

the West and towards Russia. China itself also stands to benefit economically in the long term from a weakened EU. Despite Brexit making one of its primary trading partners harder to reach, China's economic dominance will ultimately increase as the EU's trading power is weakened (Schuman, 2016).

The move away from European integration also raises questions around the future of other supranational organisations. African Union Agenda 2063 calls for states to "cede sovereignty in order to make progress and strengthen collective unity" (Hofmeyr, 2016). However, Brexit and the events it triggered have shown that the secession of sovereignty is something still balked at globally, and an Afrobarometer survey found 58% of Africans did not support further AU integration (Hofmeyr, 2016). Brexit has also fuelled US distrust of integration, casting into doubt the long-

floated idea of a North American union (Taylor, 2016), as well as the future of the increasingly sidelined UN itself.

These examples further show the regression into the nationalism and suspicion which characterised Europe in the 1930s and led to the outbreak of WW2. The grievances at the heart of these issues must be understood if we are to avoid a similar outcome.

Brexit is a symptom of wider forces at play, not a cause. It will be seen as a turning point which revealed pre-existing divisions, forced us to question what we value in our societies, and heralded radical change in the global geopolitical landscape. Living amongst the pages of a future history book as we do, it is too hard to say whether this change will be for the better or the worse, but in the words of Alan Greenspan, former chair of the Federal Reserve, "This is just the tip of the iceberg"



"Our world is extraordinarily complex and changing at incredible speeds. It is more important than ever to understand the forces altering the global geopolitical landscape. The Global Scholar Award has allowed me to investigate these forces and better comprehend what lies behind them. Besides improving my essay writing and research skills, it has fostered a curiosity about the world in me which will serve me throughout my life. I'm grateful to have had this opportunity and

will look back on it as something which changed the way I understand the world."
Samuel Garrett

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BREXIT: THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG



Britain's decision to leave the European Union rides a new wave of discontent and political apathy sweeping the world which threatens not only the future of the Union itself, but of the globalised international community. The global ramifications of the 'Brexit' referendum extend far beyond localised economic downturn, instead signalling a regression into the nationalism of the early 20th century. The forces behind Brexit must be understood in order to manage its impacts.

Brexit's economic impacts are among its most publicised but they will not prove its most significant. Advanced economies could lose 0.5% of their GDP by mid-2019 (IMF, 2016), and the pound has dropped to a 31-year low (Skilling, 2016). However, it is only small economies which are likely to feel these effects in the long-term, with larger nations likely to weather the worst of it (Bain Insights, 2016)(Skilling, 2016). It is instead the socio-political environment in which economies operate, and the resentment and anti-establishment sentiment that now characterises them, which will prove the true legacy of Brexit.

Brexit's greatest impact is symbolic. Regardless of whether the material effects are positive or negative, the imagery of a supposed revolution of 'the people' is priceless to far-right parties across Europe and the globe, galvanising electoral support, fuelling nationalism and entrenching division. These forces will fundamentally alter the world's geopolitical landscape, even if the direct, localised ramifications of Brexit prove minor.

By setting a precedent for other nations to snub the principles of international co-operation by abandoning the EU, Brexit has the potential to lead to a knock-on effect, consolidating discontent and resulting in an exodus of other European nations. This could ultimately lead to the collapse of the EU as a political entity. Britain is Europe's second largest economy (Lynn, 2016) and a vital liaison between the US and the EU. Its exit alone will likely reduce the EU's legitimacy and effectiveness, and in the words of Charles Grant, Director of the Centre for European Reform, "From now on the narrative will be one of disintegration not integration" (Grant cited in Elliott, 2016).

Brexit's usefulness as an argument for leaving the Union is strengthened by its political context. The EU currently faces a host of challenges, including the refugee crisis, the ongoing recovery from the fallout of the GFC, and its own bloated bureaucracy. Brexit has exacerbated these pressures, raising anti-EU sentiments while also championing an apparent 'quick fix' to these global issues

by retreating from them. In an increasingly interconnected world, these problems "require a global approach" (Cerny et al., 2016) rather than unilateral national 'solutions'. The unfortunate irony is that 'solutions' such as Brexit only damage platforms like the EU, making these global approaches harder to formulate and implement.

Brexit engendered and highlighted resurging nationalism and a global trend towards the Right. Far-right parties such as Alternative für Deutschland in Germany and Austria's Freedom Party have enjoyed considerable success: the Freedom Party narrowly losing the recent Austrian presidential election by less than one percentage point (Powell, 2016). Rodrigo Duterte's rise in the Philippines, Pauline Hanson's recent resurgence in Australia, and Donald Trump's successful campaign, all demonstrate the truly global nature of this phenomenon.

Brexit laid bare the economic and ideological divisions driving these movements, with 63% of non-graduates and 68% of the bottom-fifth earners voting to leave (Curtice, 2016). This same demographic, generally more disadvantaged, older, and less educated – the so-called 'silent majority' – helped propel Trump into the White House. They are predominantly those 'left behind' by globalisation and rapid economic and social change (Elliott, 2016). Brexit and Trump's election victory demonstrate that this group isn't truly silent at all, rather, they are shouting at a system that is no longer listening.

The far-right have capitalised on this discontent for their own ends, advocating a return to the past and scapegoating everyone from 'elites' to immigrants as the cause of people's predicament. Nationalism has always proved a useful tool to harness fear and anti-establishment anger, fostering an atmosphere of mistrust and xenophobia in the same way the 'Leave' campaign did, leading to a 50% increase in British hate crimes post-Brexit (Posener, 2016)(BBC, 2016)(Bearak, 2016). This divisiveness will continue to degrade productive international dialogue, fracturing the world at a time when unity is desperately required. Brexit will only serve to accelerate this process.

The isolationist stance that Brexit promotes and its knock-on effects are what make the impact of Brexit truly global. The EU has long played a significant role in maintaining European peace and balance of power (Stone, 2016). The fractured Europe to which Brexit may lead would struggle to withstand Russia's territorial ambitions, opening the door to new, broader conflicts which the EU has largely been successful at mitigating until now (Stone, 2016).

A perceived economic weakening of the EU may also spark a move into the Russian sphere of influence, particularly amongst Eastern European states (Schweitzer, 2016). International propensity to move away from the West was already evident in the rush to join 'China's World Bank', the AIIB, against the urgings of the US (Perlez, 2015), so it is a distinct possibility that Brexit could spark a new move away from