POLITICS & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Brexit: Analysing Britain’s political and geostrategic considerations

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Abstract: Brexit is a watershed moment in the life of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland that significantly reflects its circumstantial national socio-political and psychological situation. The article argued that national desperation and frustration greatly affect society, politics, and national psychology. These elements trigger and act as the fundamental driving force in shaping and shaping the course of action in the life of nations and states (most importantly former colonial powers). However, national desperation and frustration are not limited towards taking desperate measures but could also result in a radical shift in alliances and the overall orientation of the state. The article took a brief survey of Britain’s politico-strategic and psychological history and analysed the variables culminating in the form of Brexit. It considered the psychological, socio-political, economic, geopolitical, geostrategic, and military aspects, in analysing the Brexit. It concluded in the light of such variables. Moreover, it presented potential ramifications of such endeavours. The article offered a tentative road in overcoming British national desperation.

Subjects: International Relations; Political Science; Social Sciences; History; European Studies; Geopolitics; Geography and Geostrategy; War and Conflict Studies

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The article deals with an issue of enormous importance in today’s world, which is suitable for policymakers, scholars, academicians, and readers from all walks of life. Today, we are witnessing an intense tug-of-war between the rising China and the ruling United States. Also, Russia is reviving, resurfacing, and reasserting itself in the global order. Meanwhile, the European Union is increasingly behaving as a single entity and playing a significant role in world affairs and the economies of Germany, Japan, and India, have surpassed that of Britain. In all the developing international scenario, the Great Britain, a former colonial and imperial power, has left the EU, a phenomenon commonly referred to as Brexit. The exit of Britain from the EU is not an event, rather a phenomenon, which has its roots deep into the history and likely will impact the EU and European solidarity forever. This study intends to probe the historical and contemporary causes and future effects of Brexit from various standpoints.
Keywords: Brexit; Britain; European Union; psychological history; European politics; international politics

1. Introduction—the strategic context

In prevalent times, an intense security competition is visible between the ruling United States and the rising China, and this widening strategic rivalry is witnessing a reviving and resurgent Russia.¹ Likewise, the European Union (EU) is behaving like a unified pole and playing an enhanced role in the international politics, and meanwhile the German, Japanese, and Indian economies have surpassed that of Britain. However, the enduring struggle for power and prestige among the great powers is transforming the international structure; though, its overt trajectory and contours are somehow porous. Nevertheless, the transformation attests one thing in particular, that the system is no longer unipolar, and has the potential in accommodating the rise of new great powers or the reviving/resurgent former powers.² Hitherto, a former colonial empire, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) is passing through the most significant era of its existence. Historically, Britain greatly benefited from its geographical and geostrategic location and by the virtue of being an insular power (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 81) and an island-nation, attained the heights of glory and dominated globally, in an un-globalized world (Shamir, 2011, p. 67). Nevertheless, vast empires structurally suffer imperial overstretch—an argument shared by few International Relations scholars (P. Kennedy, 1988, p. 515; Layne, 1997, p. 110). I argue that this overstretch fades the benign image; shrivels the socio-political and economic power; shrinks the military prowess and power projection capabilities; results in a heterogenous and multi ethnolinguistic society; a sense of national desperation among the natives; and the imperial power suffers inertia. Consequently, great powers witness the emergence of peer-competitors—Britain is no exception. The latter joined the European Economic Commission (EEC) (later transformed into the EU) in 1973 and recently, on 31 January 2020, exited it as a result of a long and lengthy, yet complex socio-political and economic debates. The exit was executed under the Withdrawal Agreement, mutually settled by Britain and the European Council on 17 October 2019 (Boyle et al., 2018; “Brexit and You: Northern Ireland,”; Brexit and You: Northern Ireland, 2020). However, the Conservatives achieved a pyrrhic victory in doing so, since, they could not secure unanimous or a landslide vote. It is noteworthy that undertakings, such as the stepping down of Prime Ministers David Cameron and Theresa May; and later the “unlawful” suspension of the British Parliament by the incumbent Prime Minister Boris Johnson on 10 September 2019, were among the many unprecedented events during the unusual course (Ellyatt, 2019; Kumarasingham, 2020).

In briefly summing up Britain’s politico-strategic and psychological history, it can be argued that the imperial power greatly benefited from its insular³ geostrategic location in containing the rise of the French Empire under Napoleon, and defeated the combined French and Spanish navies at the Battle of Trafalgar in October 1805.⁴ The victorious Admiral Horatio Nelson’s sculpture was erected at the Trafalgar Square in London to rejoice the triumph, and even today, is taken as a monumental trophy. However, a few decades before that, in September 1783, the British Empire lost the Thirteen Colonies to the socio-politically, strategically, and psychologically more adept people, who were primarily driven by a strong doctrine known as “American Exceptionalism”.⁵ During the American War of Independence, in 1781, the repeated English defeats at the American hands caused the British regimental bands to sing “The World Turned Upside Down” (Lookingbill, 2013, p. 49). To somehow overcome the humiliation, in 1812, Britain wanted to overpower its former subjects and burned down the White House in Washington D.C., nonetheless, could not overwhelm the Americans (Black, 2002, pp. 238–240). Likewise, the British Empire prevented the German Empire from building large battle-ships and Dreadnoughts, whilst, sustained its mastery over the high seas, and defeated it at the Battle of Jutland in June 1916.⁶ Before the start of the First World War, Britain successfully frustrated German attempts in realizing the Berlin-Baghdad Railway Project. The latter was aimed to circumvent British naval mastery and could have momentarily added value to the German economy by having continental access to almost 3,800 km in the oil-rich regions of the Middle East and Asia Minor (Jastrow, 1917, pp. 88–91). Later, though, the British policymakers effectively drew a wedge between
the Irish revolutionaries Eamon de Valera and Michael Collins in demagnetizing both; however, could not resist the Irish War of Independence for long, and the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, laid down the foundations for the establishment of the Republic of Ireland (Black, 2006, pp. 107–108). Nonetheless, in hindsight, Britain successfully or perhaps desperately retained its control over vast territories across the globe including the Northern Ireland, and contained and deterred its potential or near peer-competitors.

It is worth mentioning that during both world wars, America greatly helped the British in overpowering its European contenders. Such strategic rivals have had relatively close geographical proximity to the Britain and significantly threatened its insular great power and island-nation. For instance, during the Second World War, the German Wehrmacht’s proposed Operation Sea Lion was destined to launch an amphibious attack on Britain, which could have rendered the latter’s continental insulation almost of no strategic use. Nonetheless, the U.S. played a vital role in Breaking the Enigma Code and in frustrating Germany’s war aims. Since in the early 1940s, Britain was at the brink of succumbing to the German Blitz and the Kriegmarine’s (German Navy) unrestricted submarine warfare in the Atlantic was choking the empire of its cherished seaborne trade (Folly, 2004, p. 40). Before that, Britain’s master cryptographer and the inventor of “bombe” (a fast deciphering machine) Alan Mathison Turing, earned his Ph.D. in 1938 at the Princeton University in the U.S. His dissertation entitled “Systems of Logic Based on Ordinals” made him return to UK in the summer of 1938 in putting his abilities to test in stopping German U-boat warfare (Copeland, 2004, pp. 1–3, 58–90, 125–204). Also, the U.S.-led Lend-Lease Agreement benefitted Britain in its fight against Germany.

However, the Great War and the Second World War along with the rise of nationalism flanked by decolonization, deprived Britain of its most cherished belongings, e.g., the British India in August 1947. Furthermore, the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956 could be interpreted as the watershed moment when Britain significantly lost its psychological pride and political power to the American diplomatic pressure. Consequently, Prime Minister Anthony Eden could not bear the humiliation and resigned from office in January 1957 (Tucker & Roberts, 2008, pp. 613–616). Historically, since the disastrous aftermath of the disgrace of 1956, the UK could not fight a single major war on its own. Besides, the Falklands War against Argentine in 1982; nevertheless, the latter was neither a major power nor the war was fought against a near peer-competitor. Also, it was a defensive war, waged to regain the control of the islands that made the Newsweek to report on its title page as “The Empire Strikes Back” (B. B. Stephens, 2012).

2. An overview and methodology
The article aspired to probe the various variables which culminated at Brexit. The study is unique as it briefly undertook British politico-strategic and psychological history in tracing its imperial foundations. It employed Realist tradition for the scrutiny of data, since the tradition pays enormous attention to strategic history in understanding the particular behaviour of great powers. This analytical and explanatory study mostly relied on secondary data, generally gathered from the academic community; however, primary data was also considered. The study was conducted mainly by focusing on two research questions.

1. Why and in which ways national desperation manifested itself in the life of a former imperial/colonial power Britain which culminated at the Brexit?

2. What are the implications of imperial overstretch in the life of a former imperial/colonial power Britain and how it affects various aspects including psychological, socio-political, economic, geo-political, geostrategic, and military?

2.1. Selected indicators of national desperation in Britain: theory and recent history
Theoretically, Realism assumes that great powers not only acquire more power, yet, also try and retain the status-quo in their favour. In other words, they tend not to lose the already acquired
power. Psychologically, they consider themselves to be superior and indestructible. Alternatively, realism greatly affects the psychological underpinnings of a nation and state. However, there remains a disagreement between realist scholars such as Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer, over the state being a rational actor. As, Waltz favoured irrational state behaviour in ensuring the survival of the state, whereas, Mearsheimer argued state rationality (Mearsheimer, 2009, pp. 241–256). Nevertheless, with number of intervening variables such as the influx of multi-ethnolinguistic immigrants; strengthening of German, Japanese, Indian, and French economies; and a greater German role in the international politics; along with the Russian revival and resurgence; there is a visible national desperation in British aspirations. The Brexit can be cited as the perfect example of such desperate endeavours. Historically, the EU acted as a psychological enabling force that strengthened North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in political and military terms. Later, however, then the proposed British exit from EU was patronized by the U.S. President Donald Trump arguing that “EU is a vehicle for Germany.”

Before that, Scotland nearly seceded UK in the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum, which I interpret as a pyrrhic victory for the Crown to keep Scotland within the kingdom. Quite recently, Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon argued that “We should agree a process between ourselves and the UK government for a referendum in line with the clear mandate given by the people of Scotland” and maintained “We are taking in Scotland the steps required to ensure that a referendum can be held that is legal and legitimate so the result can be accepted and agreed both at home and internationally” (Chalmers & Blenkinsop, 2020). Sturgeon’s remarks clearly exhibit the motivation of Scottish people to demand independence. Reuters commented that “Scottish people did not see a future shared with the rest of Britain” (Chalmers & Blenkinsop, 2020). On the other hand, the situation of Ireland is also demanding and gradually deteriorating. While commenting on Brexit, The Irish Times argued that “The relationship between Ireland and Britain will never be the same again” (Gillespie, 2019). Almost 56 percent of people living in Northern Ireland voted in favour to remain within the EU and wanted the same as the people of the Republic of Ireland (Full Fact Team, 2016). It is to be remembered here that in the referendum of 1975, only 52 percent Northern Irelanders voted to join (De et al., 2018, p. 2). It can be argued that the 4 percent increase in favour of EU exhibits the socio-political and economic advantages garnered by the Irish people. The BBC reported that on the very next day of Brexit, the Northern Ireland witnessed “passionate public demonstrations;” nevertheless, the anti-Brexit demonstrators continue their drive (“Brexit: How Northern Ireland Marked Leaving the EU in Pictures,” 2020). It is worth mentioning that Northern Ireland was destined to receive almost €1.200 million from the EU for the years 2014–2020 and these funds were likely to increase almost twofold over the next term. Arguably, the Brexit is likely to widen the rift between Northern Ireland and the UK in the long run. I assess and estimate that the people of Ireland at-large feel themselves to be profoundly more secure under the EU. As, they might have not forgotten the controversial conduct of Belfast Constabulary and members of the British Special Air Service (SAS) during the Troubles. Also, the assassination of Collins (August 1922) is a permanent aspect of Irish collective memories.

2.2. Imperial overstretch: heterogeneous and multi ethno-linguistic society

It was argued in the beginning of the paper that imperial powers experience over-stretch and such instances result in a heterogeneous and multi ethno-linguistic societies. The British Empire stretched along the globe, resultant it faced the influx of people from across continents. Today, of around 66 million people living in the UK, more than 10 percent comprises of foreign descent. The Britain is an ageing nation, as in August 2019, the birth rate in England and Wales hit lowest. It is noteworthy that the birth-rate of British natives is surprisingly low in relation to foreign immigrants. A British Government report indicated that “In 2019, 28.7% of all live births were to women born outside the UK” and maintained that “Pakistan remained the most popular country of birth to fathers born outside the UK” (Corps, 2020). The latter was once a colony and a constituent part of the British India. There are feelings of resentment in the UK, and almost all such developments in the British society point fingers towards one direction, i.e. the psychological feelings of being left behind or marginalized (Pettifor, 2017, p. 131). The saturation of such communities is
rapidly getting momentum and causing the resentful feelings. It would not be ambitious to argue that while keeping in view the current trends in birth rates, the indigenous British population (mostly comprising of Anglo-Saxons) likely will lose its saturation in relation to immigrants in the decades to come, if not shrink altogether (please see Table 1). The seemingly growing concentration of immigrants is also positively impacting businesses, as “migrants set up one in seven UK companies” (Moules, 2014). However, Brexit greatly frustrated the immigration of skilled workers from Europe, since British automaker Aston Martin’s Chief Executive Andy Palmer exclaimed that “Today I have 400 vacancies at Aston Martin I am unable to fill” (Brexit: UK firms “fearful” for future migration system, 2018). Contrastsingly, the former Home Secretary and ardent advocate of Brexit Amber Rudd asserted that immigrants “are taking jobs British people could do” (Wilkinson, 2016). While keeping in view British aspirations and hard facts, I argue that there exists a clear division on the role of immigrants on the British society, politics, and economy. Till December 2019, a total of 3.65 million non-UK nationals were working in relation to 29.33 million UK-national workers in the UK (Watson, 2020). The economic activity generated by foreign workers is remarkable and a huge bulk comprises of the work force. Hence, they are actively participating in strengthening Britain especially in socio-economic terms. Nonetheless, the Manchester Arena Suicide Bombing in May 2017 caused widespread condemnation of the Muslim community (Macguire et al., 2017). However, historically, the indigenous people of British India including Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were badly oppressed by the British, which caused them to demand independence. In this regard, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (Amritsar, India) of 1919, can be cited as an undeniable hard evidence which reflected the ruthlessness of British colonists in supressing the indigenous population. The carnage was executed by British Army’s Brigadier General Reginald Dyer on 13 April 1919, and resulted in the deaths of more than a thousand unarmed and innocent Indians including Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs (Wagner, 2019, pp. 163–177). Also, Britain’s brutal policies regarding Ireland gave impetus to the Irish War of Independence during the same era. Later, the same imperial policies culminated in the creation of Irish Republican Army and turned the sectarian divide between Catholics and Protestants into an armed struggle, known as the Troubles (please see Figure 1). Nevertheless, the Good Friday Agreement or Belfast Agreement of 10 April 1998, greatly ended the violence (Tucker & Roberts, 2008, pp. 1018–1019).

Lately, former Foreign Minister and incumbent Prime Minister Boris Johnson made a contemptuous remark on Muslim women wearing hijab by calling them as “letter box” (L. L. Hughes, 2018). However, then Prime Minister, Theresa May was unhappy, and Johnson

| Country of birth of mother | All ages | Under 20 | 20 to 29 | 30 to 39 | 40 and over |
|---------------------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|------------|
| United Kingdom            | 53.8    | 11.0     | 65.2     | 80.7     | 13.9       |
| Total outside United Kingdom | 71.9 | 14.4     | 90.2     | 91.4     | 22.9       |
| European Union (EU)       | 64.4    | 23.9     | 76.2     | 77.8     | 21.6       |
| Rest of Europe (non EU)   | 92.7    | 13.8     | 144.0    | 102.6    | 22.6       |
| Africa                    | 86.3    | 6.2      | 136.0    | 110.9    | 31.3       |
| The Americas and the Caribbean | 56.4 | 10.0     | 49.7     | 86.0     | 22.2       |
| Middle East and Asia      | 77.7    | 6.7      | 104.8    | 100.2    | 20.3       |
| Antarctica and Oceania    | 44.5    | 0.5      | 21.2     | 88.2     | 19.8       |
reluctantly apologised for such comments. In 2018, British Cabinet Minister Sajid Javid was among those Members of Parliament (MP) that received “Punish a Muslim” letter (Buchan, 2018). However, it is pertinent to mention that Islamic States’ (IS) cyber warrior-turned-jihadi Junaid Hussain hailed from Birmingham, Britain, and the perceived psychological persecution and injustices done to the Muslims were among Hussain’s motivations to join the ranks (Hamid, 2018, pp. 30–37). Also, Hussain was greatly motivated by the literature produced by jihadis featuring British Army’s war crimes and cruelty subjected to the Muslims of Iraq. Interestingly, football has a great social value and the English Premier League with all its clubs has an undeniable impact on the English society. However, currently there are more than fifty Muslim football players playing in the league (Zainab, 2018). Though, football hooligans are dedicated followers; nevertheless, Muhammad Salah of Liverpool Football Club was subjected to racial and religious segregation. Moreover, racist hooligans quite often throw bananas and chant “monkeys” at players belonging to the African descent. On the one hand, these racist acts committed mostly by the white British people reflect their collective frustration and impatient behaviour towards other races and the people of colour. On the other hand, it also resonates their tendency towards using violence in expressing such an anger. Further, it is almost impossible for them to see the “others” in their society, especially having an impactful and powerful socio-political stature.

2.3. Brexit: the politico-geostrategic and geopolitical side
It was noted that “great powers are rational actors,” and I argue that being rational, they give great consideration towards political understandings (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 31). These powers are inherently obsessed with conserving the already acquired power and are relentlessly pursuing strategies to acquire more power; political arena remains the main battlefield to pursue such
designs. As mentioned earlier, Britain is a historic great power and it inherits a unique strategic history. However, Arnold Toynbee’s theory of cyclic nature suggested recurrence of history and Paul Kennedy advocated rise and fall of great powers; imperial overstretch being one of the chief elements. In the prevalent times, I argue that Britain is witnessing stagnation or perhaps a slight downward trajectory of its power. Alternatively, one can aver that Britain’s historic competitors are considerably gaining elements of national power, which are ostensibly causing it to feel that way. For instance, the recent signing of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in October 2015 can be presented as evidence of such claims. The JCPOA was signed between Iran and the P5 + 1 countries; where Germany was the driving force along with the Five Great Powers, i.e. U.S., U.K., Russia, France, and China.

Moreover, the potential secession of Scotland from the UK will further weaken the latter, as, losing territories is the attribute of weak powers (Maxwell, 2020). However, Prime Minister Johnson seems reluctant in allowing the second referendum for Scottish independence. It seems clear that Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon is determined for a second referendum that is likely to yield undesirable results for the UK. The recent independent surveys are important instruments in gauging and assessing the will of Scottish people at-large and can be interpreted as alarming for the UK (Figure 2). Conceivably, these perceived alarms likely will impede further referendums. I assess that there is perhaps one underexplored aspect behind the results yielded by the previous referendum, i.e. the potential Russian sabotage and hacking. According to various sources, such sophisticated use of information and cyber warfare was exhibited by Russia in U.S. Presidential Election in November 2016. Historically, Russia and the UK are great powers and remained in a constant state of struggle against one another. Also, it was rightly argued that “Great powers fear each other” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 32) and are relentlessly looking for opportunities to either annex territories or deprive peer-competitors of regions with vital strategic importance. The Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014 can be cited as the most recent example of acquiring territory. While on the other hand, the Treaty of Versailles (1919) in relation to Germany, and disintegration of the Soviet Union (1991), are historic examples of decimating adversary’s territorial control.

Figure 2. The recent survey on Scotland’s independence (Russell, 2020).
2.4. The revolt of the Rustbelt: Britain and the auto-making industry

In the contemporary world, auto-making is one of the most lucrative businesses and states take great pride in their national and indigenous automakers, considering them to be a part of their national identity, global power, and prestige. Also, statesmen prefer to ride in their nationally produced vehicles to exhibit a sense of patriotism and partisanship. For instance, the Japanese Emperor travels in an especially produced Toyota Century; the German Chancellor uses a German-made automobile; and the former Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad of Malaysia prefers to travel in locally produced Proton vehicles. On the same pattern, the U.S. presidents travel in an American-made armoured Cadillac or Chevrolet limousines; the Chinese President Xi Jinping uses a Chinese-built Hongqi (Red Flag) LS; and the Russian President Vladimir Putin though used Mercedes-Benz in the past; however, recently Putin switched to Russian automaker NAMI’s Aurus Senat limousine to showcase his nationalistic fervour (Read, 2018).

Likewise, the British Royals and high-ranking government officials choose one of the British-made cars, more preferably. However, it is worth arguing that iconic British automakers Rolls Royce and Mini are owned by German BMW; Bentley is owned by German Volkswagen; Jaguar merged with Land Rover and is owned by Indian automaker Tata; and Vauxhall is owned by French Groupe PSA. It is quite inquisitive that German Mercedes-Benz owns five percent of British luxury auto Aston Martin and the latter uses the more affordable V-8 engine made by German Daimler AG (Wiseman, 2017). The Aston Martin was previously owned by the American Ford Motor Company (Jones, 2013). Also, British flagship sports car brands including the Lotus Cars and McLaren are not fully in British possession. Almost 51 percent shares of Lotus are owned by the Chinese automaker Geely, (China carmaker Geely secures stakes in Proton and Lotus, 2017; “Lotus Cars—Zhejiang Geely Holding Group, 2020) and nearly 62.55 percent shares of McLaren are owned by Mumtalakat Holding Company of Bahrain (McLaren: Evolution and Growth, 2020). Furthermore, the British sports car brand Morris Garages (M.G.) founded in 1924 is now owned by the Shanghai-based Chinese state-owned giant automaker SAIC Motor Corporation Limited (“About MG,” 2020). It is noticeable that Britain roamed freely in China during the Nineteenth century and on 30 August 1839, the Royal Navy’s HMS Volage singlehandedly destroyed 29 vessels of the Imperial Chinese Navy (Kane, 2016, p. 29). In the following years, Britain controlled Chinese cities of Shanghai, Guangzhou, Ningpo, Fuzhou, Xiamen, and the Treaty of Nanking on 29 August 1842, deprived China of Hong Kong (Fairbank, 1956; Waley, 2005, p. 247). Nonetheless, now in the wake of the rising China, its automakers and investors are steadily taking control of British automaking industry. It is noteworthy that all the key position holders in the Chinese SAIC Corporation are its national and staunch members of the Communist Party of China (CPC) (Board of Directors, 2020). These British automakers are still regarded as the signs of British glory; however, they are owned by its historic strategic rivals i.e. Germany, France, and China. Moreover, the merged Jaguar Land Rover is owned by India; the latter was once a British colony.

The famous British automobile journalist Richard Feast authored a well-researched and thought-provoking book that highlighted the German drive in acquiring Rolls Royce and Bentley (Feast, 2003). Especially after carefully reading the Chapter 13 “BMW Makes Its Mark,” and Chapter 20 “Volkswagen Wins Half The Battle” of the book; the psychological and political feelings of a loyal British subject can be well understood, of losing two iconic luxury automakers to a historical rival i.e. Germany. This book alone tells the value of such belongings in the life of former colonial powers. It is noteworthy that Britain has lost almost all its auto-making-identity and luxury vehicle industry, to either its historic rivals or its former colonies.

One has observed that British motor journalists like Jeremy Clarkson from Top Gear and Mat Watson from Car Wow take serious pride in almost all the British-made automobiles. Also, the British action-series James Bond, always feature an indigenous luxury automobile to project its technological power and prestige. While at the same time, they somehow show observable prejudice towards their German counterparts. For instance, on one occasion, Mat Watson reviewed Mercedes-Benz GLB-class and made taunting comments about the automaker with special regards.
to Brexit (Carwow, 2020). However, these gentlemen are perhaps unaware of the fact that Britain’s automaking Crown Jewels are no longer in its sole possession.

2.5. British historical and prevalent relations with Germany

Before the initiation of the First World War, the industrial output of Germany was surpassing that of Britain and their mutual strategic rivalry was imminent. In 1913, Wilhelmine Germany’s per capita income increased by 250 percent, that was a five-fold increase as compared to its position in the 1870s (Engdahl, 2004, p. 12). The rivalry gained momentous traction by the then proposed German-led Berlin-Baghdad Railway Project in early years of the Twentieth century. By the supposed and sustained increment of German economy and its growing access to the oil-rich regions of Middle East and Persian Gulf, Britain perceived a German desire in shifting the balance of power and the status quo in its favour. Arguably, the then rising Germany was perceived as an imminent peer-competitor and a threat to British power—consequently such instances acted as precursors of the First World War (Lambert, 2012, p. 32; Seligmann, 2008a, 2008b).

However, I assess that Britain’s psychological and socio-political consternation is comparable to Germany’s (Weimar Republic) circumstances after the First World War. The early phase of the inter-war period (1919–1939) allowed radicals to emerge, since, the conditions permitted the rise of such political forces as their stance appealed the masses. For instance, the doctrine of “Great Stab in the Back” gained momentous socio-political and psychological traction and paved the way for National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) to carry out the putsch against the State of Bavaria in November 1923 (Calvocoressi et al., 1995, pp. 20–21). Though, the putsch was unsuccessful; nevertheless, it was the opening of a new beginning for Adolf Hitler. Likewise, British Conservatives raised captivating slogans such as “Take Back Control,” “Take Back Our Country,” and “Britannia waives the rules” which proved to be instrumental in making Brexit a reality (Pettifor, 2017, p. 131).

Historically, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the British hangman Albert Pierrepoint was instrumental in Nuremberg Hangings and hanged hundreds, if not thousands of Nazi sympathizers and affiliates. However, Pierrepoint and British policymakers deliberately kept a closed eye on the Queen’s husband, i.e. Prince Philip, who marched alongside Nazi officials in 1937 at the funeral of his sister Cécile, who died in a tragic airplane crash (Mount, 2015; Urbach, 2008, pp. 153–154). Also, the British King Edward VIII abdicated in 1937 to marry French socialite Wally Simpson. However, history reveals that Edward VIII visited Hitler in 1937 and was fond of him When the Duke of Windsor met Adolf Hitler, 2016 and wished to have such a leader.11 Why praising one of the most highly controversial figures in history such as Hitler, could not make Edward VIII a Nazi sympathizer?

It is worth mentioning that Queen Elizabeth II’s late husband Prince Philip had had historical family connections with the Nazis, as his three out of four sisters were married to German Princes who happened to be Nazi officials (S. Kennedy et al., 2015, p. 124; Pollock, 2015; C. Wilson, 2018). Before that, Prince Philip’s father Prince Andrew of Greece and his mother Princess Alice of Battenberg moved to Germany after the abolition of monarchy in Greece in 1922 and Philip studied in Germany at a castle; however, after Hitler rose to power, they moved to France and then England (Bousfield & Toffoli, 2002, p. 54; S. Kennedy et al., 2015, p. 124). Prince Philip cannot escape its Nazi legacy. The impact of Philip’s Nazi past can be judged from the very fact that his sisters were not invited to his marriage ceremony in November 1947, as it was believed that they would bring national embarrassment. Likewise, Edward VIII and his wife were also not invited due to their visit to Hitler in 1937 (S. Kennedy et al., 2015, pp. 120–121). It was not until 1953, when Prince Philip’s Hessen family members “were allowed to attend the coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey” (Urbach, 2008, p. 147). It was noted that in 2004, for the very first time, Prince Philip talked about his German relatives and their “involvement with National Socialism” (Urbach, 2008, p. 147). Arguably, Nazism has a profound impact on the British society and politics, as, Neo-Nazis and White Supremacists are exerting more influence in British domestic and local
politics. It is noteworthy, that after the Second World War, there were abundant anti-German sentiments in Britain and King George V asked Prince Philip’s Grandfather Louis Battenberg to anglicize “his name to Mountbatten” and in 1946 Prince Philip did the same.\textsuperscript{12}

2.6. \textit{British dealings vis-à-vis China}

The prevalent unfolding of events in Hong Kong is a serious concern for the international community and any freedom-loving individual would question China’s calculated invasion on Hong Kong’s dwindling democracy. A few commentators noted that it was another Tiananmen in the making (Baig, 2019\textsuperscript{b}; Görlach, 2019). However, after almost a quarter of century following the British withdrawal from Hong Kong, the former colonial power still considers the peninsula as its integral part and continues to worry about its well-being. As mentioned earlier, the developing situation in Hong Kong is a serious concern for the international community; however, the British capture of Hong Kong and other parts of the Imperial China in the Nineteenth century, remains highly controversal chapters of history. Such Western incursions into the Chinese heartland and the initiation of Opium Wars in 1839 were termed as the beginning of the “Century of Humiliation” by China’s paramount leader Mao Tse-Dong (Gries, 2004, p. 43–53; Parker, 1888, pp. 4–5). In other words, the rising China is exercising its momentarily manifold power in relation to its historic territories, which can be termed as revanchism and irredentism. However, such an exercise of power is an attribute of rising or ruling powers, which Britain effectively exercised during the Nineteenth century.

Perhaps, China’s tech-giant Huawei has dangerously encroached into the international technology development and some argue that the conglomerate has its connections with the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) (Hawes, 2020; Mascitelli & Chung, 2019; Medeiros et al., 2005, pp. 205–251). It is worth mentioning that Huawei’s founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Ren Zhengfei served as a Director in the Information Engineering Academy at the PLA’s General Staff Department and conducted telecommunications research for the PLA (Medeiros et al., 2005, p. 218). Contrastingly, it was argued that “Huawei is 100 percent employee-owned with no state funding” (Liu, 2020, p. 2). That said, the British Prime Minister Johnson and its policymakers are quite vary of China’s Huawei. However, the British response towards Huawei’s 5 G technology is worthy to investigate, as it is a desperate one. One question remains worthy to investigate that apart from the Five Eyes intelligence alliance (including Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the U.S., Australia, Huawei and 5G, 2019) is Britain capable enough of manufacturing 5 G technology-related equipment indigenously, while banning Huawei? Understandably, China and the UK are historic great powers and their mutual animosity roughly dates to the initiation of the Opium Wars in 1839. Political pundits interpreted the rising China as an empire returning to and rejuvenating its lost power, and undoubtedly such powers are dangerous (Kissinger, 2012, p. 546). The British instincts are driven by the psychological and political fear of an unprecedented, yet calculated Chinese reprisal; however, how the UK could better respond to such surging challenges, while retracting itself and losing strategic allies? To make things worse, France, Germany, Italy, and many other Europeans are actively supporting the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in realizing their national interests and are gradually drifting away from Britain. However, I argue that the veering away of Britain’s European allies is the direct product of its endless and unnecessary Euro scepticism. The unending debate between UK and EU officials over numerous Brexit-related issues are further weakening the European solidarity and opening plentiful opportunities for extra regional players such as China and Russia. It is deeply deplorable that Brexit has deprived the EU with “20% of its military capabilities” (R. G. Adam, 2020, p. 262).

I assess and estimate that Britain is likely to witness a surge in demand for independence in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Though, Theresa May’s strategic vision-induced “Red Lines” in its negotiations with the EU was focused on “avoiding a hard border on the island of Ireland” (Whitten, 2020, p. 314). Nevertheless, it just cannot be ruled out that China may initiate a new bilateral relationship with the Republic of Ireland or momentarily increase its investments in Northern Ireland and Scotland with an underlying aim to widen the socio-political rift, with the
specific objective of somehow reminiscing the British dealings with the Nineteenth-century China. Arguably, this is one of the many strategies pursued by great powers in weakening their historical rivals. In this connection, Scotland’s third China Engagement Strategy (2018) is worthy to probe which stated that “China remains a priority country for our international engagement” (External Affairs Directorate, 2018; McNeice, 2018). This precedes the previous strategies of 2006 and 2012. Likewise, the Irish Government has a growing desire to develop and strengthen its bilateral relations with China and the recent Double Taxation Agreement was signed in February 2020 to avoid double taxation and to prevent fiscal evasion (China, 2020; Ireland willing to deepen friendly ties with China: Irish deputy PM, 2019). I argue that what options does Britain have if the Chinese successfully leases one of Irish seaports in the pseudo name of bilateral trade? My argument likely will sound a bit too radical; nonetheless, China has already leased and acquired several seaports in the Indian Ocean region to realise its BRI, and such replenishment points also house advanced naval forces (Brewster, 2015, p. 51–52; Pehrson, 2006, pp. 1–3).

2.7. Britain and the growing Russian challenge

Today, the resurgent Russia has tri-services military bases in the Levant—a region once considered as an exclusive sphere of influence of the UK (Sanders, 1983). The contemporary Russia continues to pose credible threats towards the UK, not particularly in the conventional or military realms. Rather, Russia’s post-Cold War strategic thinking is continuously evolving and reflected in instruments such as the Primakov Doctrine and later Gerasimov Doctrine (Cohen, 1997; Gerasimov, G. of the A. V, 2016; Linnemann, 2016). Russia’s use of information and non-linear warfare culminated with its annexation of Crimea in March 2014. Also, the Russian cyber warfare capabilities can be judged from the very fact that many cyber-attacks on the British infrastructure originated in Russia; nonetheless the Russian government’s involvement in such attacks could not be substantiated, provided its continued denial. Moreover, the Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election pointed fingers towards its cyber capabilities and the assassination attempt on anti-Putin Russian immigrants on the British soil using lethal nerve agent was an eye-opening event.

I argue that great powers do not operate in isolation. Their outlook may be isolated; nonetheless, they continue to further their aims and objectives in a camouflaged manner. For instance, the U.S. adopted isolationist foreign policy orientation during the inter-war period. Nevertheless, in aftermath of the Imperial Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941; Washington gave an unprecedented military response (Lomazoff & Rably, 2012, p. 258). In hindsight, it greatly benefited from the advancements made during the period. Likewise, great powers have global, international, or at least a regional footprint. Every action of a great power is intrinsically driven by its strategic history; the driving forces remain psychological and political. Historically, when the UK joined the EEC (the previous name of EU before 1993) on 1 January 1973, The Guardian’s David McKie and Dennis Barker commented that “We’re in—but without the fireworks” (Mckie & Barker, 1973). However, I argue that on 31 January 2020, when the UK left EU; perhaps there were fireworks—none other than in Moscow or Beijing.

As the great powers have global goals, likewise, they think globally. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, scholars tended to argue the emergence of a unipolar world order that made Charles Krauthammer to argue that “The center of world power is the unchallenged superpower, the United States” (Krauthammer, 1990, p. 23). Nevertheless, the world is dynamic and so is its order and structure. The hierarchy of states can never be constant. However, in contemporary times, “The world order is transforming rapidly from unipolarity to multipolarity” (Boig, 2019a, p. 2) the rising China and a resurgent Russia can be argued as the evidence of such a transformation (“Russian-Chinese Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New International Order, Adopted in Moscow on 23 April 1997,” 1997).

On defence, UK’s official position remains “the minimum threshold of operational effectiveness” and some predicted that in the coming years “reductions in military capability” may result (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018, p. 80). It is noteworthy that Russia’s bastion-
defence strategy is looming over the UK from the North. And the GIUK Gap\textsuperscript{14} reminiscences the Fulda Gap of the Cold War and the Suwalki Gap (Parafianowicz, 2017, p. 3-20; Rahim, 2018) in contemporary times. The Fulda Gap kept the NATO in a constant state of confusion of a possible Soviet Blitzkrieg and it adapted its doctrinal orientation to calm the fear (Bacevich, 2005, p. x). Apart from the Suwalki Gap threatening the Western Europe, the GIUK Gap is the most significant geographic gap that has enormous geostrategic significance and is likely to pose more threats towards the security of the UK (Figure 3). The Russian Northern Fleet comprises of its advanced naval strategic assets including ballistic missile submarines and is the primary threat operating in the GIUK Gap (Defence Committee, House of Commons, 2018, pp. 20–24). Apart from the Russian Navy’s dangerous manoeuvres conducted in the Black Sea region, it time and again conducts the same tactics near the GIUK Gap and Norway (Nilsen, 2019). History reveals that the Britain neither could anticipate nor pre-empt its military operation in relation to Norway and other Scandinavians to prevent them from falling into the Nazi Germany’s hands. These strategically vital regions have great value in Britain’s strategic calculus and the security of such regions along with the enormous water bodies are synonymous with that of Britain’s.

A report by European Parliament indicated that the UK has almost fourteen offshore territories and it maintains Permanent Joint Operating Bases (PJOBs) in Cyprus, Gibraltar, Falklands Islands in the South Atlantic, and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean (Permanent Joint Operating Bases, 2012). Also, the UK maintains military presence in Singapore, Brunei, Nepal, U.S., Canada, Belize, and Kenya (Rogers & Simón, 2009). However, with Brexit, the UK’s cooperation with other European partners would significantly decrease e.g., with France. As, the latter also maintains offshore military presence. Nonetheless, NATO still binds the two together. However, with Trump calling the NATO as “obsolete” (James & Faulconbridge, 2017) and constantly demanding for more defence spending; (Goebel, 2019) it would not be a surprise that soon Britain starts of contemplating of leaving the NATO (Figure 4). I argue that such ominous contemplations may circle over UK on the basis that geographically the Suwalki Gap is located in Western Europe and the UK has no imminent threat of a full-scale Russian ground invasion. However, the Russian role in poisoning Sergei Skripal and its daughter Yulia Skripla with the notorious Novichok nerve agent in March 2018 is a noteworthy incident indicating Moscow’s prowess in conducting Stalin-like assassination attacks (K. Adam & Morello, 2018). Also, a series of cyber-attacks were orchestrated in 2018 at various UK-government offices including Britain’s top spy agency, the MI6 (UK exposes Russian cyber attacks (2018).

Realism puts enormous emphasis on the relevance of international organizations and their role in securing a states’ aims and objectives (Mearsheimer, 1995a, pp. 82–93). Mearsheimer argued that international institutions and organizations are the instruments by which states increase, improve, and quite often maintain their relative power position in the international system and called bodies
such as European Community, NATO, Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to be the examples (Mearsheimer, 1995b, pp. 5–49). Likewise, Stephen Walt gave momentous importance on alliances. However, Snyder presented the logic of security dilemma in explaining alliance politics (Snyder, 1984, pp. 461–495). Nevertheless, quite contrary to Snyder’s logic, Britain’s former EU partners were much vulnerable to a potential Russian invasion and toward the influx of immigrants. For realists, cooperation means relative gains and to garner maximum security. I argue that Britain was never contained by its EU partners in any way and was not driven by security concerns. Yet, apparently Britain was greatly motivated by its marginal socio-political elite, unique strategic history, and more importantly declining or stagnant power in conceiving and realizing Brexit.

2.8. Analysis and afterthought
The British society is witnessing a bipolar worldview with more acceptance for the preservation and sustenance of its white legacy. The recent marriage of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle and the criticism it garnered can be taken as a hard evidence of such resentful narratives. As, Markle is of Afro-American descent (McTague, 2020). Even after a century, the British Government is quite hesitant to apologise for the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre while, Queen Elizabeth II and former Prime Ministers David Cameron and Theresa May offered somewhat comforting words. Nonetheless, I argue that psychologically, number of indigenous British people most importantly conservatives, regard South Asian immigrants and people of such descent as unwanted and a growing danger towards Britain’s transforming demographic statistics. Racism is noticeable in
Britain and number of indigenous people chant remarks such as “Paki” at Pakistani people in a derogatory manner (Meadows, 2006). People belonging to other non-white races are equal victims of such discrimination. It was argued by British academicians that “British governments and the British public in general are very good and very well practised at being nasty to immigrants” (Tomlinson & Dorling, 2019, Chapter 6). If British policymakers are not willing to pay considerable heed to this socio-political behaviour, then in the years to come, there likely will be more voices calling for independence and stirring things up.16

It can be argued that Brexit is a product of British nationalism and the consequent revolt of the rust belt i.e. the back lash of mostly dissatisfied white middle-class people (Flemmmen & Savage, 2017; A. C. A. C. Stephens, 2019). In this connection, it was asserted that “propriety, pensioned, well-off, white middle class based in southern England” were main voters to leave the EU (Bhambra, 2017, p. 215). A scholar noted that “Brexit revealed the severity of Britain’s imperial nostalgia and selective amnesia” (El-Enany, 2018, p. 31). It was noted that the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 triggered a new debate on the position of England within the UK that was argued as the “English question” (Fabbrini, 2017, p. 95–97; “The Union and devolution—Select Committee on the Constitution, 2016, para. 354). It is conceivable that ethno-linguistic groups are largely motivated by “individuals” which use certain ethnic or linguistic markers to carve out some distinct identity (Özkirimli, 2010, p. 206; A. C. A. C. Stephens, 2019). And in Brexit’s case, an overwhelming majority of the people from Southern England voted to leave EU due to the very sensitive issue of national identity, or in other words it can simply be called as nationalism (Favel, 2020). That said, I also fear the disintegration of the UK or at least a dangerous widening of socio-political cleavages, following the unmitigated authority and control of “Little Englanders” (Pettitfor, 2017, p. 131). I also assess and estimate that in the coming years, if prevalent trends continue to prevail or gain momentum, the UK likely will witness an impatient socio-political circumstances driven with ethnic identities including Irish, Scottish, and Englisher.

Advocating for and leaving the EU was a captivating doctrine or perhaps a plausible doubt in putting all the blame on Germany and France. The Tories led by Boris Johnson are not willing to accept the geopolitical realities and the advancements made by other states. It is notable that former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair’s decision to take part in US invasion of Iraq in March 2003 i.e. Operation Iraqi Freedom was nothing but a huge strategic mistake. Later, “The Iraq Inquiry” commonly known as the Chilcot Report released in July 2016, provided the empirical evidence that removing Saddam Hussein on the basis of possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) was nothing but a debacle The Iraq Inquiry—The Report, (2016). The report confirmed that Iraq was not possessing such lethal weapons and technology. Before that, the Butler Review also raised serious questions on the British Intelligence regarding the presence of WMDs in Iraq. It is a fact that toppling down of Saddam Hussein brought an unending chaos to the region and the rise of terrorist organizations including the IS.17 It is to be remembered that then German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and French President Jacques Chirac clearly opposed the attack on Iraq and did not take part in the operations (Tagliabue, 2003). Perhaps, German and French nations could see and predict the outcome of such disastrous unilateral military interventions.

Like the inter-war Germany, radical thinking and behaviour is visible in the contemporary UK. The British national anxiety and desperation are time and again reflected in the psychological behaviour and the socio-political conduct (B. M. B. M. Hughes, 2019, pp. 97–120). The growing violent extremism in Britain can also be argued as the outcome of its foreign policy decisions.18 Brexit is the true manifestation of such psychological behaviour and political conduct. Brexit has raised serious questions on the future of Europe and the European citizens living in the UK and vice-versa. While continuing the present desperate drive, it would not be a surprise that in the coming years, Britain may expel all the foreigners, since, the latter caused burden on the British exchequer. The “unlawful” action of Boris Johnson, i.e. the suspension of British Parliament can be averred as the
beginning of such actions. It would not be an ambitious claim to argue that with this psychological motivation, Britain may face unprecedentedly unfavourable circumstances.

Another aspect i.e. armed forces and military intelligence also contribute toward the glory of a great power. Historically, on 16 January 1917, it was the British Naval Intelligence that intercepted the German Imperial invitation known as “Zimmerman Telegram” sent to Mexico to join the German Empire in an aggressive military alliance against America (Strachan, 2014, p. 131). Quite contrary to its history, the Chilcot Report and the Butler Review raised serious concerns over the credibility, sources, and legitimacy of the September Dossier and February Dossier presented by the Tony Blair government, towards building a strong case to invade Iraq (At-a-glance: Butler report, 2004; MacAskill, 2016). Later, the Iraq Survey Group and Iraq Intelligence Commission also confirmed the grave flaws in intelligence. The Chilcot Report also raised serious weaknesses prevailing in the British Armed Forces and major failures in pre-war and post-war strategies. I argue that such eye-opening reports provide solid evidence of the stagnant or perhaps declining British power and prestige.

2.9. Why Britain could not remit its insular great power?
It was noted that “Seas do not form a barrier” (Davies, 1999, p. 587). The contemporary instruments of naval, amphibious, and aerial warfare have greatly reduced the barrier-value of seas; however, unlike seas, oceans being larger bodies of water are still considerable barriers and continue to act as “stopping power of water” (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 44). A scholar argued that number of British people and its political elites “still possess a great power mind set” (P. Wilson & Oliver, 2019, p. 1018)— nonetheless, history reveals that Britain predominantly remained an insular great power which momentarily benefited from its geographical and geostrategic location (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 81). It retained such an exemplary status mainly due to its mastery over sea power. However, the exalted position achieved by the British involved a careful calculation in avoiding strategic overstretch; somehow maintaining a benign image; prospering politico-economic power; concentrating naval and power projection capabilities; sustaining homogenous and native ethno-linguistic society; preserving national prestige; and evading inertia. For instance, in 1880, the UK was world’s fourth largest economy and its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) could only be surpassed by India, the United States, and China. However, at that time, India was a British colony, and the combined economies could be argued as the largest in the world (Davies, 1999, pp. 641–652).

Nevertheless, today, the British political and socio-economic landscapes present a gloomy picture. Recently, it was estimated that British GDP in terms of PPP would likely remain at ninth position in relation to the world with 2,978,564 million USD (Report for Selected Countries and Subjects: October 2020, 2020). It is much likely that France may surpass it in a few years to come, provided President Macron’s open cooperation with China-led BRI. Previously, Britain suffered strategic overstretch and lost precious territories and likely will lose more territorial control, while keeping in view the worsening of situation in the Northern Ireland and Scotland. Also, it no longer enjoys a benign image. The historic British stern policies towards Irish people did cost it numerous asymmetric attacks, including the assassination of British royals. Likewise, the recent referendum in Scotland clearly demonstrates the will of the Scottish people at-large aspiring to have an independent destiny. The post-Second World War special relationship between the UK and the US is still there (Hlatky, 2013, pp. 59–64). However, contemporarily, I argue that the Anglo-American alliance is more costly for the UK in relation to its counterpart. The British people and society have suffered more by participating in the US-led War on Terror, since, it comprises of heterogeneous and multilingual society and the wartime atrocities committed by its troops, contributed more towards the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in terms of men and material.

I argue that the most important aspect deringing Britain of its historic insular great power is its growingly becoming fringe sea power and power projecting capabilities. The earliest foundations of Royal British Navy were laid down by King Henry VIII in 1514 by laying down the largest warship of that time called Henry Grace à Dieu. The naval force continued to enjoy mastery for the coming four
centuries. On 24 March 1873, during a debate at the House of Commons, George Goschen, the First Lord of Admiralty, highlighted the importance of sea power for Britain and equated “naval expenditure” to “national premium of insurance” and related it to the “insurance against hostile attack” and further emphasized with “the insurance of our power and prosperity” (“House of Commons Debate—Supply—Navy Estimates (Volume 215, Column 33),” “(1873); Lambert (2012), p. 19). However, today, it has around 33,000 active troops with roughly 80 main vessels for naval operations (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018, pp. 162–163). Whereas, Russian Navy has 150,000 active troops and almost 500 vessels, and the Chinese PLA Navy has 240,000 troops in service having almost 600 warships including advanced vessels and two aircraft carriers with numerous indigenous produced Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUVs) for conducting operations and gathering Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018, pp. -195-197, 252–253). Britain’s main naval competitors have manifold advantage over the Royal Navy and the gap is widening rapidly. This dangerous trajectory is not limited to sea power, yet this dangerous attribute is also observable in other domains of military power and power projection capabilities. To alarm Russian and Chinese enhanced military capabilities, it was noted that the “Western technology edge erodes further” (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018, pp. 5–18). Apart from conventional capabilities, British nuclear power is smallest in the recognised nuclear club with almost 1 percent of the entire world’s nuclear warheads (P. Wilson & Oliver, 2019, p. 1019). It is strange that its former colonies like India and Pakistan have fewer competitors and more nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles. On the other hand, Chinese and Russian nuclear power is not only momentous but is constantly growing.

3. Conclusions and recommendations
A renowned British economist argued that “I do not believe that Brexit is a wise decision” (Pettifor, 2017, p. 131)—I could share the same wisdom and conclusion. I argue that after Brexit, it has become much harder for Britain to compete or resist the rising China and the reviving/resurging Russia alone. It could have matched the Chinese challenges and Russian threats in a better way while remaining within the EU. In retrospect, it can be concluded that great powers have an intransigent world view. This inherent inflexibility sometimes is reflected in ignoring the structural and geopolitical realities, and often results in the disintegration of vast empires. Historically, Britain lost its many colonies, while ignoring the ideologically charged forces of nationalism and the structural damages inflicted by Germany during the Second World War. Similarly, in modern times, the Iraq War of 2003 resulted in overstretch; Britain lost 179 soldiers (UK military deaths in Iraq, 2016) that greatly faded the benign image (Samira Shackle, 2018); shrivelled the economic power; shrunk the military prowess and power projection capabilities (Cobain, 2017); and consequently, Britain is suffering inertia. That said, it can be also be concluded that the future of the British union is uncertain, and the current trajectory could lead to further deterioration or even disintegration.

Undoubtedly, the infamous Iraq War resulted in a surge towards violent extremism, though, the latter is a global problem that predominantly follows Frustration-Aggression thesis and developed societies are equally vulnerable towards the menace. However, the thesis pays enormous emphasis on psychological and socio-economic understandings. The murder of the British MP Helen Joanne Cox in June 2016 at the hands of a white supremacist can be taken as a classic example of such dangers (Macklin, 2019, pp. 15–20). Furthermore, Britain needs to overcome its growing signature of violent extremism. However, the idea of pluralism and the notion of “nation of nations” are likely to remain a dream—even in mature liberal democracies. And with leaders like Boris Johnson and his “unlawful” action to suspend the parliament, the true essence of liberal democracy is likely to be in tatters. A commentator raised questions on Johnson’s character and highlighted the nascent dichotomy in Britain about public and private life of leaders (McTague, 2019). Nonetheless, being adamant like Trump, the likelihood of Johnson in remaking Britain remains a mystery.

It was argued that “The ultimate yardstick of national power is military capability” (Tellis et al., 2000, p. 133). Clearly, the UK is heading towards a perilous path with having doubtful military
power in relation to its competitors like China and Russia. Lamenting the British military capabilities, a scholar argued that “the size of the army is set to shrink to its lowest level since 1815” (P. Wilson & Oliver, 2019, p. 1019). In conventional terms, Britain is lagging far behind numerically as well as in terms of equipment and armament. Besides traditional military capabilities, its former colonies including China, India, and Pakistan have more nuclear warheads at their disposal and have more launch vehicles. Also, its competitors as well as former colonies have space programs and are actively exploring weaponization of space including anti-satellite missiles. These developments are negatively contributing towards Britain's power and prestige; however, the Article 5 of the NATO Charter ensures its defence. The path to restoring lost glory of Britain does not lie in retraction, but in enhanced cooperation with its European allies.

Moreover, considering UK’s good old European allies, i.e. Germany and France as competitors in the contemporary era is eroding British global power and prestige. It is an undeniable fact that Britain has lost almost all its distinguished automaking identity to its historic rivals and its former colonies. Nonetheless, China, Germany, India, France, or any other nation did not steal anything away from the UK, as the British auto-making industry is largely still in the island nation and is carrying the same legacy. However, giant corporations tend to invest and acquire dwindling brands to saving them from going bankrupt, which is an inherent attribute of the liberal economic system. It is noteworthy that British Aston Martin went bankrupt for seven times during the past couple of decades. Its fractional acquisition by German Mercedes-Benz has added value and stability to its prices. For instance, German-made V8 engine made the Aston Martin DB11 grand tourer more affordable (Wiseman, 2017). Nonetheless, there is one worth arguing observation that the entire leadership and management of Chinese SAIC Motor belong to the CPC, and this rather controversial affiliation makes an independent observer to contemplate about a calculated Chinese encroachment in the British automaking industry. Perhaps, SAIC Motor and Huawei share the same motivation in realizing state objectives, instead of being purely international and multinational corporations. I must conclude that the British society-at-large and its fractional political elite must realize the advanced German automobile technology whose fruitful harvests are not limited to Germans or Germany only. It is to be remembered here that the research spearheaded by German engineers and Mercedes-Benz regarding the installation of Supplemental Restraint System (SRS) airbags in automobiles was made available for all without any charge (Nayak et al., 2013; O’Neill, 2009). It is in larger British interest to reap the rewards of its European partners.

Conceivably, the enhanced Chinese investments in the Republic of Ireland are of great concern for Britain. On the other hand, the fate of Northern Ireland and Scotland is pretty uncertain as the forces of nationalism are gaining traction. This trend has great potential of becoming dangerously worse with increased Chinese investments and Russian non-linear warfare. Also, previously, the majority of Northern Irishlanders and Scots voted against Brexit (Results and turnout at the EU referendum, 2019). The situation in Northern Ireland and Scotland is reminiscent of the Irish War of Independence and it remains uncertain that Nicola Sturgeon and Michelle O’Neill may behave like Michael Collins and Éamon de Valera. I estimate and suggest that it is in Britain’s larger national interest to extend enhanced autonomy to the Northern Ireland and Scotland. Simply applying its Twentieth-century suppressive tactics and strategies like it did in India and Ireland, likely will worsen the situation and may prove harmful in retaining the British union and fruitful for its competitors like China and Russia. Also, in near future, if the people of Scotland votes in favour of independence, Britain must refrain from abrogating the will of the Scottish people. The alarming trends prevailing in Britain's near-abroad emphasise a revaluation and revision in policymaking. I argue that English policymakers must rethink their dealings with the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

The UK is the classic example of a true international country that is open to immigrants of all sorts. Unlike many European countries like Germany and France, the geographical location of Britain prevented the influx of illegal emigrants from the war-torn regions of the Middle East. However, I argue that its openness is a blessing that Britain can utilise in enhancing its trade relations. The saturation of immigrants in UK is high, comprising almost 10 percent of the total population and are actively participating in strengthening the economy. Though, Brexit has
hindered the influx of skilled labour from Europe; nonetheless, it can introduce a number of reforms in order to increase productivity from the current workforce including raising wages, giving increased health care and insurance, subsidizing electricity, and cutting taxes.

Britain’s national anxiety and desperation are clear as a day and has exited the EU; however, it is a desperate act that is likely to weaken the EU and more importantly the NATO. It is important that with the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad (Tsvetkova et al., 2016) acting as the sword hanging over the Western Europe, the EU and Britain need to strengthen their mutual relationship using fora such as Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Nonetheless, it is also suggested that the Europeans and Britain need to re-establish their mutual relationship while overcoming the sourness to pull on the geostrategic and geopolitical challenges. It can be summed up, for great powers, losing the acquired power is hard. However, Britain can enhance its trade with the Commonwealth of Nations and can increase bilateral relations. In this way it can create an alternative to the EU’s single market and other privileges related to trade.

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Notes
1. Allison argued that the U.S. is ruling, and its peer-competitor China is rising. Please see: (Allison, 2017). For a detailed account on Russia’s resurgence, please see: (Lovelace, 2017).
2. In aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was predicted that new great powers likely will rise (Layne, 1993).
3. For a medieval account on Britain’s insular power, please see: (Smith, 1999).
4. The Battle of Trafalgar took place on 21 October 1805. For more please see: (Adkins, 2006; Best, 2018).
5. There are two basic strands of this doctrine; Global Exceptionalism and Messianic Exceptionalism. (McCrisken, 2003, p. 44). Also please see: (Dseai, 2014).
6. Britain and Germany, both claimed victory at the Battle of Jutland. For more please see: (Brooks, 2016; Butler, 2006).
7. For a broader and an in-depth discussion on realism, please see: (Frankel, 2013, pp. 105–141).
8. For Waltz, every measure that insured state survival was rational. (Lobel et al., 2009, p. 22).
9. It was argued that “Brexit is connected to the rise of the Trump.” Please see: (Cabrall et al., 2017, p. 12–15; Mance et al., 2017; Tudorau, 2018, p. 160).
10. The term was used by various scholars, please see: (Bromley-Davenport et al., 2019; Calhoun, 2016; McQuarrie, 2017).
11. For a detailed account on fascism in Britain during the interwar and Edwardian period, please see: (Stone, 2002).
12. The word Battenberg is of German origin and the family name was simply translated to English language. Since, “berg” means mountain or hill in German, so the word “mount” was added instead of berg. Hence, the family name became Mountbatten (S. Kennedy et al., 2015, p. 124).
13. Mearsheimer and Layne predicted the emergence of a multipolar world order. Please see: (Layne, 1993, p. 5–51; Mearsheimer, 1990, pp. 35–50).
14. GIUK stands for Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018, p. 75).
15. Please see for a detailed account on alliances. (Walt, 1987).
16. For a detailed account on international migrants, please see: (Dora, 2020, pp. 501–524).
17. The Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was founded by Abu Musab al Zarqawi after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and with Zarqawi’s death on 7 June 2006, in a US airstrike; AQI gradually transformed into IS. Please see: (Lia, 2007, p. 8; Stern & Berger, 2015, pp. 13–30).
18. For a detailed account on the growing extremism in the UK, please see: Laveck & Joyce (2019).
19. In 2007 to 2008, China tested its anti-satellite missiles. Please see: (Van, 2011, p. 224).

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