



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

## Global Britain and the narrative of empire

**Citation for published version:**

Turner, O 2019, 'Global Britain and the narrative of empire', *Political Quarterly*, vol. 90, no. 4, pp. 727-734.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12739>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.1111/1467-923X.12739](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12739)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

Political Quarterly

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Turner, O. (2019), Global Britain and the Narrative of Empire. The Political Quarterly. doi:10.1111/1467-923X.12739, which has been published in final form at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-923X.12739>. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.

**General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy**

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



# **Global Britain and the narrative of empire.<sup>1</sup>**

Oliver Turner,

University of Edinburgh

## **Abstract**

Since 2016, the UK government has outlined plans for Global Britain as a framework for post-Brexit foreign policy. Some criticise the idea as a vision of “Empire 2.0”, but it is rarely made clear exactly what form it takes or what its wider political implications are. This article argues that Global Britain constitutes not just an idea or a slogan, but a foreign policy narrative and, more specifically, the narrative of empire. To appear reasonable, its grand ambitions require pre-existing knowledges of past imperial “successes” and accepting images of empire among the British public. Yet Global Britain lacks efficacy: as a domestic rather than an international narrative; by being inherently regressive in its worldview; and for contradicting the preferences of international partners on which the UK heavily relies. These narrative flaws, it is argued, make Global Britain an actively problematic, rather than merely ineffective, component of UK foreign policy.

## **Key words**

Global Britain; Brexit; Asia; Narratives; Empire.

---

<sup>1</sup> The author thanks Ryan K. Beasley and Charlotte Rommerskirchen for helpful comments and suggestions on this article.

## **Introduction**

Since the UK referendum in June 2016 and its decision to leave the European Union, debates over the nation's place in global affairs have intensified. Throughout the Brexit process, politicians, academics, journalists and others have provided assessments on what leaving the EU (and indeed remaining within it) would mean for the UK's international significance and standing. In October 2016 former Prime Minister Theresa May formalised the slogan Global Britain, as 'an ambitious vision for Britain after Brexit' in which the UK would govern itself, advocate free trade, promote peace and prosperity, and protect the interests of itself and others.<sup>1</sup> Global Britain has been endorsed by government departments and ministers ever since.

Some argue that support for Brexit emerges broadly from imperial nostalgia or dreams of "Empire 2.0". The project, they claim, is an impossible attempt to recapture a position in global affairs the UK occupied before the collapse of its empire and entry into the EU. To a lesser degree, these arguments are extended to Global Britain and the foreign policy blueprint it claims to provide.<sup>2</sup> As with Brexit, tying endorsements for Global Britain to empire is typically done pejoratively, to criticise its proponents as unrealistic or even delusional. But if Global Britain is akin to a 'dead colonial fantasy',<sup>3</sup> where exactly do we find it and what particular form does it take? Moreover, what are the implications of its apparent imperial motivations for UK foreign policy and engagement with international partners, whether it leaves the EU or not? This article addresses these questions to bring focus and substance to debates about the meanings and applications of Global Britain since 2016. It does so in two interconnected ways.

First, it concentrates on the UK government's understandings of Global Britain, primarily as laid out in a dedicated 2018 memorandum by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Addressing loose descriptions of the term as a notion, an idea, a concept and so on, it is argued that Global Britain is most usefully conceived as a foreign policy narrative, and more specifically

the narrative of empire. As such, Global Britain is principally authored as a “painkiller” in anticipation of domestic trauma following the loss of EU membership, just as the British Commonwealth once was to assuage the loss of empire, and is thus purposefully marketable rather than unwittingly delusional. The lofty ambitions for Global Britain, moreover, require knowledges of past imperial “successes” and accepting images of empire among the British public in order to appear meaningful and justifiable. The focus falls on how this narrative of empire applies to UK post-Brexit ambitions in one of the three global ‘centres’ of political and economic activity identified by the FCO as central to Global Britain’s future: Asia (or the Indo-Pacific).

Second, the article examines the efficacy of Global Britain and the framework for post-Brexit foreign policy it ostensibly presents, with a continued focus on how it is received in Asia. It is argued that the framework is fundamentally flawed for at least three reasons. First, as a domestic rather than an international narrative, Global Britain was never envisaged as a viable foreign policy programme. Second, as a narrative of empire it is inherently regressive rather than progressive, assuming a world which increasingly no longer exists. Third, and most importantly, Global Britain contradicts the preferences of international partners on which it relies so heavily to achieve its goals. It is argued that Brexit has re-ignited an impassioned identity crisis within the UK, bringing disagreement and political deadlock over what the nation *is*. Simultaneously, however, it has brought comparatively pragmatic, clear-eyed assessments of the UK’s strengths and value from non-EU partners in regions like Asia, from which we learn much about the place and role(s) it occupies in modern day global affairs, but which have largely been ignored in Whitehall. Misalignments between the underlying, enduring self-narrative of Global Britain - from which the foreign policy slogan has recently emerged - and the priorities of key partners, it is asserted, are critically important to the UK’s future prospects, whatever the outcome of Brexit.

### **Unpacking Global Britain: The narrative of empire**

For a time after its emergence in late 2016, there were few clear articulations of what Global Britain was understood to represent. To date, a 2018 memorandum from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to the UK's House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee constitutes the best resource from which to unpack the British government's intended meanings of, and ambitions for, Global Britain.<sup>4</sup> In it, the FCO explains that Global Britain would adapt to leaving the European Union, 'to continue to be a successful global foreign policy player, and to resist any sense that Britain will be less engaged in the world'. To this end, Global Britain

'is intended to signal that the UK will...continue to be open, inclusive and outward facing; free trading; assertive in standing up for British interests and values; and resolute in boosting our international standing and influence. It is a Britain with global presence, active in every region; global interests, working with our allies and partners to deliver the global security and prosperity that ensures our own; and global perspectives, engaging with the world in every area, influencing and being influenced.

To realise these visions, Global Britain must be 'influential in all regions', especially within 'the three centres of the global economy and political influence': the United States, Europe and the Indo-Pacific.

As already noted, some argue that Global Britain reflects nostalgia for the British Empire and dreams of recouping a lost imperial presence. Those who criticise as unfounded this assertion that Global Britain (and indeed Brexit) is driven by visions of Empire 2.0 are in important respects correct; few, if any, of those in positions of responsibility seriously consider that the British Empire can or should be resurrected. The argument here, then, is not that Global Britain has been conceived as a rebirth of empire. It is that Global Britain is the narrative of Empire, with important consequences.

Narratives are a form of discourse which convey stories about the world and the actors within it. They contain characters and plotlines, but are at least partly autobiographical, bringing normative constructions of political “realities” around us. As such, they present the narrator’s own opinions about what is normal and right as matter of fact. Narratives provide comforting and reassuring stories about “our” identity, where “we” come from, and “our” purposes and aspirations. ‘Having a secure autobiography, a firm grasp on our past and our history’, notes Subotic, ‘provides a sense of stability and allows us to move forward’. To be convincing, moreover, narratives are manufactured and selective, emphasising elements of the story while omitting others. This in turn means narratives can enable and restrict conceivable policy choices, by convincing their audiences of appropriate (and inappropriate) courses of action. Finally, any given narrative does not exist in isolation, and can often be found embedded within everyday discourses to ease communicability.<sup>5</sup> Identifying Global Britain as a narrative, rather than an idea, a notion, etc. helps us unpack its nature, purposes and significance.

In the twentieth century, the Commonwealth of Nations brought under its umbrella most of the former colonies of the British Empire as they gained independence, primarily throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The Commonwealth was presented as ‘empire in contemporary form’. It was ‘a painkiller’, sold to the British public to ease the shock of losing global power and authority with promises of imperial levels of international control and prestige.<sup>6</sup> (Such ambitions would go unrealised, and the UK’s motivations to join the EEC in the 1960s are traced partly to realisations that the Commonwealth was a less significant source of trade and prosperity than originally believed).

Today’s narrative of Global Britain is in many important respects a painkiller to ease potential suffering from leaving the European Union. The shock from Brexit to the UK’s political-economic foundations may be as significant as any experienced during the twentieth century,<sup>7</sup> and official government projections point to contractions of the UK economy outside the EU. ‘Some elements of our interaction with the rest of the world will change’, the FCO – as the narrative’s

key author - acknowledges in its memorandum on Global Britain. Accordingly, the UK 'will lose some elements of the force multiplier advantages of EU membership'. Since 2016, then, and just as the Commonwealth of Nations once was, Global Britain has been sold as empire by another name via compensatory promises of authority and prestige – of being 'active and influential in every region', from a 'global presence' which would enable it to help deliver 'global security and prosperity'.

Global Britain is criticised by some as an impracticable vision to retrieve something which has been irretrievably lost. Yet, intended as a painkiller, the narrative of Global Britain is less accidentally delusional than it is purposefully marketable; members of Britain's foreign services are well versed on the limits of state resources and capabilities, making the insistence that Global Britain can ensure 'our adversaries are aware of our capacity for protecting our national interest, remaining an activist global player in projecting our values, supporting the rules-based international order, and leading efforts to ensure global peace and security', far from misinformed. Rather, it is a largely autobiographical narrative crafted to reassure, with a familiar, soothing story about the UK as a nation with truly global attributes and aspirations, and networks of allies and partners, to ease an expected shock not from the loss of Empire but the loss of EU membership.

The central aims for Global Britain are in many ways ambiguous and underdeveloped, with the term representing an empty signifier. Empty signifiers are in themselves devoid of meaning. Ripe for interpretation, they only make sense once attributed meaning by others. Global Britain could thus be taken at face value, appealing to visions of the 'open, inclusive and outward facing' post-Brexit Britain the FCO describes, with little consideration for imperial legacies. Yet the stated ambitions for Global Britain only appear reasonable and justifiable in practice if collective memories of empire are there to lend them credence.

Global Britain, then – like most narratives - does not operate in isolation. It complements long-running narratives of Global Britain which predate 2016, to eras in which it was taken for granted that the UK, by virtue of its empire, exerted extensive international authority and

influence, enjoying a 'global presence' commensurate with the words of the FCO today. Empire, in other words, is the still-beating heart of Global Britain, giving its bombastic rhetoric logic and meaning. Indeed, Global Britain quietly draws strength from overtly favourable or accepting/ambivalent images of empire among the British public. In 2016 for example, 43 percent of Britons considered their empire to have been 'a good thing', with 25 percent believing it was neither a 'good' nor a 'bad thing'. Just 19 percent expressly considered the Empire to have been a 'bad thing'.<sup>8</sup>

This explains much about Global Britain's ambition. It is highly questionable whether its aims could ever be realised, a point made by the UK's House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee report when it noted that 'the slogan must be backed by substance'. This is especially pertinent when the UK's foreign services, including the FCO and Ministry of Defence, have experienced sustained budget reductions since around 2010. Restrictions on their abilities to exert British influence abroad are also highlighted in the Foreign Affairs Committee report. Yet the endurance of empire in the British imagination is such that its "achievements" can override knowledges of ongoing budget restrictions, as well as government projections that the UK economy would expand more slowly outside the EU, to make persuasive the possibility of an approaching - or perhaps returning - Global Britain.

Thus, while the FCO's memorandum on Global Britain never actually mentions the word empire, it does not have to. The British government can avoid controversy the term brings through careful manipulation of the narrative, relying instead on understandings and interpretations empire leaves behind. When outlining the importance of India to future UK involvement in Asia, for example, it euphemistically explains that 'influence and access' are gained by virtue of 'a shared past' and 'strong people-to-people links'. It also points to the 'major advantage' the UK boasts of 'global reach through our diplomatic network', and 'the huge advantage of being part of the Commonwealth, allowing us to engage with a wide network of countries...with a similar history, legal heritage, and institutions'.



In such a way, Global Britain simultaneously embraces and denies the existence of empire. On the one hand, Global Britain can appear feasible only with an appreciation for what empire bequeathed the twenty first century UK: a ‘shared past’ with countries it colonised, an unusually wide diplomatic reach achieved largely through intercontinental imperial administration, and a grouping of nations which operate according to laws and procedures formulated by Britain to replace their own. On the other hand, for Global Britain to succeed its narrative must be attentively managed, with its imperial foundations erased from immediate sight.

Yet, as the narrative of empire Global Britain’s historical inspirations are always close to the surface, and its primary reference point is an imperial era defined mainly by “successes” in the non-Western world. As a result, Global Britain is grounded in arguments about economic opportunities in India, China, wider Asia, and the Commonwealth. In a 2016 speech to promote Global Britain, Boris Johnson when Foreign Secretary argued that a post-Brexit UK should take advantage of opportunities beyond Europe, ‘beginning with some of those dynamic commonwealth economies that are already queuing up to do free trade deals’. This message has been echoed by others, including Theresa May during her leadership.

The FCO also stresses that a post-Brexit UK would support ‘the rules-based international order’. Yet rules are as political as they are legal, and the international order the FCO envisions is an ideational construct which exists as much in the imagination as in judicial texts. That “order” has long been primarily of Anglo-American design, expanded and sustained beneath the umbrellas of *Pax Britannica* and then *Pax Americana*. However, while the leading rule-making institutions of the UN, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation and others remain Western-dominated and Western-based, today’s shift in the global political economy sees power residing elsewhere and new multilateral institutions and organisations emerging (not least in Asia), with established centres of legal power eroding. For Global Britain to unequivocally support ‘*the* rules-based international order’, then, points to a normative autobiographical narrative written not to endorse rules *per se*,

but the rules of a (intrinsically imperial) Western-based system it considers right and the way things should be.

### **The efficacy of Global Britain**

While the UK government's post-2016 narrative of Global Britain is seductive and comforting, with selectivities to mask its imperial foundations and boost its acceptance, it is flawed as a foreign policy blueprint for at least three interconnected reasons. First, Global Britain is in essence a domestic rather than an international narrative; as a painkiller for traumas expected in the event of Brexit, it has never been envisaged as an implementable policy programme. With its principal intended audience the British public, Global Britain is inherently inward-facing as a party-political rallying call to voters more than a serious foreign policy strategy. This is reflected in its aforementioned lack of operational detail, but articulations of the key elements of Global Britain, such as in a February 2019 speech by former Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson, further expose its domestic configurations. Williamson's speech, delivered in London rather than in the welcome of an international partner for maximum attendance by the British media, was an overview of global security challenges along with a salutation to UK armed forces. Few new policies or announcements were made, with focus instead on reassurances that the UK would remain a global security actor.

The second flaw is that, as a narrative of empire, Global Britain is fundamentally regressive rather than progressive, promoting engagement with a world which increasingly no longer exists. As already seen, the particular 'rules-based order' the UK essentialises is rapidly evolving, and projections that a post-Brexit UK would 'lead efforts to ensure global peace and security' and be 'influential in all regions' require knowledges of past imperial "glories" for meaning. Broader anachronisms of Global Britain also contradict the interests of international partners. For instance, plans for a post-Brexit UK to engage more actively with the Commonwealth received a lukewarm response; in 2016, Commonwealth Secretary General Patricia Scotland argued that the EU and

Commonwealth were not competitors, and that ‘partnership is a much better way forward’. Scotland noted that she was unaware of any appetite throughout the Commonwealth for Brexit. The Commonwealth may be a source of post-imperial pride for the UK, but its members prioritise regional relationships and those with giant outliers like the United States, China and indeed Europe; most have either signed or begun to negotiate free trade agreements with Brussels. For Global Britain to prioritise the Commonwealth over the EU would ultimately be out of step with the worldviews of both institutional memberships.

The third and perhaps most important reason for why Global Britain fails as a foreign policy programme is that, as indicated above, it fundamentally contradicts the understandings and preferences of international partners about what the modern-day UK represents. Scholarly debates as to exactly what the UK constitutes in global affairs have existed for decades, since at least the collapse of the British Empire. Since then, the UK has been labelled a “great power”, a “former superpower”, and a “middle-ranking European power”, among others. ‘When Britain lost an Empire’, argues Graham Leicester, ‘...it lost an identity based on the projection of “Britishness” overseas’.<sup>9</sup>

The UK’s decision to leave the EU brought this long-simmering identity crisis to the boil. (The British government has itself been informed that Brexit has generated a ‘role crisis’ for the UK<sup>10</sup>). The Brexit referendum produced an almost 50-50 split in domestic public opinion. Prolonged and fractious parliamentary deliberation followed, defined by conflict and indecision over what type of Brexit the UK should pursue and whether the UK should exit the EU at all. Indecision and deadlock twice resulted in delays to Brexit. Those who prefer that the UK remains in the EU tend to argue that the nation has been anchored to Europe for its own benefit, with a relatively modest international profile more vulnerable without Union membership. Those who advocate that the UK leaves the EU more commonly argue that Brexit would free it of bureaucratic oversight which shackle its potential, returning sovereignty over trade, currency and military-security arrangements, and enabling it to recapture independence and a lost sense of self by re-

engaging with the world on its own, very capable, terms. Britain's highly polarised Brexit debates, then, have ultimately been less about the EU, or even UK membership, than they have been continuations of long-running contestations about what the UK actually *is*.

Typically lost within this domestic discursive milieu however is that Brexit has forced an unusually raw and in-depth interrogation of the UK's twenty first century place and function. It has been argued that 'no-one knows what Britain is anymore', with its partners in Europe most bewildered as they witness a 'sudden nervous breakdown' which has left the UK 'unrecognisable'.<sup>11</sup> Importantly however, Brexit has also prompted key partners – notably beyond Europe in priority regions like Asia - to deliver considered, matter-of-fact assessments of the UK's international presence which bring relatively clearer understandings of its identity than the UK holds of itself. The nation's identity crisis can thus appear less perplexing when the comparatively sober and utilitarian assessments of others are considered. By extension, we learn much about how well the self-narrative of Global Britain translates in the wider world, and with what effects.

It is argued elsewhere that the space and role the UK occupies today (particularly, but not exclusively, within Asia) is best conceived not in terms of quantitative power as a "great" or "middle" power, but by its qualities of power. Specifically, the UK today represents a 'facilitator' and 'subcontractor'. As a facilitator, long-standing, influential positions in multilateral institutions and organisations such as the EU (but also the WTO, UN, and World Bank), enable it to act for others, as a "gateway" into the lucrative economic markets of Europe and corridors of political power of global governance. As a subcontractor, the UK brings a select range of skills and specialisms, in finance; international bureaucracy; security (weapons sales and broader security expertise); education and others. It is argued that Brexit would more negatively impact the UK's status as facilitator than subcontractor.<sup>12</sup>

In an open letter to London and Brussels, for example, the Japanese government provided the most comprehensive statement of any Asian country on what it considers the primary challenges to its interests from Brexit. Tokyo, like others, perceives the UK as among the most

liberal trading voices in Europe through an historical aversion to protectionist measures, with its letter affirming that the UK's value lies firmly in its "gateway" status to Europe and the cross-channel movement of goods, services and people.<sup>13</sup> In the months preceding the UK's Brexit referendum, the leaderships of (Indo-Pacific) partners including China, India, Australia and New Zealand spoke of the benefits they derive from Britain's facilitating membership of the EU.

Japan also called for a 'strong, united Europe' within a 'global order now beset by challenges'. These perceived challenges revolve primarily around China, which Tokyo fears is now steered only by the world's most capable actors, such as the European Union. The EU boasts little regional military significance, but its collective voice on norms and laws of sovereignty, territory, trade, the environment and others make it a valuable ally. Tokyo considers Brexit, and by extension the UK's visions for an "independent" Global Britain, detrimental to Europe's authority at a time of rapid global change.

Japan also expects that the UK's own ability to provide meaningful diplomatic influence over Beijing - via Brussels but also international organisations such as the UN whose operations are driven not insignificantly by regional partnerships and alliances – would weaken with Brexit. In 2019, Japan's ambassador to the UK explained he was 'perplexed' as to why the UK was leaving the EU. Such confusion is traced to ingrained understandings of the UK as a valuable, successful facilitator with which Japan shares productive - European - relations. Brexit, indeed, has been promoted via images of hyper-globalisation and a world which enables Global Britain to enjoy international omni-presence with partners on every continent in relationships of its choosing. Largely absent from these debates has been the enduring importance of regionalisation and the power of geography, from where *today's* Global Britain derives much of its facilitating value.

Interpretations of the UK as a subcontractor, with prized specialisms across a core set of industries and arenas, also speak to the faults of Global Britain as a foreign policy blueprint and a narrative whose authors have paid little attention to the views of those it requires to achieve its aims. The FCO envisions an ambitious 'All of Asia' policy, for example, in a region where it is

‘continually looking for opportunities to expand’. As observed earlier, the narrative of Global Britain, with its primary reference point an imperial past, also assumes that economic opportunities await an enterprising UK in the non-West, in India, China, with members of the Commonwealth, and so on. Yet the Brexit process to date has helped to confirm that the priorities of those in Asia (and elsewhere) are not simply for increased trade.

With the UK now a minor trade partner to most Asian countries by virtue of both geography and size, regional governments seek alternative gains. In November 2016, India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi explained that a post-Brexit bilateral trade deal required increased visa numbers for Indian students to the UK education system. This was an immediate illustration of the centrality of such niche areas as higher education to perceptions of the UK’s purpose and identity, and the misalignment between the ambitions of Global Britain and the priorities of international others.

China is also less interested in a trade deal than in employing UK proficiencies in banking and finance. This explains Beijing’s enthusiasm for the annual UK-China Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD), and its aims to promote the renminbi in global currency markets through London, as articulated most recently in joint EFD statements of 2016, 2017 and 2018. These aims of China to promote the renminbi are not incommensurate with the stated goals of Global Britain. However, a cancelled meeting in 2019 between UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond and his counterparts in China - apparently after protest from Beijing over a decision by the UK Ministry of Defence to sail a new aircraft carrier through the Pacific alongside references to ‘those who flout international law’ – additionally demonstrated how the aims of Global Britain to be ‘active in every region’ can collide with the preferences (whether justified or not) of partners on which it relies to achieve the prosperity and influence it promises.

## **Conclusion**

Global Britain is more than a notion, an idea, or a vision for UK international engagement, and more than the foreign policy blueprint it purports to provide. It is an autobiographical narrative about what Britain is and what it envisions the world and its actors to be. This is an important distinction because narratives are not simply descriptive and they rarely stand alone; they are performative and interconnected, written to construct particular realities and shape policy choice. Global Britain narrativises a world of opportunity which an entrepreneurial UK is ready to embrace. It does this to calm public unease in anticipation of (especially economic) trauma in the form of Brexit, as a narrative which, to rephrase Subotic, encourages stability to allow the country to move forward. As the narrative of empire however, Global Britain requires knowledges of imperial “achievements” not just to acquire meaning, but to validate its grand ambitions.

This matters because while the tagline of Global Britain may disappear from public discourse once a new government is elected, and/or when the outcome of Brexit is determined, deeper narratives of Global Britain will endure in alternative forms. They will do so whether or not the UK leaves the European Union, as long-running debates about the post-imperial UK persist and evolve. The importance of this is firstly in recognising that today’s Global Britain is as much a statement of identity as it is of policy. It is also in recognising the legacies of empire which subtly pervade UK political and foreign policy discourse. As this article has shown, these legacies encourage fundamentally regressive conceptions of the world that exist in a mutually-reinforcing relationship with wider public opinion; perhaps ironically, the purpose and meanings of Global Britain today are largely detached from the rapidly changing world around it. The UK’s House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee worries that Global Britain will remain an empty slogan if not backed by further resources. The more significant problem is that, since 2016, Global Britain has already revealed a broad and highly problematic mismatch between its sense of self and the assessments of the international partners it requires to succeed.

## Notes

- 
- <sup>1</sup> J. May 'Read in full: Theresa May's Conservative conference speech on Brexit', 2 October 2016, [www.politicshome.com/news/uk/political-parties/conservative-party/news/79517/read-full-theresa-mays-conservative](http://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/political-parties/conservative-party/news/79517/read-full-theresa-mays-conservative) (accessed 19 May 2019).
- <sup>2</sup> See for example D. Dorling and S. Tomlinson, *Rule Britannia: Brexit and the End of Empire*, London, Biteback Publishing, 2019; S. Virdee and B. McGeever, 'Racism, crisis, Brexit', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 41, no. 10, 2018, pp. 1802-1819; C. Calhoun, 'Populism, nationalism and Brexit', in W. Outhwaite, ed., *Brexit: Sociological Response*, London, Anthem Press, 2017, pp. 57-76; D. Boffey, 'Empire 2.0: The fantasy that's fuelling Tory divisions on Brexit', 8 November 2018, [www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/nov/08/empire-fantasy-fuelling-tory-divisions-on-brexit](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/nov/08/empire-fantasy-fuelling-tory-divisions-on-brexit) (accessed 19 May 2019).
- <sup>3</sup> M. Boussebaa, 'Brexit's "Global Britain": UK needs a clear economic strategy for its trading future, not a dead colonial fantasy', 10 May 2019, <https://theconversation.com/brexit-global-britain-uk-needs-a-clear-economic-strategy-for-its-trading-future-not-a-dead-colonial-fantasy-116707> (accessed 20 May 2019).
- <sup>4</sup> House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 'Global Britain', Sixth Report of Session 2017-19, 12 March 2018, pp. 19-28, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmfaaff/780/780.pdf> (accessed 6 June 2019).
- <sup>5</sup> M. Patterson and K. Monroe, 'Narrative in Political Science', *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 1, 1998, pp. 315-331; J. Subotić, 'Narrative, ontological security, and foreign policy change', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2016, pp. 610-627.
- <sup>6</sup> K. Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline, and Future of the British Commonwealth*, London, Palgrave, 2005, p. 116.



- 
- <sup>7</sup> D. Weldon, 'The British model and the Brexit shock: Plus ça change?', *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 90, no. S2, 2019, pp.12-20.
- <sup>8</sup> YouGov, 'Rhodes must not fall', 18 January 2018, [https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/95euxfgway/InternalResults\\_160118\\_BritishEmpire\\_Website.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/95euxfgway/InternalResults_160118_BritishEmpire_Website.pdf) (accessed 21 May 2019).
- <sup>9</sup> G. Leicester, 'Devolution and Europe: Britain's double constitutional problem', in H. Elcock, M. Keating, eds., *Remaking the Union: Devolution and British Politics in the 1990s*, London: Frank Cass, 1998, pp.10-11.
- <sup>10</sup> R. K. Beasley, J. Kaarbo and K. Opperman, 'UK Foreign Policy After Brexit: Losing Europe and Finding a Role', <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/foreign-affairs-committee/global-britain/written/82242.html> (accessed 21 May 2019).
- <sup>11</sup> S. Erlanger, 'No one knows what Britain is anymore', *New York Times*, 4 November 2017, [www.nytimes.com/2017/11/04/sunday-review/britain-identity-crisis.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/04/sunday-review/britain-identity-crisis.html) (accessed 14 May 2019).
- <sup>12</sup> O. Turner, 'Subcontracting, facilitating, and qualities of regional power: The UK's partial pivot to Asia', *Asia Europe Journal*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2018, pp.211-226.
- <sup>13</sup> Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Japan's message to the United Kingdom and the European Union', 2016, [www.mofa.go.jp/files/000185466.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000185466.pdf) (accessed 12 May 2017).