



## *Krasno Analysis 2018*

### **'THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF SPECIAL?'** **Brexit and the UK's 'special relationship' with the United States**

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Once Donald Trump had been elected U.S. President in November 2016, the U.S. began to pursue a radically different foreign policy. Relations between Washington and most of its partners and allies worldwide became quickly strained. In particular relations with the EU but also with long-standing loyal allies such as Germany, many other members of NATO and surprisingly also Britain were faced with an almost unprecedented level of presidential skepticism, if not antagonism.<sup>1</sup> For Britain and its self-inflicted Brexit dilemma this was particularly troublesome. The country expected that once it had discarded its European allies of 45 years and left the EU in March 2019 it would be able to fall back and rejuvenate its relations, not least its trade relations, with the old Commonwealth countries and, above all, the United States. In the aftermath of the Brexit referendum of June 2016 Prime Minister Theresa May went out of her way to emphasize that London wished to strengthen and deepen its relations with the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the much acclaimed 'special relationship' that goes back to the days of Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, Washington, however, seemed to be quite unwilling to treat the UK as a privileged partner.<sup>3</sup> After all, Trump's mantra of 'America First' clearly spelled out the nationalist and protectionist policy that had begun to dominate U.S. politics ever since Trump was inaugurated in January 2017. There was

very little inclination to grant special favors to any foreign country, including the UK. While Trump at times indicated, that he was enthusiastic about negotiating a free trade agreement with London, this did not mean that he would grant any particular generous terms to the British government.

This essay will explore Britain's dilemma and assess whether or not a greater focus on the 'special relationship' can help London to balance to at least some extent the country's loss of global influence in the post-Brexit era. Could closer relations with the U.S. enable Britain to maintain its precarious great power status?

## **Brexit**

The Brexit referendum of 23 June 2016 gave voters a choice between an exciting new political departure and 'more of the same.' The crusade for the soul of the UK was a battle between irrational nationalism and a longing for past glories, including white English superiority, and a rational but rather dry and unglamorous focus on economic advantage and inclusion in a tightly knit, rules-based club of 28. At least this was how the referendum on British EU membership came to be interpreted by the majority of voters and the 'remain' and 'leave' campaigns.

According to most studies that have been conducted in the meantime, the fear of untrammelled immigration from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa was decisive for the 'leave' campaign's narrow victory.<sup>4</sup> There was an exceptionally high turn-out of 72.2 per cent and 51.9 per cent of the voters expressed their preference for leaving the EU. The votes cast in England and Wales were decisive. Here 'leave' majorities of 53.4 and 52.5 per cent respectively were crucial for the overall victory of the 'leave' campaigners. In the much less populous Northern Ireland and Scotland majorities of respectively 55.8 and 62.0 per cent wished for the UK to remain in the EU.<sup>5</sup> The referendum results have been analyzed in great detail and it appears that younger voters overwhelmingly wished to remain in the EU while the majority of older voters above the age of 55, and in particular those who were white, less educated and living in

the old, often still run-down working class cities in the north of England, wished to exit the EU.<sup>6</sup>

Although this was a non-binding referendum that in strictly legal terms did not force the government and parliament to embark on an entirely new political course and leave the EU, the emotions connected with Brexit ran deeper than most other issues in recent British politics. Misjudging the anti-European mood prior to the referendum, Prime Minister David Cameron had promised that his government would feel obliged to implement the decision of the voters. Sentiments were sharply whipped up by the leaders of the 'leave' campaign, UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage, who also is a long-standing member of the European parliament (a position which provides him with a sizable tax-free income and many perks) and Conservative MP and former mayor of London Boris Johnson. They campaigned ferociously against both the EU and any other foreign influence in the UK. Long suppressed racial and nationalistic prejudices came to the forefront with a vengeance. Even an unprecedented shocking murder occurred. On 16 June 2016, exactly a week before polling day, Labour MP Jo Cox, a 'remain' supporter and mother-of-two, was killed in cold blood by a mentally deranged pro-Brexit campaigner. Thomas Mair, a 53-year old man with far-right sympathies, shouted "this is for Britain" before stabbing Cox 15 times and pulling the trigger on his gun to shoot her three times. All this happened within a matter of minutes just outside her constituency office in Birstall, near Leeds.<sup>7</sup>

Conservative Prime Minister Cameron had cynically called the referendum for internal party-political reasons to appease the EU sceptics in his own party and cabinet. Now frequently regarded as one of Britain's most reckless and incompetent Prime Ministers of the post-war period and perhaps even since "Lord North lost America" and was forced to resign in 1782,<sup>8</sup> Cameron had become convinced that the majority of UK voters would prefer the UK to stay inside the EU. He himself campaigned for the UK to remain an EU member. Cameron expected a narrow victory similar to the outcome of his previous gamble with the Scottish independence referendum of September 2014. With 55.3 per cent Scotland had narrowly voted to remain in the UK at that time.<sup>9</sup> Shortly after the result of the Brexit referendum was known, Cameron resigned to be succeeded within a matter of weeks by his hardline Home Secretary Theresa May.

While May had also been in favor of remaining in the EU, she proved to be a lukewarm campaigner and soon recognized where the wind was blowing. She quickly began to portray herself as a politician above the two opposing camps with her patriotic British heart in the right place.

Once the new Prime Minister had been installed in the chaotic aftermath of the referendum, May kept emphasizing that “Brexit means Brexit.”<sup>10</sup> This, however, was highly misleading and by no means correct. Whether or not there would be a ‘hard’ or a ‘soft’ Brexit or some other ‘in-between’ solution to Britain’s departure from and future relationship with the EU was the issue that greatly occupied the UK and indeed the other 27 EU members for the next two years. The ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ solutions were largely about whether or not the UK should stay in the EU Single Market and Customs Union and thus accept a continued role for the EU Court of Justice and further EU oversight rights over much of Britain’s economy and finances. A ‘soft’ solution would also mean that the country would have to continue making financial contributions to the EU without, however, being able to influence EU decision-making.<sup>11</sup>

The other even more contentious issue concerned the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, a British province since the partition of Ireland in 1922. If the UK left the Single Market and the Customs Union, the EU’s external land border would be in the middle of the island of Ireland. To control the flow of goods, services and people a hard border would need to be re-erected between Ireland and Northern Ireland. This, however, ran counter to the spirit of the ‘Good Friday’ agreement of 1998, which had effectively ended the 30-year long *Troubles* in Northern Ireland that had produced a death toll of more than 3000 and numerous wounded, maimed and traumatized victims. A new hard border would annoy the nationalists in both parts of Ireland, not least in the north, and might well lead to a resumption of violence and renewed activities by the New IRA, formed in 2012, as well as by loyalist terror organizations.<sup>12</sup>

Allowing Northern Ireland to stay in the Single Market and the Customs Union, as suggested by EU negotiator Michael Barnier, the former French foreign minister, while the other parts of the UK would fully exit the EU would give Northern Ireland a special and distinct position from the rest of the UK. Not surprisingly this was unacceptable to the Northern Irish Unionists, the hardline DUP, upon whose support Prime Minister May

depended to maintain a workable parliamentary representation for her government. Since May, in a rush of confidence, had gambled her 17-seat majority in the House of Commons when calling and losing a snap election on 8 June 2017, she was in a precarious situation. Losing 13 seats, her majority in Westminster had dwindled to 317 seats (Labour gained 30 seats but could still not muster a parliamentary majority). Without the informal support of the 10 DUP members of parliament May's new minority government could not survive for long. It was a rather intractable situation, not least as the Conservative Party at Westminster was split down the middle between pro- and anti-Brexit MPs. Various attempts failed to reach a compromise on an orderly EU exit; most spectacularly, the Prime Minister's so-called Chequers plan of 7 July 2018 was disowned by many of her own cabinet ministers.<sup>13</sup>

One matter was certain however. Once May had formally notified EU Council President Donald Tusk on 29 March 2017 under Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty of 1 December 2009 (the *Treaty on European Union*) of the UK's intention to withdraw, London would have to depart the EU by March 2019, exactly two years after May had invoked Article 50. However, a prolonged transition phase until December 2020 was agreed upon at an early stage of the exit negotiations between the EU and the UK. These negotiations were necessary to calculate the UK's exit fee (for commitments entered into before the invocation of Article 50), to regulate the precise withdrawal terms and – perhaps most importantly – to agree on the future relationship between the two sides (including the legal fate of Britons residing in EU countries and EU citizens living permanently in the UK).

In principle the UK government could also withdraw its application to exit the EU (assuming the other EU countries would not insist on the UK leaving after it had invoked Article 50). London could also hold a second referendum, as demanded by many in Britain in view of the political and economic consequences of an EU exit which, it was argued, had not been realized at the time of the 2016 referendum. May, however, repeatedly rejected any of these options. Otherwise, she argued as late as 1 September 2018 in an article in the *Sunday Telegraph*, she would commit a “gross betrayal of our democracy.” She wanted to fulfill “the democratic decision of the British people.”

Optimistically she explained that “we want to leave with a good deal and we are confident we can reach one.”<sup>14</sup>

Eventually May and Barnier, the EU negotiator, agreed that the transition period, during which the UK as a whole would stay in the Single Market and Customs Union could be extended by another year to have more time to resolve the problem.<sup>15</sup> This was referred to as a ‘backstop’ to the border issue between Ireland and Northern Ireland though it would effectively just kick the can down the road. Moreover, this sort of temporary compromise solution was strongly rejected by the ‘Brexiters’ within the Conservative Party at Westminster. They wished to leave the EU as soon as possible with or without a deal on the future relationship between the two.

### **Britain, the U.S., and the ‘special relationship’**

Throughout the referendum campaign in the middle of 2016 and in the following two years of EU-UK negotiations, the Brexiters within the Conservative party kept referring to Britain’s traditionally close relations with the U.S. as one of the pillars of a “truly global Britain.”<sup>16</sup> ‘Global Britain’ was meant to connect the country with the leading economic powers of the world by above all free trade agreements once the country had freed itself ‘from the shackles of the EU.’ In this context the ‘special relationship’ made a surprise re-appearance, at least rhetorically, as a major concept in British foreign policy. To a significant extent the Brexit decision expressed a yearning for yesteryear and the glorious days of Empire. In the same vein, Britain’s elite nostalgically revived the notion of close Anglo-American relations as they had flourished during World War II and perhaps briefly in the early Cold War years. This was somewhat surprising and perhaps showed a certain desperation as the concept of special UK-US relations had been quite discredited ever since Prime Minister Tony Blair and George Bush had invaded Iraq in March 2003.

After all, the Blair government had persuaded parliament to vote for the invasion by submitting manipulated documentation to the House of Commons regarding the danger of Saddam Hussein’s country and the likelihood of his possessing weapons of

mass destruction, possibly including nuclear arms.<sup>17</sup> It also soon transpired that Bush had actually told Blair that if he could not participate in the invasion due to domestic political problems, he fully understood and would not ask for British involvement. The Prime Minister, however, insisted on British troops participating in the invasion. Blair realized that if the UK were not involved in the invasion his country might cease to be viewed as Washington's foremost ally and a major foreign policy power. Britain might not be able to continue punching well above its weight in global politics.<sup>18</sup> Naturally this would also turn the British Prime Minister into a much less important person on the global stage. Washington and London had been unable to obtain UN endorsement for the invasion of Iraq. It was thus an illegal invasion of a country that was not imminently threatening the UK, the U.S. or other parts of the world.

The Iraq invasion's disastrous six-year long aftermath (the British mission was eventually ended in April 2009) took a high toll on British resources and British soldiers, killing, maiming and traumatizing many of them. Soon the British public felt used, misinformed and misled by both Blair and the Bush administration and both leaders were viewed with much mistrust. By implication the vast majority of the British people also began to regard U.S. foreign policy very skeptically. There always had been a good deal of anti-American sentiments in Britain – not least among both the upper classes and the traditional working class – but these were largely culturally inspired sentiments (with a sizable dose of economic envy thrown in for good measure).<sup>19</sup> The outrage over the Iraq war had an entirely new quality that manifested itself on the basis of some concrete awful developments. The British public, or so it seemed to many, had been duped into participating in an unnecessary and highly unpredictable foreign policy adventure. Henceforth references to the value of the Anglo-American 'special relationship' occurred much less often in British public discourse. With the exception of the 1956 Suez crisis, when Britain also felt badly let down by the U.S., the Iraq war represented the nadir of Anglo-American relations since the Second World War.<sup>20</sup>

### **The historical dimension**

The 'special relationship' was the brainchild of Winston Churchill. He referred to it by name in his famous "iron curtain" speech of March 1946.<sup>21</sup> But Britain and the U.S. had already cooperated very closely ever since Washington joined the fight against Hitler Germany in December 1941. Pearl Harbor and then Hitler's declaration of war on America enabled Franklin Roosevelt to quickly dispose of any still lingering isolationist feelings in both the nation and Congress. Ever since Germany had invaded Poland on 1 September 1939 Roosevelt had fought an uphill struggle to be able to support Britain's lonely fight against Nazi Germany. In view of the Neutrality Act of 1937 the U.S. President had to move cautiously though he gradually increased the material aid he provided for Britain, for instance by means of the *Destroyers for Bases Agreement* of early September 1940.<sup>22</sup>

Once the U.S. formally participated in World War II, military and also political cooperation between Washington and London became rather close. The Atlantic Charter of 14 August 1941 was symbolic of this new alliance that both countries had entered into. Still, even before the Soviet Union joined the anti-Hitler alliance, Anglo-American relations were fraught with tension and conflict. Already the drafting of the Atlantic Charter had led to serious clashes between the two countries though the document was eventually signed by Roosevelt and Churchill on a ship anchored off the coast of Newfoundland. Among the conflictual themes were above all issues of decolonization and the sovereignty and self-determination of nations.<sup>23</sup>

In the course of the war severe differences over war strategy, relations with the Soviet Union and post-war planning concepts, to name but a few, followed. It was a tense and competitive alliance though both countries, in particular Britain, realized that they needed to cooperate closely with each other. Both nations, therefore, made strenuous attempts to work together. Indicative is perhaps the anecdote, true or not, of Roosevelt walking unannounced into Churchill's suite during the Prime Minister's visit to the White House in December/January 1941 right at the moment when Churchill stepped out of the bathroom stark naked. Roosevelt apologized and wanted to withdraw immediately but Churchill pronounced grandly that "the British Prime Minister has nothing to hide from the American President."<sup>24</sup>



In fact, both sides hid an awful lot from each other but Britain was clearly dependent on U.S. resources and financial as well as military support. Thus, the myth of the “special relationship” was born in Churchill’s fertile mind. It helped of course that both countries were democracies, spoke the same language and drew on a similar though by no means identical outlook on international affairs. Realizing his country’s deep economic and financial predicaments in the aftermath of World War II, Churchill did his best to emphasize the ‘special relationship’ and use the sentimental underpinning of this concept to his country’s advantage. Almost all of his successors did so likewise. Yet, the U.S. was only rarely persuaded by nostalgic sentiments. ‘Special relationship’ or not, Washington tended to pursue a hard-nosed foreign policy in the post-1945 world, including toward Britain. America’s national interests always came first. U.S. politicians were also fully aware of the long-standing British inclination to use the ‘special relationship’ to make Washington go along with British ideas and pull British chestnuts out of the fire.<sup>25</sup>

Once Churchill had departed (he retired in April 1955) it became even more difficult for London to rely on its special status in Washington as a helpful tool for maintaining and intensifying the hugely important relationship with the American superpower. Britain clearly was the junior partner in this unequal alliance and over time the U.S. frequently came to disregard British preferences and sensitivities. The ‘special relationship,’ for instance, did not stop President Eisenhower from forcing Britain to abandon the retaking of the Suez Canal in the middle of British (and French) military attempts to reverse Egypt’s nationalization of the Suez Canal in early November 1956. When a run on the pound sterling occurred and Britain’s gold, oil and dollar reserves were rapidly depleting, Washington insisted on the end of the Suez adventure before helping to rescue the country from its financial predicament.<sup>26</sup> Eisenhower made it perfectly clear when addressing his *National Security Council* on November 1, 1956, that America’s interests came first. “How could we possibly support Britain and France and in doing so we lose the whole Arab world?,” Eisenhower asked rhetorically.<sup>27</sup>

After the Cuban Missile crisis a few years later, Prime Minister Macmillan claimed to have been regularly consulted by President John F. Kennedy throughout the crisis. Nothing was further from the truth; Kennedy had merely informed him in a few

phone conversations about the developments; he had not asked Macmillan for advice or guidance as Macmillan liked to claim.<sup>28</sup> At the Nassau conference in December 1962 Macmillan also had to implore Kennedy to offer Britain the use of America's new Polaris missiles. After the abandonment of Britain's own technically inferior Blue Streak missiles and the cancellation of America's outmoded Skybolt missile, which had been promised to London, the UK needed Washington's modern submarine-launched ballistic Polaris missiles to actually have a vehicle onto which to fit its nuclear warheads. Only with great difficulties and under certain multilateral conditions was Macmillan able to extract the Nassau Agreement from a reluctant Kennedy. It became the basis of the Anglo-American Polaris Sales Agreement of 6 April 1963.<sup>29</sup>

Still, Britain could be hard-nosed too and was also quite capable of defending its national interests, 'special relationship' or not. During the Vietnam War Labour Prime Minister Wilson did not allow himself to be pushed into providing military support to the U.S. Despite numerous appeals from the Johnson administration, he could not be persuaded. Wilson viewed the Vietnam war as a lost cause and did not want to get involved.<sup>30</sup> In 1954 Churchill had also already refused to provide British troops to the Indochina war. The U.S. had considered an Anglo-American enterprise to support the French in their battle at Dien Bien Phu but London stood its ground and was unwilling to participate.<sup>31</sup>

While in the early 1970s Prime Minister Heath successfully managed to persuade the European Communities to offer membership to the UK, his relationship with the Nixon administration was not particularly close. It was, however, not as antagonistic as it is sometimes portrayed in the literature. Nevertheless, Heath went out of his way to avoid using the term 'special relationship' in order not to annoy his European partners. When during one of the Prime Minister's visits to Washington President Nixon insisted on using the term, Heath looked distinctly uncomfortable.<sup>32</sup>

The revival of the 'special relationship' occurred in the 1980s during the Thatcher-Reagan era. Both politicians got on rather well personally and – more importantly – they shared a very similar philosophical outlook on international affairs. They both detested the Soviet Union, were skeptical of America's continental European allies and held strongly neo-liberal economic convictions. While Reagan frequently

referred to the 'special relationship' and was always ready to explain how much he valued it, his practical foreign policy was always based on what was good for America, as he saw it. At the outbreak of the Falklands war in early April 1982, the U.S. did not immediately side with London. At first Washington tried to negotiate between Britain and Argentina before eventually and quite reluctantly supporting Britain's military action to drive the Argentinians from the small British possession in the South Atlantic. Still, without American satellite information Britain may well have been unable to ultimately succeed and win the war.<sup>33</sup> Just over a year later, in late October 1983, when the Reagan administration invaded Grenada, a former British colony, to counter an alleged communist coup on the small island, the President did not bother to inform his trusted ally and friend Margaret Thatcher.<sup>34</sup>

Although Reagan eventually overcame his and Thatcher's deep suspicion of new Soviet leader Michael Gorbachev and enter into successful relations with Moscow that eventually led to the end of the Cold War (and the disintegration of the USSR itself), Thatcher never made this transition. In contrast to Reagan she remained implacably opposed to both the Soviet Union and a reunited Germany.<sup>35</sup> Still during the Reagan-Thatcher era Anglo-American relations were almost as close as they had been in the 1940s. With hindsight it appears that the 1980s were the highpoint of the 'special relationship' during the post-World War II years.

During the years following the end of the Cold war in 1989/90 the 'special relationship' would count for less and less. Even before this era had properly commenced, in a speech in Mainz, Germany, in May 1989, visiting President George H.W. Bush referred to Germany and the U.S. as "partners in leadership" within the western alliance. The UK, it seemed, had no particularly distinguished role to play in this context. Politicians in London were not amused, in fact they were outraged.<sup>36</sup> Public opinion in Britain, however, cared much less. Unlike for the liberal elite, for most ordinary Britons the 'special relationship' represented a feature of times past. And the role of Tony Blair and President George W. Bush, as outlined above, in dragging Britain into the invasion of Iraq on behalf of a united Anglo-American front would lead to further mistrust, if not outright hostility toward the U.S. Moreover, the succeeding Obama administration strongly pushed the EU member countries to make further progress with

the European integration process. This was resisted by the majority of British public opinion. President Obama, however, regarded Britain as an integral part of the European Union. In fact, Obama said repeatedly that being a member of the EU was one of Britain's strongest advantages from the U.S. point of view. In April 2016 he flew to London to make this point in person in the run up to the Brexit referendum.<sup>37</sup>

When Donald Trump moved into the Oval Office in January 2017 Washington began to view this very differently. Nevertheless, the new administration could not be persuaded that Britain ought to be given special status in U.S. foreign policy.

### **Donald Trump and the 'special relationship': "the highest level of special"?**

Already as presidential candidate Trump made clear his sympathy for Britain leaving the EU. He even indicated that he wasn't too concerned whether or not the EU might break up as a result.<sup>38</sup> Initially, however, Trump had refrained from commenting on the looming Brexit referendum. In March he said somewhat ingenuously that he didn't "want to make a comment about the UK leaving, but I think they may leave based on ... everything I am hearing."<sup>39</sup> Once Obama had strongly come out against Brexit in early May 2016, Trump also began talking about the situation more publicly. "I think the migration has been a horrible thing for Europe," he told Fox News in May 2016. "A lot of what was pushed by the EU, I would say that they're better off without it, personally, but I'm not making that as a recommendation. Just my feeling." He wanted them "to make their own decision." He didn't want to give the British any advice "but I know there are a lot of people that are very, very much against being in the EU," he said.<sup>40</sup>

By the middle of 2016 populism was clearly on the march with a populist right-wing government having already come to power in Hungary and a left-wing one in Greece. There also was the increasing popularity of nationalist parties in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and a number of other EU countries. Still, most politicians and commentators in the western world were hesitant to recognize these fundamentally disruptive developments as more than a temporary phenomenon. Trump

had no such inhibition and recognized perhaps more clearly than others that populism and the discontent it rested on would not quickly fade away again.<sup>41</sup>

The mounting disconnect between ordinary people who had been hit badly by the financial and economic crisis of 2008-2012 (the 'Great Recession'), many of whom had still not recovered their pre-recession positions, was obvious to him. The widespread feeling about the liberal elite being out of touch was not helped by the inclination of presidential candidate Hillary Clinton as well as the incumbent President Obama to surround themselves with rich and famous Hollywood celebrities who had a global outlook similar to that of the two Democratic politicians. Clinton managed to misjudge the mood of the country even further by giving extremely well-paid speeches to Wall Street bankers such as Goldman Sachs and campaigning in many of the wrong areas. She largely avoided the rustbelt states of middle America where the problem was most obvious.<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps due to shrewd reflection and advice he received from ultra-nationalist film maker and Breitbart editor Steve Bannon or perhaps merely because of an instinctive gut feeling (or a mixture of both), Trump realized much more precisely than either Clinton or Obama the underlying reasons for the mounting discontent in America.<sup>43</sup> He also immediately saw that Brexit was "the starkest repudiation yet of the postwar consensus favoring ever-deeper global integration," as Daniel Drezner put it in the *Washington Post*. Instead, "growing protectionism and anti-immigrant sentiment world-wide" could be observed. "Identity politics trumped economics; arguments about 'independence' and 'sovereignty' defeated arguments about British influence and importance. The advice of once-trusted institutions was ignored."<sup>44</sup> Trump was fully aware of the deep-seated anger and the yearning for change and a better future that Brexit represented. What the referendum had done for Britain, he wanted to bring about with his own election in November. "It'll be Brexit plus plus plus," he kept saying, "Brexit times 10."<sup>45</sup>

Trump certainly felt inspired by the Brexit referendum and his occasional consultation with Nigel Farage confirmed him in his deep conviction that his campaign was on the right track. As the opinion polls in Britain had wrongly predicted the outcome of the Brexit vote, Trump believed that this might also be the case regarding his

electoral battle with Hillary Clinton. Unlike the Democratic camp, Trump and his advisers developed a much better feeling about the important role of immigration (and in the U.S. context it meant there also was an ever-present racial dimension) and the sanctity of the country's borders.

On the day after the referendum Trump arrived for a two-day trip to his Turnberry golf course and hotel in Scotland. He knew that the world media was focused on Britain and at a time when he was falling behind Clinton in the polls, he cleverly exploited the opportunity to put himself right in the middle of the attention of the world's media. On the day of his arrival, a Friday morning, he gave a rambling and rather bizarre press conference about Brexit and anything else he was asked about. Responding to a question on Brexit, he immediately declared that "People want their country back. They want to have independence, in a sense, and you see it with Europe, all over Europe." He predicted that "you're going to have, I think many other cases where they want to take their borders back. They want to take their monetary (sic!) back."<sup>46</sup>

Trump was full of praise for Britain and he predicted a great post-Brexit relationship between the US and the UK. "They'll be great allies, they always have been. And I think zero will change on that score. There has never been a better ally, and I think nothing will change on that score." Indeed, in response to Obama's saying that a post-Brexit Britain would be at the back of the line with regard to the negotiation of a free trade agreement with the US, Trump declared that "the UK has been such a great ally for so long, they'll be always at the front of the line. They've been amazing allies in good times and in bad times."<sup>47</sup> Trump referred to German Chancellor Merkel's migration policy which had allowed almost one million refugees to enter the country in 2015 as a disastrous policy. According to Trump it had led many Germans, once very proud of their country, to leave and emigrate elsewhere. Therefore, he fully understood that the British people did not wish to see anything like that in their own country and wanted to get rid of any EU influence. "My opinion is," he pronounced, "that what happened should have happened. I think they will end up being strong for it, and they'll control their country, and they'll control everything about their country."<sup>48</sup>

In view of these and similar remarks the British government believed optimistically that they could work with President Trump once he had been elected and

then inaugurated in January 2017. In the course of the two purely bilateral meetings between Prime Minister May and President Trump without any foreign leaders present (unlike during the G7, G20 and NATO meetings which Trump attended) it became clear, however, that despite all of his bombastic rhetoric, Trump did not intend to pay particular attention to the ‘special relationship.’

### **The bilateral May-Trump meetings in Washington (Jan 2017) & London (July 2018)**

Prime Minister May was the first foreign leader who managed to obtain a formal invitation to visit the White House on January 27, 2017. There had been other leaders, such as Nigel Farage and Japanese Prime Minister Abe who had met Trump in *Trump Towers* in New York after his election but the first official visit to the new President was the one by the British Prime Minister. She was quite proud of this achievement. May had high hopes that a meeting with Trump would shore up her precarious position in domestic UK politics. And at first sight Trump did not disappoint. He told her, while holding her hand during talks at the White House, that Brexit was a “wonderful thing” for Britain and it would be the basis for new trade deals,<sup>49</sup> not realizing that the UK was only entitled to negotiate such deals once it had formally left the EU in March 2019. In a subsequent joint press conference, the new President declared that “Great days lie ahead for our two peoples and our two countries.” May was quick to respond that her being invited to the White House as the first foreign leader clearly was “an indication of the strength and importance of the special relationship that exists between our two countries, a relationship based on the bonds of history, of family, kinship and common interests.”<sup>50</sup>

During her visit the British delegation came to realize, however, that the UK did not play that much, if any, role in Donald Trump’s thinking. For instance, during the press conference with Theresa May he was much more focused on talking about opening a new chapter in relations with Russia and whether or not to lift sanctions on Moscow as well as on his immigration policy. He recently had issued a highly

controversial Executive Order banning all immigration to the U.S. from six predominantly Muslim states.

In fact, shortly before a private meeting with Theresa May commenced, Michael Flynn, Trump's controversial first National Security Adviser, told the President that other leaders such as Russia's Putin had also been interested in being the first foreign leader to visit him in the White House. Learning this Trump got rather agitated and annoyed and repeatedly asked Flynn why he hadn't told him sooner, thus implying that he would have much preferred Putin's visit to that of Theresa May. During this brief intermezzo May and her delegation were in earshot; they were quite embarrassed and didn't quite know how to react. They pretended not to have heard the exchange.<sup>51</sup>

All this did not indicate that Trump was particularly interested in relations with the UK, Brexit or not. After the talks had ended, Prime Minister declared that she was more than happy with her visit which had reconfirmed the special relationship. In her view she had also managed to persuade Trump that the NATO alliance was a mutually beneficial organization for all member states, including the U.S. At least the President had not repeated to her that he thought NATO was obsolete as he had said during the election campaign.<sup>52</sup>

May's and Trump's next purely bilateral meeting occurred when Trump visited London in mid-July 2018. It was a highly controversial occasion. His visit was sandwiched between his attendance at the North Atlantic Council in Brussels from 11 to 12 July and before he would meet for the first time with Russian President Putin in Helsinki. In Brussels he had once again reminded the 28 other leaders rather robustly that most of them did not contribute two per cent of their GDP to defense as NATO members had voluntarily agreed to do several years before. This was unacceptable in Trump's view. He hinted at the possibility that the U.S. could well go it alone if the NATO members did not get their act together. In the aftermath of the meeting he also seemed to indicate that he had doubts about the continued viability of Article 5, which said that an attack on one NATO country was an attack on all – one of the pillars that were the basis for the NATO alliance and held it together.<sup>53</sup>

But Trump did sign the communique though it was reported in August that his own national security team had insisted on the communique being finalized well before



the NATO meeting in Brussels. That way Trump could not interfere in the drafting process or stop the process during his visit to Brussels.<sup>54</sup> While most western leaders viewed the NATO meeting as difficult though not a failure, Trump's view was much more optimistic. He explained at a press conference in Brussels "there's a great, very collegial spirit in that room." Very unified, very strong, no problem." Despite his ever-changing views on the value of NATO, Trump also claimed that "the United States commitment to NATO is very strong, remains very strong." "I believe in NATO."<sup>55</sup> A few days later he referred to the meeting as "very productive."<sup>56</sup>

Trump's intention to meet with Putin in Helsinki was seen by most other western leaders with mixed feelings, to put it mildly. After all, Trump's personal fascination with Putin and his benign attitude to Russia was not shared by the likes of Angela Merkel, French President Macron or indeed Britain's Prime Minister May. Moreover, the poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia with a Novichok nerve agent (A-234) had occurred as recently as early March (both narrowly survived). Skripal, a former Russian military officer and double agent, lived in exile in the English Salisbury. Based on solid intelligence information, the British government was convinced that the order to attack the two had come from the highest echelons in the Kremlin. Putin must have known about it; this at least was what British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson claimed publicly.<sup>57</sup>

Due to the opposition of the Speaker of the House, the Mayor of London and many MPs from both sides of the aisle, Trump's planned state visit to the UK had to be downgraded to a much less formal working visit. After many delays it occurred on 12 and 13 July 2018, sandwiched between two other probably more important visits, as outlined above. Trump was largely kept away from central London, where huge demonstrations were expected, and met the Queen, members of the royal family and other dignitaries at Windsor Castle. Prime Minister May hosted a black-tie dinner for him at Blenheim Palace, the birth place of Winston Churchill whom Trump greatly admired. He had put a bust of Britain's wartime Premier back into the Oval office within weeks of his inauguration.

Prior to the dinner it became known that Trump's new National Security Adviser, the ultra- conservative former UN Ambassador John Bolton, had met with pro-

Brexit members of the Conservative party, who were making May's life in her negotiations with the EU difficult. They were quite ready to leave the EU without a deal while May was desperate to negotiate a 'soft' deal with the EU to cushion Britain's exit and maintain close relations with the EU for the future. Many of them were openly wondering how much longer the Prime Minister ought to stay in office. Bolton asked the anti-May faction in her own party how he could be helpful to their cause. Apparently, according to Anne Applebaum writing in *The Independent*, some members of Trump's delegation also lobbied the British government on behalf of the imprisoned Tommy Robinson, a violent white supremacist who was one of the co-founders of the fringe and ultra-nationalist English Defence League.<sup>58</sup>

If this were not enough. The day before he was hosted by May at Blenheim Palace Trump had given an interview to Britain's mass circulation tabloid *The Sun*, which is owned by Rupert Murdoch, a Trump family friend. In the interview the U.S. President severely criticized his host, the British Prime Minister. He believed that she was entirely mishandling the Brexit negotiations. He was not impressed by her 'Chequers plan' which was her negotiation strategy to persuade the EU to agree on an exit deal with the UK. He said that he would negotiate much "harder" with the EU, including breaking off negotiations if necessary, but that May had ignored his advice and in fact went "the opposite way" with "very unfortunate results" so far.<sup>59</sup>

"Well, I think the deal that she is striking is not what the people voted on," he explained. With May's approach the British economy would remain subject to many European regulations and "then their trade deal with the U.S. will probably not be made," he told *The Sun*. "If they do a deal like that, we would be dealing with the European Union instead of dealing with the UK, so it will probably kill the deal." May's plan, he said, "will definitely affect trade with the United States, unfortunately in a negative way." After all, the U.S. had "enough difficulty with the European Union," he outlined. "We are cracking down right now on the European Union because they have not treated the United States fairly on trading." Upon further reflection he even made the statement to the *Sun* journalists: "No, if they do that I would say that would probably end a major trade relationship with the United States."<sup>60</sup>

Although Trump reassured the journalists that May was a “nice person” and that he got along “with her nicely,” he also strongly praised Boris Johnson, May’s arch rival. Johnson had recently resigned as Foreign Secretary as he did not agree with May’s Chequers negotiation strategy. He “would make a great prime minister,” Trump told the newspaper. Without offering any evidence, the President also claimed that Sadiq Kahn, London’s Muslim mayor, was weak on fighting crime and terrorism.<sup>61</sup>

Downing Street was stunned by Trump’s interview that came like a bolt from the blue in the middle of his formal visit to the UK and clearly supported the anti-May Brexiteers in the Conservative Party, exactly those who wanted to get rid of May as Prime Minister. The Downing Street press office published a rather dull statement in response pointing out that May’s ‘Chequers plan’ was “the proposal we’re putting to the European Union which absolutely delivers on the Brexit the people voted for. They voted for us,” the statement said rather lamely, “to take back control of our money, our law and our borders and that’s exactly what we will do.”<sup>62</sup>

To make up for his *faux-pas* Trump went out of his way to be particularly nice to May at the final joint press conference on the day following the publication of his *Sun* interview. He described America’s relationship with the UK as “the highest level of special.” She “is doing a fantastic job, a great job. And I mean that,” the journalists attending the press conference heard him saying. When he was asked why he had criticized her in his newspaper interview, he simply denied that he had done so, this was “called fake news” he declared. Instead, he said, he wanted to “celebrate the special relationship.” His country was looking “forward to finalizing a great bilateral trade agreement with the United Kingdom. This is an incredible opportunity for our two countries,” he said, “and we will seize it fully.” After all, “a strong and independent United Kingdom like a strong and independent United States, is truly a blessing on the world.”<sup>63</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The British governing elite's intention to strengthen and intensify the UK's relationship with the United States and rejuvenate the 'special relationship' has proven to be much more difficult than anticipated. Prime Minister May's inept and fairly incompetent negotiation strategy with the EU may have contributed to this. The total disarray both her government and the Conservative party has descended into during the last 18 months or so has not helped either to portray Britain as a strong, skillful and influential partner to the U.S. Moreover, despite Prime Minister's May desperation to be seen as Trump's favorite European leader, she has not completely rolled over to beg favors from Washington. London, for instance, has criticized Washington's withdrawal from the 2016 Paris Climate Change Treaty. Together with France and Germany as well as China and Russia the UK also continues to support the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran which Trump withdrew from in May 2018.

Yet, it is largely not the British government's fault that a revival of the 'special relationship' has not occurred since Donald Trump came to office in January 2017. Despite some positive rhetoric about the continued value of the UK and the 'special relationship' for the United States, Trump does not intend to rely on allies and friends for conducting America's foreign policy. As his slogans 'America First' and 'make America Great again' indicate, it is all about the U.S. and it is all about him. And Trump admitted this quite frankly at an election rally in October 2018, "I am a nationalist," he proudly proclaimed receiving thunderous applause in response from the thousands who had come to admire him.<sup>64</sup> This simply leaves no space for trusted relationships with other countries, including Britain. Instead since he came to office Trump has gone out of his way to undermine relations with some of America's long-standing allies, such as Germany or valuable organizations such as the European Union and NATO.<sup>65</sup>

While Trump has not actively attempted to undermine Britain or express much public criticism of Britain's role in world affairs, neither has he done much to help the country. It is most unlikely therefore, that a post-Brexit UK can expect to get much support and help from Donald Trump's America. During his press conference with Theresa May in July 2018, he claimed that he "would go in bloody hard," if he were negotiating Brexit. It can be expected that he would do the same if a UK-US free trade

agreement (or any other agreement, perhaps a military or nuclear one) were being negotiated between London, which no longer can fall back on support from the EU, and an ever more strident and increasingly nationalist and protectionist America. Although *Guardian* journalist Jonathan Freedland recommended that “in the age of Trump, it’s time to ditch the special relationship,”<sup>66</sup> this will be difficult to do. After having abandoned the EU, where is Britain supposed to go for support and assistance if not to the U.S.? There is no one else left. This, of course, puts the country very much at the mercy of Washington. In the age of Trump this is not a good position to be in.

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#### ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> See for instance Klaus Larres, “Angela Merkel and Donald Trump: Values, Interests, and the Future of the West,” *German Politics*, Vol.27/2 (June 2018), pp.193-213; also Klaus Larres, “Donald Trump and America’s Grand Strategy: U.S. foreign policy toward Europe, Russia and China,” *Global Policy Journal* (May 15, 2017):

[http://www.academia.edu/33029313/DONALD\\_TRUMP\\_and\\_AMERICAS\\_GRAND\\_STRATEGY\\_U.S.Foreign\\_Policy\\_toward\\_Europe\\_Russia\\_and\\_China\\_Global\\_Policy\\_Journal\\_May\\_2017](http://www.academia.edu/33029313/DONALD_TRUMP_and_AMERICAS_GRAND_STRATEGY_U.S.Foreign_Policy_toward_Europe_Russia_and_China_Global_Policy_Journal_May_2017)

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/04/theresa-may-britains-relationship-with-the-us-will-be-strong-des/>, Sept. 4, 2016 (accessed, Oct. 27, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> For a somewhat different interpretation, see Steve Marsh, “The US, Brexit and Anglo-American Relations,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol.16/3 (2018), pp.272-294.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Geoffrey Evans and Anand Menon, *Brexit and British Politics* (London: Polity, 2017); also John Armour and Horst Eidenmueller, *Negotiating Brexit* (Munich: Beck, Hart, Nomos, 2017); Denis MacShane, *Brexit, No Exit: Why (in the End) Britain won’t leave Europe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> See [https://www.bbc.com/news/politics/eu\\_referendum/results](https://www.bbc.com/news/politics/eu_referendum/results) (accessed, Oct. 20, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> See Sasch O. Becker, Thiemo Fetzer, Dennis Novy, “Who voted for Brexit? A comprehensive district-level analysis,” in *Economic Policy*, Vol.32/93 (Oct. 1, 2017), pp.601-650: <https://doi.org/10.1093/epolic/eix012>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/nov/23/thomas-mair-slow-burning-hatred-led-to-jo-cox-murder> (accessed, Oct. 22, 2018); <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-politics-of-murder-in-britain> (accessed, Oct. 22, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.leeds.ac.uk/news/article/3930/britains\\_post-war\\_prime\\_ministers\\_ranked\\_by\\_politics\\_experts](https://www.leeds.ac.uk/news/article/3930/britains_post-war_prime_ministers_ranked_by_politics_experts)” (Oct. 13, 2016) (accessed, Oct. 22, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/events/scotland-decides/results> (accessed, Oct.22, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/news/archive/2017/01/theresa-may-brexite/513314/> (Jan. 17, 2017) (accessed, Oct.24, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2018/06/25/how-a-soft-brexite-differs-from-a-hard-one> (June, 25, 2018) (accessed Oct. 22, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/28/world/europe/uk-northern-ireland-brexite.html> (Feb.28, 2018); <https://www.ft.com/content/73ac4a5c-d83f-11e8-a854-33d6f82e62f8> (Oct. 30, 2018) (accessed Oct. 30, 2018); <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-46083327> (Nov. 3, 2018) (accessed, Nov. 3, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2018/09/15/selling-the-chequers-plan> (Sept. 15, 2018) (accessed Oct. 24, 2018).

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6123413/Theresa-says-second-EU-referendum-gross-betrayal-democracy.html> (Sept. 2, 2018) (accessed, Oct. 30, 2018). <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/09/01/theresa-may-declares-wont-surrender-brussels-chequers-plan/> (Sept. 1, 2018) (accessed, Nov. 1, 2018).

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/sep/25/brexite-transition-period-too-short-angela-merkel> (Sept. 25, 2018) (accessed Oct. 24, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> This was the phrase May used in her speech to the as May outlined in her speech to the Conservative party conference on 2 October 2016. See [https://www.bbc.com/news/video\\_and\\_audio/headlines/37535867/theresa-may-calls-for-truly-global-britain](https://www.bbc.com/news/video_and_audio/headlines/37535867/theresa-may-calls-for-truly-global-britain) (Oct. 2, 2016) (accessed Oct. 25, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> UK government, *Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction: the assessment of the British government* (London: The Stationary Office, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> See Ron Suskind, *The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, the White House, and the Education of Paul O’Neill* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004); also for instance John Kampfner, *Blairs Wars* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2004); Simon Serfaty, *Architects of Delusion: Europe, America and the Iraq War* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Philadelphia Press, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> See for instance Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes, *America Against the World: How we are different and why we are disliked* (London: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2007); Julia E Sweig, *Friendly Fire* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> James R Strong (ed.), *Public opinion: legitimacy and Tony Blair’s War in Iraq* (London: Routledge, 2017); Chris Nineham, *The people v Tony Blair: politics, the media and the anti-war movement* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2013).

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<sup>21</sup> Klaus Larres, "Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' Speech in Context: The Attempt to Achieve a 'Good Understanding on All Points' with Stalin's Soviet Union," *International History Review*, Vol.40/1 (2017), pp.86-107.

<sup>22</sup> See the classic Philip Goodhart, *Fifty Ships that Saved the World* (New York: Doubleday, 1965).

<sup>23</sup> Douglas Brinkley and David R Facey-Crowther (eds), *The Atlantic Charter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> For details, see Richard Langworth, "'Nothing to Hide': The Truth about Churchill's Naked Encounter," 27 May 2011: <https://richardlangworth.com/churchills-naked-encounter> (accessed, Oct. 29, 2018).

<sup>25</sup> See Tony McCulloch, "Churchill's ambassadors: from Fulton to Suez," in Alan Dobson and Steve Marsh (eds), *Churchill and the Anglo-American special relationship* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p.146; John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations from the Cold War to Iraq*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Keith Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East*, reprinted ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in "Defence-in-depth: The Significance of Suez 1956: A Reference Point and Turning Point?" Kings College London (accessed, Oct. 28, 2018).

<sup>28</sup> See Lucas V. Scott, *Macmillan, Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis: Political, Military and Intelligence Aspects* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> Nigel J Ashton, "Harold Macmillan and the 'Golden Days' of Anglo-American Relations Revisited, 1957-1963," *Diplomatic History*, Vol.29/4 (Sept. 2005), pp.691-723.

<sup>30</sup> Rhiannon Vickers, "Harold Wilson, the British Labour Party, and the War in Vietnam," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol.10/2 (spring 2008), pp.41-70.

<sup>31</sup> See Klaus Larres, *Churchill's Cold War: The Politics of Personal Diplomacy* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2002), pp.330-332.

<sup>32</sup> See Alex Spelling, "Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations, 1970-1974: A Reappraisal," *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol.20/4 (2009), pp.638-658.

<sup>33</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign*, 2 vols (London: Routledge, 2004); Kenneth Privratsky, *Logistics in the Falklands War: a case study in Expeditionary Warfare* (London: Pen and Sword, 2017).

<sup>34</sup> Hugh O'Shaughnessy, *Grenada: an eyewitness account of the U.S. invasion and the Caribbean History that provoked it* (London: Dodd Mead, 1985); also Mark Adkin, *Urgent Fury: the battle for Grenada* (New York: Transatlantic Publications, 1989).

<sup>35</sup> See Klaus Larres, "Margaret Thatcher and German Unification Revisited," in Michael Gehler et al (eds), *The Revolutions of 1989* (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2015), pp.355-384.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>37</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/04/obamas-brexit-plea/479469/> (April 22, 2016) (accessed, Oct. 30, 2018); <http://fortune.com/2016/04/21/obama-london-eu-brexit/> (April 21, 2016) (accessed, Oct. 30, 2018).

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/donald-trump-brexit-latest-news-eu-referendum-immigration-consequences-us-election-2016-a7105176.html> (June 27, 2016) (accessed, Oct. 31, 2018).

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> For a good brief account, see John B Judis, *The Nationalist Revival: Trade, Immigration, and the Revolt against Globalization* (New York: Columbia Global Reports, 2018).

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.investors.com/politics/editorials/goldman-sachs-paid-hillary-675000-for-this/> (Oct. 17, 2016) (accessed, Oct. 31, 2018); also referred to throughout Bob Woodward's, *Fear: Trump in the White House* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

<sup>43</sup> For Bannon's influence on Trump, see Joshua Green, Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, *Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017). See also Charlie Laderman and Brendan Simms, *Donald Trump: The Making of a World View* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017).

<sup>44</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/06/24/what-does-brexit-mean-for-the-2016-election/?utm\\_term=.0bddbbe46be7](https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/06/24/what-does-brexit-mean-for-the-2016-election/?utm_term=.0bddbbe46be7) (June 24, 2016) (accessed, Oct.31, 2018). See also Francis Fukuyama, "Against Identity Politics: The New Tribalism and the Crisis of Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* (Sept./Oct. 2018).

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2016-37922961> (Nov. 10, 2016); <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/11/brexit-plus-plus-plus/507107/> (Nov. 9, 2016) (accessed, Oct. 31, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jun/24/donald-trump-hails-eu-referendum-result-as-he-arrives-in-uk> (June 24,2018) (accessed, Nov. 2, 2018). Trump's press conference can be found verbatim in the *Washington Post*: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/06/24/donald-trumps-brexit-press-conference-was-beyond-bizarre/?utm\\_term=.fa44da9ff9a6](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/06/24/donald-trumps-brexit-press-conference-was-beyond-bizarre/?utm_term=.fa44da9ff9a6) (June 24, 2018) (accessed, Nov.1, 2018).

<sup>47</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/06/24/donald-trumps-brexit-press-conference-was-beyond-bizarre/?utm\\_term=.fa44da9ff9a6](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/06/24/donald-trumps-brexit-press-conference-was-beyond-bizarre/?utm_term=.fa44da9ff9a6) (June 24, 2018) (accessed, Nov. 1, 2018).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/27/theresa-may-meets-donald-trump-white-house-live/> (accessed, Nov. 2, 2018).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/07/trump-and-may-special-relationship-dumpster-fire> (July 13, 2018) (accessed, Nov. 2, 2018).

<sup>52</sup> For the official remarks at the White House press conference, see <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-trump-prime-minister-mays-opening-remarks/> (Jan. 27, 2017).



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<sup>53</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/09/us/politics/nato-summit-trump.html> (Aug. 9, 2018) (accessed, Nov. 1, 2018).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-press-conference-nato-summit-brussels-belgium/> (July 12, 2018) (accessed, Nov. 1, 2018).

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/6766531/trump-may-brexit-us-deal-off/> (July 12, 2018) (accessed, Nov. 2, 2018).

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/03/16/boris-johnson-accuses-putin-ordering-russian-ex-spys-poisoning/431200002/> (March 16, 2018) (accessed, Nov. 1, 2018).

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/trump-uk-visit-anti-us-protests-brexit-theresa-may-president-queen-a8448976.html> (July 16, 2018) (accessed, Nov. 1, 2018).

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/6766531/trump-may-brexit-us-deal-off/> (July 12, 2018) (accessed, Nov. 2, 2018).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/i-think-they-like-me-a-lot-in-the-uk-trump-says-as-he-faces-mass-protests-in-britain/2018/07/12/d88c3118-7f01-11e8-a63f-7b5d2aba7ac5\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.3dac360131a7](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/i-think-they-like-me-a-lot-in-the-uk-trump-says-as-he-faces-mass-protests-in-britain/2018/07/12/d88c3118-7f01-11e8-a63f-7b5d2aba7ac5_story.html?utm_term=.3dac360131a7) (July 12, 2018) (accessed, Nov. 2, 2018).

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-prime-minister-may-united-kingdom-joint-press-conference/> (July 13, 2018) (accessed, Nov. 2, 2018).

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-nationalist-texas-rally-1182223> (Oct. 22, 2018) (accessed, Nov. 3, 2018).

<sup>65</sup> See for instance Klaus Larres, “Angela Merkel and Donald Trump: Values, Interests, and the Future of the West,” *German Politics*, Vol.27/2 (June 2018), pp.193-213.

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