terrorism and drug trafficking with its North American neighbour.

On 15 December 2020, Mexico and the UK signed an interim trade agreement to roll over their commercial relationship after Brexit, the [Mexico-UK Trade Continuity Agreement \(TCA\)](#). This retains the rules set by the EU-Mexico Free Trade Agreement (FTA-EU) until at least 2023.

Bilateral agreements may not be the only opportunity for commercial collaboration, however. On 1 February 2021, the UK government formally applied to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). If admitted, the UK will be part of a community comprising Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam, which accounts [for 13% of global GDP, 15% of the world's trade](#) and a market of 500 million people.

According to the [DataMéxico](#) website, the UK is the 11th largest destination for Mexican exports and the 19th for imports. The most traded goods are electronic parts. In contrast, Mexico is the UK's 45th largest trading partner. Goods and services trade amounted to \$5 billion in 2018. According to the [Department for International Trade](#), UK exports to Mexico were \$2.7 billion, whereas imports stood at \$2.3 billion.

The UK-Mexico TCA has been [modelled](#) on the FTA-EU to maintain business as usual. Furthermore, it seeks to prevent the imposition of higher tariffs under the interim rules of the WTO when two nations do not have a bilateral trade agreement. According to the Mexican Government, the TCA will help the agricultural sector in its south-eastern states by rescaling export quotas for commodities such as bananas, asparagus, molasses and honey. It will provide

assurances and define new trade provisions that are part of the new wave of trade negotiations on intellectual property for Britain.

However, the UK must update its current trade expectations if it wants to recuperate what would be lost from its participation in the EU's free trade agreements. The Mexican government is currently updating its FTA with the EU. According to the [Secretariat of Economy](#), the new iteration of the FTAEU will lead to gains in areas such as agriculture, digital services, government procurement and small and medium business. Therefore, if the UK does not align its regulations on these matters with the standards required by the EU, the existing asymmetries between the UK and the EU regarding Mexico and Latin America could worsen.

On the other hand, the CPTPP contains crucial differences from the new FTA-EU that could become critical for improving commercial relations between Mexico and the UK. For example, the former includes chapters on textiles and apparel, labour, the environment, cooperation and capacity building and development, which are not covered in the FTA-EU. Likewise, the latter contains chapters on subjects not considered in the CPTPP, such as animal welfare, energy, raw materials and international maritime transportation. The UK will need to update its standards and laws on all these matters if it wants to join the CPTPP.

OPPORTUNITIES

The differences between the CPTPP and FTA-EU will need to be addressed by the UK when negotiating its new agreement with Mexico in order to maintain market access. However, even if it does so, gains in fields other than agriculture and telecommunications will be marginal.

The trade era today is far more complex than when the first EU free trade agreements were signed. New markets go beyond agriculture and essential goods: high technology transfers and difficult chain values are also included. International trade poses a particular challenge for the UK. The benefits expected from joining the CPTPP depend on its current strength to trade with a diverse range of trading partners such as Mexico. The UK must focus on building both countries' potential in underdeveloped manufacturing technological capacities, for example, those in aerospace or automobile industries that have been developed in Mexico under NAFTA. Sharing expertise and collaborating on joint ventures under the Chapters of the CPTPP (particularly those not considered in the FTAEU) will be critical to the UK can prospering outside the EU.

This strategy could be replicated with similar middle-income countries with manufacturing capacities such as Brunei, Chile, Malaysia and Peru and before

approaching more vital trade partners such as Australia, Canada or the United States. This new focus will require the UK to agree, beyond reducing tariffs, to engage in investment projects that promote job creation and consolidate trade partners' exporting industries and economic capacities. In the case of Mexico, this requires developing bilateral manufacturing of high technology goods with technological transfers and enhanced scientific exchange through bilateral educational programs, such as having focused areas in the future [Turing scheme](#) that the UK has launched to replace Erasmus.

CONCLUSION

The rejuvenation of UK-Mexico relations will require more than protecting extractive businesses in Mexico or simple equivalent treatment with Europe. For the Mexican government, the UK has been a reliable ally in educational and cultural matters. However, for its main agenda in trade, the UK is still marginal. Brexit could make the UK an even more marginal presence in Mexico, if it does not go beyond updating trade deals or joining CPTPP. Global Britain would be a healthy development for Mexico if the UK employed its technological and scientific power to create new joint business ventures.

However, both economies will always be dependent on their immediate trade neighbours (the US and the EU). The long-term aspiration in both countries to detach somewhat from their closest partners, to gain increased independence and to be global requires complex industrial and scientific exchange. If the UK offers nothing new, the US and the EU will still be more important and relevant for Mexico and will overshadow the UK in Latin America.

NIGERIA

Folahanmi Aina

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is home to Africa's largest population, at 195 million people, and Africa's [largest economy](#) in terms of GDP. The country is both a regional powerhouse and a continental force on the global scene. The UK stands to benefit immensely should it decide to make the most of its relationship with its former colony. For Nigeria, a Global Britain means opportunities for improved ties in trade, as well as other areas of mutual interest such as education, technology, health and defence. With Africa representing two percent of total British trade activity globally, Nigeria alone accounts for [one tenth](#) of this, valued at [£3.4 billion](#) in 2016, which is why a Global Britain must take its relationship with Nigeria seriously.

Since gaining independence from the UK on 1 October 1960, Nigeria has attempted to navigate the difficulties of state building and nationhood. In its more than 60 years of independence, over half of which was under military rule, its relationship with the UK has been defined by the desire to avoid interference in its domestic affairs by its former coloniser. The return to democracy in 1999, however, heralded a closer working relationship built on mutual respect and cooperation with the UK. The need for new markets to accommodate the rising domestic demands of consumers occasioned by Brexit and national security concerns in West Africa imply that Nigeria's relations with a Global Britain could be strengthened further, particularly when it comes to trade and defence cooperation.

CONTEXT

UK-Nigeria relations date back to the British Empire, when the UK sought to expand its influence in Africa by conquering territory and reaping trade benefits. The imposition of indirect rule by the British laid the ground for the entrenchment of a formal political system in the geographical entity that came to be known as Nigeria, following the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by Lord Frederick Lugard in 1914.

Historically, UK-Nigeria relations have been rooted in trade. This was at the core of relations between both countries during the colonial as well as the post-colonial era. Shortly after Nigeria's independence, the country was plunged into a civil war from 1966 to 1970. During this period, the country's relations with

its former colonial master were put to the test with the UK's decision to support the Nigerian government in its conflict with [Biafra separatists](#). The political relationship between both countries has continued to be sensitive given the colonial legacy.

During Nigeria's period of military rule, relations with the UK were at their worst, particularly during the military junta headed by the late General Sani Abacha, which culminated in Nigeria being suspended from the Commonwealth. The return to democracy in 1999 ushered in Nigeria's Fourth Republic and provided an opening to rekindle shared values in the areas of democracy promotion and on other socio-economic issues such as strengthening education, health and energy.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Trade has been and is likely to continue to be a key issue in UK-Nigeria relations, particularly in the post-Brexit era. In December 2020, the UK dispatched a [trade envoy](#) to discuss trade relations with Nigeria in the areas of agriculture, health and technology *inter alia*. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has affected global supply chains and disrupted trade, bilateral trade relations between Nigeria and the UK have continued to thrive through initiatives such as the UK-Nigeria Economic Development Forum (EDF), which are to be held twice a year. Nigeria also benefits from the UK's Global Tariff through the UK Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP). In addition to this, the UK has assisted Nigeria in drafting its National Quality Policy, which is aimed at facilitating the industrialisation of the Nigerian economy through improvements in competitiveness of Nigerian goods and services, thereby helping to diversify the country's resource base, such as its non-oil sectors. The UK has committed to supporting Nigeria in the policy's implementation. The importance of Nigeria's trade relations with Global Britain is further demonstrated by the fact that total exports from the UK to Nigeria amounted to [£2.7 billion](#) (as at June 2019) — a 15.9% increase on the previous year.

Furthermore, the challenges posed to security and peace by the Boko Haram insurgency in the troubled northeast region has resulted in a closer strategic partnership and defence cooperation between Nigeria and the UK. In 2017 alone, £100 million in UK aid went towards alleviating the humanitarian crisis in the region. Yet despite existing military training support provided by the UK to the Nigerian military, there appears to be a level of distrust on the part of the UK. This surfaced in [allegations](#) by the former UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, about the reluctance of Nigeria to accept assistance in the rescue of the Chibok girls (276 girls were kidnapped from a government secondary school in Chibok town by Boko Haram on 14 April 2014) for a number of years following their kidnap.

Education has also been a major area of cooperation. One example is the £42 million project [Partnership for Learning for All in Nigerian Education \(PLANE\)](#), which is part of the UK Aid Strategy's strategic objectives. The programme seeks to benefit up to 2m children through improving teaching, school quality, education management and efficiency.

Outside of these areas of bilateral cooperation, Nigerians have a tendency to view the UK as a cause of Nigeria's protracted socio-political challenges. The UK's hasty decision to amalgamate the country's two regions into one country, despite the existence of multiple ethnic groups, has led to occasional ethnic clashes and renewed calls for secession more recently.

UK-Nigeria relations have also tended to focus on strengthening democracy through the law courts to deliver social justice in the country. It is notable that the success of Nigeria's democracy is crucial to democratic consolidation in Africa as a whole, a point recently [made](#) by the British High Commissioner to Nigeria.

Leveraging its diplomatic influence, the UK has exerted pressure on the Nigerian government to improve electoral processes and to remain accountable to Nigerian society. It is expected that Global Britain will be more vocal on this point. A recent case is the nation-wide [#EndSARS](#) protest against police brutality, which followed a vocal response by Global Britain demonstrating solidarity with Nigerian citizens over allegations of human rights abuses.

OPPORTUNITIES

The recent [visit](#) by the UK's minister for Africa for high-level discussions with senior member of the government, civil society and business leaders confirms the tremendous benefits that lie ahead for Nigeria's relations with Global Britain. Although recent development aid cuts have not had a direct impact on UK-Nigeria relations, these cuts are expected to have negative consequences over time on Nigerians who experience the benefits of development aid directly.

Beyond trade and security, UK-Nigeria relations can be expanded to include issues such as critical infrastructure, which the current government under President Buhari [is prioritising](#). Railway construction, for instance, has attracted significant [Chinese investment](#) in Nigeria. The UK could potentially explore partnerships with Nigeria in this area and others such as renewable energy, particularly in light of [ongoing efforts](#) to reform the country's energy sector away from oil.

Nigeria's digital economy also offers opportunities for closer ties through the strengthening of Nigeria's digital infrastructure, unlocking investment

and helping to boost digital skills training for its thriving, tech-savvy youth population. Consolidating on gains made through the [UK-Nigeria Tech Hub](#) could, in the short-term, be of significant benefit to both countries. The country's teeming entrepreneurial middle class is a potential area that offers huge benefits should the UK decide to invest in small businesses both privately and publicly.

The Nigerian diaspora in the UK is also a potential vehicle for advancing Britain's interests in the post-Brexit era through cultural diplomacy. The Integrated Review clearly notes that Nigeria is an 'important partner' and further states that South Africa and Nigeria are regional powers with global reach through international fora, with which we share common values and commercial and development interest: together they [account](#) for 46% of GDP in sub-Saharan Africa and for 60% of its trade with the UK. Recognising the importance of this, the UK Foreign Affairs Committee has recently launched an [inquiry](#) into the UK-Nigeria relationship.

Being a regional hegemon, Nigeria has a crucial role to play with regards to the regional power balance, such as promoting peace and security in hotspots across the West African sub-region, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel. This is particularly true within its immediate spheres of influence such as in Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Benin, Togo and Mali. Working closely with Nigeria in this regard, especially in the areas of counterterrorism, is crucial to Global Britain's strategic national security interests in the sub-region in the coming years. To guarantee its national security interests, Global Britain would be unlikely to deploy an interventionist force unilaterally to the region to avoid the accusations of neo-colonial tendencies. Supporting a close and dependable ally such as Nigeria would help to ensure its national security interests are guaranteed, a point which the Integrated Review clearly alludes to by recognising Nigeria's stabilising role in the region.

Another crucial area for strengthening existing relations is in health. Bearing the world's largest [malaria burden](#), with 27% of global cases and 23% of global deaths annually, Nigeria's health infrastructure is weak. With its population expected to be the third largest in the [world by 2050](#), the UK could be a close partner in developing Nigeria's health sector.

With a high number of young Nigerians moving to the UK for educational purposes, Global Britain should expect to benefit significantly from this through an expanded pool of highly skilled and well-trained foreign nationals adding value to the UK economy. The reintroduction of the [Graduate Study Route visa](#) is a major attraction for Nigerian students to choose UK universities for their higher education.

CONCLUSION

With the UK [spending](#) close to £300 million in foreign aid on Nigeria in 2018, making it the third largest recipient of British aid globally (after Pakistan and Ethiopia), there is no doubt whatsoever that UK-Nigeria relations are at their peak, although the amount of aid is expected to be reduced in future. As the UK recalibrates its efforts to harness its relations with Nigeria in a post-Brexit world, its focus must move beyond the provision of aid to seeing Nigeria as an equal partner in international cooperation, particularly in Africa. Trade and defence cooperation are set to remain at the core of this relationship for years to come, owing to Nigeria's huge consumer-led market and its protracted security challenges.

SOUTH AFRICA

Mervyn Frost

INTRODUCTION

South Africa has had a long and, at times, turbulent relationship with Britain. After defeating the Boer republics in the Boer War, Britain played a key role in bringing about the Union of South Africa in 1910. The Union was a staunch ally of Britain in two World Wars. From its creation to the end of World War II and beyond, Britain was South Africa's major trading partner and a key member of the Commonwealth. For the most part South Africa exported precious metals and raw materials in what was essentially a free market. Under apartheid the government eroded the free market by intervening in the economy by, inter alia, controlling the movement and supply of labour, setting up monopolistic state-owned enterprises and protecting these from international competition. International condemnation of apartheid eventually led to the introduction of severe cultural, political, sporting and economic sanctions by the international community. It was the pressure of these that finally brought about the end of the National Party government and ushered in a process of radical reform to the South African constitution. Here again, Britain played a key role in supporting the launch of the new South Africa and in supporting its economy.

The relationship of the newly democratic South Africa to Britain was significantly different at its launch to what it had been at the start of the apartheid period. South Africa now related to a Britain that was embedded in the EU, and the EU had become South Africa's largest trading partner. The EU itself, taken as a whole, had become one of the three most powerful economies in the world. What emerged in the following decades was a relationship that was highly beneficial to South Africa and to the EU. This happy relationship to the EU rested on a set of specific agreements between it and the states of southern Africa: the Trade in Development and Cooperation Agreement, which established a preferential trade agreement with the progressive introduction of a free-trade area; the EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership; and the South African Development Community (SADC)-EU Economic Partnership Agreement. Taken together these provided a very favourable trading environment for SADC and the EU. It also provided a good environment for interaction in tourism, sport, education and culture.

CONTEXT

The meaning of Brexit for South Africa must be understood in the context of the pre-existing relationship with the EU, but also of key changes that had taken place in South Africa's relationship to specific states within the EU and also beyond it.

In the years following the inauguration of the new South Africa, it remained the largest exporter from Africa into the UK and the largest African importer of goods from the UK. Yet the UK's dominance was no longer what it had been. By 2008, Britain had slipped to sixth place as the destination for South African exports and to fourth place as the source of South African imports. In 2015, South Africa exported more to the rest of sub-Saharan Africa than to the EU and more to India than to the UK. In the last decade, a new major trading partner arrived on the scene — China. Its presence is found in a range of sectors from infrastructure to small trading stores in rural locations. It is only in the field of foreign direct investment (FDI) that the UK remained the dominant partner.

Well before Brexit became a reality, it was apparent to both the UK and South Africa that, if not properly handled, the change in the UK's status might harm the interests of both parties. They might find themselves confronting a lose-lose scenario. If South Africa cut a new deal with an independent UK that undercut the norms and standards of the trading rules that applied to the UK as a member of the EU, this would elicit an adverse reaction from EU states, especially Germany. It would be reckless of South Africa to provoke the EU in this way given that it is the largest trading partner. In the other direction, it would be contrary to British interests to threaten harm to South Africa's relationship with the EU. Early on, South Africa, together with five other African states, recognised the futility of such an outcome and embarked on a series of negotiations, which quickly produced an agreement that on the UK's exit from the EU, the set of rules governing its relationship to the states in SADC would be rolled over to cover the new relationship. The agreement in effect allows tariff-free entry into the UK for products from these states. From South Africa's point of view, then, nothing much would be changed by the fact of Brexit. In the negotiations some 'sweeteners' were included by the UK giving the SADC states easy access to the EU market for some of its agricultural produce and wine.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

From the South African perspective, it is clear that 'Global Britain' has a set of international priorities and that South Africa is not one of them — nor, for that matter, is Africa as a whole. Global Britain's attention is focused on the USA, Europe and Asia. Also relevant to Britain's role in Africa, it is salient that

there are now more states competing for impact, profit and influence in Africa than there used to be. Major powers with a burgeoning interest include the USA (which has a particular interest in security and combating terrorism in Africa), China, India and Japan. It follows that when looking for trade, FDI, and other kinds of engagement, South Africa is not confined to seeking it from its old colonial master. It finds itself in a position to exploit the competition between the foreign powers with an interest in Africa.

The possibilities of benefitting from great-power competition, including the role of Global Britain in it, has been dealt a blow recently by the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated economic downturn. Of particular relevance here is that South Africa was classified as being on the red list of states with regard to the possibility of travel from South Africa to the UK. This has hampered and will continue to hamper the possibilities for South Africans to travel to the UK for business, tourism, sport and other purposes, and vice versa.

Closely linked to the effects of Covid-19 on South Africa are the effects (which will be long lasting) of the recent rioting and the associated widespread looting in two South African provinces which has damaged infrastructure, the economy and the polity in general. The catalyst for the riots was the arrest, trial and sentencing to prison of former President Jacob Zuma for contempt of court. He faces a slew of charges relating to widespread corruption at the highest level during his presidency. Those who benefitted from this corruption fear that if Zuma is found guilty as charged and sent to prison, they, too, will face incarceration. During the rioting, the state appeared weak, the police ineffective and only the private sector security apparatus proved effective.

In sum, South Africa is not currently in a good position to play off Global Britain against the other great powers seeking trade and influence in Africa.

OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunities for merely self-interested action by Global Britain in South Africa would appear to be limited. In all the spheres in which it might be interested, it faces stiff competition from other actors, including the EU, USA, China, Japan and India. The exclusive lead it had as a member of the EU no longer exists. However, if Global Britain commits itself to a values-based foreign policy rather than a narrowly self-interested one, then South Africa still presents a range of good opportunities. There is evidence of such an orientation in the Integrated Review in which the British government committed the country to be a ‘force for good in the world’ and to pursue in its international relations ‘openness, democracy and human rights.’ Indeed, the Integrated Review commits Britain to work in partnership with South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia and Ghana ‘to

further our shared prosperity goals, our democratic values and security interests'. In the aftermath of the pandemic and the Zuma riots there is a pressing need in South Africa for help on all these fronts as it sets out to reconstruct and develop the economy, society and polity. In the short run these are not opportunities for profit, but in the long run they could secure for Britain something like its traditional role as the leading ally for this still-fledgling state on the tip of Africa.

CONCLUSION

In the coming decades Africa is set to become a major space for increased international engagements of many kinds. It will continue to be a source of natural resources and it will increasingly become a market for manufactured products. However, the opportunities in Africa can only be exploited if the states in the region are stable and well governed. Many of them are not (including South Africa). Many are weak, failed or quasi-states. These might produce problems internationally, which might manifest as terrorism, massive movements of asylum seekers and economic migrants, widespread poverty, and, at the limit, famine. Global warming will aggravate all of these problems. The international community, as a whole, then has a present and ongoing interest in doing what is necessary to ameliorate these problems. South Africa is, has always been and will remain a crucial entry point for great powers (including Global Britain) into a continent with vast resources, huge market potential and educational needs at every level. The UK, because of its close historical links with South Africa, is well placed to lead, influence and coordinate the efforts directed towards African development in the south of the continent.

USA

David Des Roches

INTRODUCTION

The United States considers itself to be the apotheosis of British ideals of government, society and economy. Ideals that were transplanted from the UK, cross-fertilised with elements of other cultures, then became better, brighter and stronger in the USA. Many Americans regard their institutions as perfected versions of British institutions — the UK is the beta-version and the US version is ready for the mass market.

British values are generally recognised as American values, and it is often Americans who strive most to preserve and defend British customs and history (the American Bar Association erected a memorial commemorating the signing of the Magna Carta at Runnymede). Indeed, one of the grievances in the American Declaration of Independence was that Americans were afraid English common law was to be abolished in the American colonies as it had been in Quebec.

There is a broad cultural enthusiasm for all things British in America: UK produced costume dramas dominate US Public Broadcasting, UK actors and productions are regular recipients of major US entertainment awards and UK [music](#) permeates US radio playlists. Most Americans over 40 know someone who can recite a Monty Python routine by heart.

Although this relationship is warm and familiar, it is also asymmetric. The British have a greater preoccupation with America than Americans have with Britain. The ‘Special Relationship’, which has been at the heart of UK strategic thinking since the Second World War, is more significant for the UK — American officials usually only mention it when addressing British audiences. Familiarity does not breed contempt, but neither does it breed the kind of deep reflection and consideration of partner interests that the US is obligated to undertake with other countries — the UK is more at risk of being taken for granted than, say, France or New Zealand. In spite of that, the US generally views the UK positively and seeks to collaborate with it in most fields. If an American president [lacks](#) British support for a specific policy, that fact alone is considered to be a flaw in the policy.

‘Global Britain’ will receive little attention in America, except when it conflicts with the interests of ‘Global America’. Americans generally assume that American and British policy is aligned and that policies reflect mutual linguistic and cultural alignment. Specialists in trade policy or workers in affected

industries may follow British developments more closely, but the vast majority of Americans assume that the British view the world in the same way as America, and behave in the same way for the same reasons.

CONTEXT

It is difficult to imagine two countries that are more closely interconnected than the US and the UK. Since the end of the American Civil War in 1865, the UK and the US have been the closest of partners. Americans and Britons generally enjoy visa free travel to each other's countries, and there is an extensive network of [direct flights](#) between major cities in each country. Each year, about seven percent of the population of Britain visits the US — an astonishingly high number given the distance involved. America's only rivals in this frame are the other descendants of Britain — the advanced commonwealth countries of Canada and Australia. The [common language](#) is a unifying factor, which has risen in importance even as the percentage of Americans who trace ancestry to the UK has declined.

Popular culture provides another powerful unifying force. This is asymmetric: the US generally gets only the UK 'prestige' shows such as *Downton Abbey*, while the UK eagerly receives the bulk of American television and movies. When Americans and Britons meet, they can speak in a shared cultural shorthand.

The degree of defence cooperation between the two nations is without parallel and includes the exchange of the most sensitive intelligence, the US provision of nuclear material and advanced missiles that form the [basis](#) of Britain's nuclear deterrent, the exchange of military officers in senior positions throughout the Armed Forces, and routine conduct of military exercises and the exchange of civil servants in respective Ministries of Defence. The UK was a driving force behind the foundation of NATO and is [one of its three main powers](#), where it has established itself in an informal role as a bridge between America and non-Anglophone Europe.

UK-US trade relations are strong. Each country is the other's largest foreign investor; the US is the UK's biggest trading partner. The US is the UK's largest import and export market. UK firms employ over 1.27 million US workers, and US firms employ 1.4 million UK workers. The bilateral investment relationship is the [largest in the world](#).

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Brexit is a cause for concern between the US and the UK. There are several aspects to this, taking the form of a general unease rather than specific disagreements.

First, as with much in American politics today, the legacy of President Donald Trump creates issues of its own. Trump was a [strong supporter](#) of Brexit and was [such a polarizing figure](#) that anything he endorsed became gospel for some and anathema for others. Trump's good relationship with Boris Johnson (with whom he shares some characteristics), caused the Biden administration to be wary of Brexit. Biden also [prides himself](#) on his Irish heritage and has cited Northern Ireland's [troubled status](#) in Brexit as an outstanding issue for the US. Biden's administration has a general unease with Brexit, which is difficult to quantify but has the potential to seep into even the most dry and technical discussions. Most Americans have a more favourable view of the [UK than of the EU](#), but there is natural resistance to change.

A major area where friction can be expected is in trade. The UK's withdrawal from the EU trade regime means the full range of the US-UK trade relationship needs to be reassessed. It is to be expected that during negotiations, each side will seek to gain advantage. British producers (who fear an influx of cheaper US products) will likely seek to stigmatise American products in order to protect domestic producers — such as questioning standards of animal welfare and the safety of 'chlorinated chicken' — whereas the US will try to impose their own domestic standards (leveraging their economies of scale) on the UK. At the moment, the Biden administration's intent is uncertain. The UK will recall President Obama's threat to put a post-Brexit UK ['at the back of the queue'](#) and wonder whether Obama's Vice President feels the same way.

But the bigger threat to US-UK relations is both more ethereal and more ingrained. There is a longstanding resentment at the perceived subordinate role the UK plays to the US. When Harold Macmillan [said](#) the UK would be the 'Greeks to their Romans', he also hinted at the resentment which would follow. For current generations, not as grounded in classics as their forebears, the threat is of the ['Love Actually' moment](#), in which the prime minister (played by Hugh Grant) warns the American president (Billy Bob Thornton) not to bully the UK and destroy the friendship. The UK [desire](#) to assert itself is always lurking in the background and requires constant American attention and consideration.

With Brexit, one of the UK's chief advantages in dealing with the US — acting as a bridge to the EU — is lost. The UK has [retained](#) less influence in the EU than it hoped for, and is in danger of being viewed by the US as an interested, but no longer vital, party in EU affairs, equivalent to Norway or Canada.

OPPORTUNITIES

Free of EU strictures, having invested in a world-class defence establishment, possessing extensive cultural, financial and trade ties with the US, the UK

is in an ideal position to build on its unique advantages. It can strengthen its partnership with the US across the board, taking advantage of geography as well as shared culture. Americans [generally like the British](#) and [enjoy their company](#). The UK's strengths (real or perceived) are admired and desired by Americans: they can build on their shared concerns and commitments, particularly with an American administration whose goals are roughly the same as those of Global Britain.

Britain shares, for example, Washington's [recognition](#) of the threat posed by a rising China, not least through its direct concern over [Hong Kong](#). The UK remains a staunch ally of the US against various [Russian predations](#), and remains one of America's strongest partners in the [global effort](#) against Islamist terror movements.

In climate change policy, the US and UK are closely [aligned](#) and have pursued similar strategies, such as encouraging the shift to renewable energy and electric cars. The Biden administration's return to the Paris Climate Accords [was welcomed](#) in London, and this cooperation can be expected to continue. This will be an area where British support is welcome in helping the Biden administration overcome domestic opposition.

The UK's 2021 G7 presidency is a perfect opportunity for it to advance its relationship with the Biden Administration. There were none of the histrionics associated with the Trump years, and (even though Biden insisted on setting out a marker on Northern Ireland at the onset), the summit was more notable for cooperation than differences. The margins of the summit saw the conclusion of a truly unique document — a [recasting](#) of the wartime 'Atlantic Charter'. The United States would not even have contemplated such an act with any other country.

Global Britain's goals are roughly aligned to those of the Biden administration: a display of unity between two of the world's biggest economies would be mutually beneficial, but would bring greater benefits to the smaller country.

CONCLUSION

Global Britain is — from the US viewpoint — pretty much the same Britain it has grown used to. Britain will continue to be seen as the home of a slightly elevated and refined but nevertheless shared culture. Both countries share a similar worldview. The US and the UK will continue to be favoured destinations for education and tourism. The US will continue to regard the UK as a reliable and capable military and political ally, whereas the UK will continue to use America as an amplifier of its own security capabilities.

In areas such as climate change, human rights and general world outlook, both countries will have more in common, particularly in the post-Trump era. Generations of Anglo-American cooperation have led to a virtuous cycle whereby even the most rancorous disagreements are resolved as a matter of routine.

Trade issues will present the greatest difficulties — the UK is wary of being swamped by US imports, and the US is unwilling to modify practices — particularly in agriculture — to suit a relatively small market. However, these concerns will not disrupt the general pattern of cooperation.

Global Britain may remain an aspiration for the UK, but its goals are mostly shared by the US. History and culture are important: shared history and culture are more important.

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