

Issue 1

The Politics Journal

**British Politics, Political Philosophy,
Political Science, Global Politics & More!**



***Will the UK-US
Special
Relationship
Prevail?***

***What is the Alt-
Right movement?***



***What are the
Pros and Cons of
Globalisation?***



***The Syria Paradox
Explained***



Introduction

“Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.”

Franklin D.Roosevelt

Politics is such an important topic for all. It is how we manage our world around us and no matter who you are, it's certain that you have been and will be affected by politics in your life.

Politics is also such a fascinating topic for many reasons. Whether you are interested in elections, the nature of British democracy, political philosophy, political science, law or global politics then there is something in this journal for you to learn more about. In recent years there are even more reasons to get up-to-date in political news; with the UK experiencing a gigantic political shake up due to Brexit, America electing the most unprecedented candidate for President we can ever remember and the expanding globalisation drawing together countries around the world bringing with it new stories of war, terrorism and trade conflicts.

Our political journal is written for the benefit of Warwick school students from any year group - not just those studying the A-level politics course - who are interested in knowing more about how our country and the world are both governed. Here, writers can expand their journalistic skills by researching specific topics outside the school curriculum that interest them and subsequently write short and informative articles for others. These articles are written without any intended bias against or towards any particular ideology or philosophy present in the political world, and we aim to appeal to everyone in the school.

We plan to have issues published as regularly as possible. If you have a topic that you would like us to write about or are interested in writing an article yourself, please contact the editor David Holroyd at D.Holroyd@warwickscool.org or our supervisor Mr Jefferies at J.Jefferies@warwickschool.org.

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UK-US Special Relationship - will it Prevail?

Edward Innes

Donald Trump's presidency poses an uncomfortable question over the future of the UK-US 'Special Relationship' and whether it will prevail. This relationship is crucial in terms of both national defence and trade - especially after our planned withdrawal from the EU. Therefore maintaining a close relationship with the US, especially with the prospect of American isolationism, is of extreme importance to the UK's military and economic prosperity, regardless of what we think of the 'tax-avoiding, race baiting, sexual predator'.

Already the President has welcomed a continued close relationship with the UK, stating that *"With me, they'll always be treated fantastically"*, whilst openly expressing support of Brexit. This suggests that Trump is keen to retain the special relationship, especially after he referred to May as *"my Maggie"* - likening their future relationship to that of Thatcher and Reagen.



Trump has committed his support towards both Brexit and Prime Minister Theresa May's political agenda

The President's opinion on Britain exiting the EU is another encouragement for the future of the UK-US relationship, especially in terms of trade, stating *"We're gonna work very hard to get [a trade deal] done quickly and done properly – good for both sides"*.



US President Reagan and UK PM Thatcher held a strong relationship during the Cold War to counter the USSR and communism

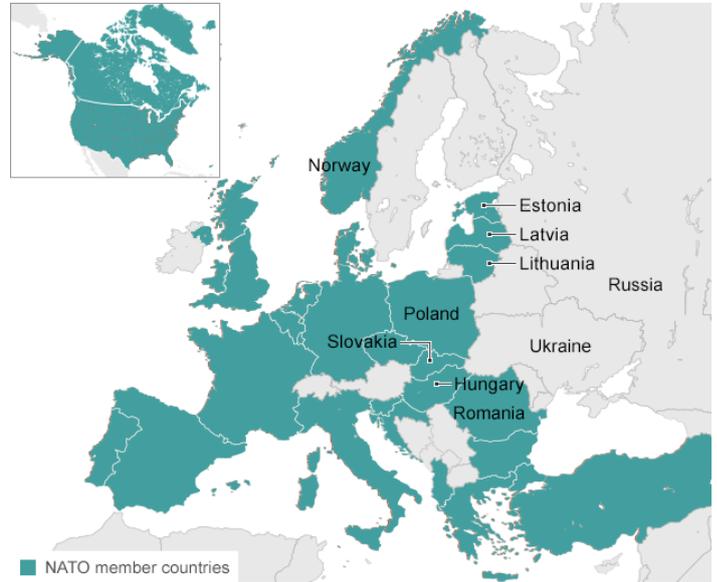
During Cameron's campaign to remain in the EU, President Obama prompted fury by stating that Britain would go to the *"back of the queue"* when attempting to strike a trade deal with the US. This entertains the thought that Brexit would be disadvantageous to the UK in acquiring a trade deal with the US, leading to a deterioration in our relationship. Therefore Trump's presidential term now is not only beneficial to the 'Special Relationship', but also for Britain's international future, especially as the US imports 15% of the total UK exports.

Another area which is crucial to maintaining the 'Special Relationship' is through the US's contribution to collaborative defence. As soon as Trump was inaugurated into his presidency, the strength of our relationship was

questioned due to his comments in July 2016 against Article 5 of NATO. His opposition to the organisation put the security of its members in huge jeopardy, as the withdrawal of US authority would mean a significant reduction in the power of the deterrent, especially in a time of increasing Russian military aggression towards Western states.

However, Trump's recent comments that he "*strongly supports NATO*" and that he only requests that all members make their "*full and proper financial contributions*" could counter this point. This is encouraging for the continuation of the relationship between Britain and the US, as it maintains a crucial military alliance and prevents US isolationism by maintaining global engagement. This will prove to be of greater importance once the UK leaves the EU and has to establish itself in the transatlantic community.

Perhaps the continuation of our special relationship with the US will all depend on the working relationship between May and Trump. In this case, the meeting between the two leaders in January suggested that they will



The incorporation of former USSR countries such as Estonia, Hungary and Romania into NATO has aggravated Putin

work to maintain the relationship, with Trump rambling about "*this most special relationship*". The future of the UK-US special relationship can only be dictated by events.

Since the inauguration of President Trump, our relationship with the country and its leader may have been strengthened, especially due to Trump's strong support for Brexit.



Both the USA and UK have played a pivotal role in NATO and countering Russian aggression in Europe

The End of the 'Age of Austerity'

David Holroyd

British history has always been defined in periods, and if the years 1945-79 were the '*post-war consensus*', 1979-90 '*Thatcherism*' and 1990-2010 were the '*post-Thatcherite consensus*' or the '*New Labour era*', then what would we label the current political environment? It has already been suggested that the election of the 2010 coalition government after the economic crisis of 2008 saw Britain into the new '*Age of Austerity*'.

This '*Age of Austerity*' was marked with the dramatic spending cuts pursued by David Cameron and his chancellor George Osborne with the entire political debate centring on how to reduce the deficit and bring down government debt effectively.



George Osborne was a close ally of David Cameron but was sacked last year by Theresa May

Even Ed Miliband supported some form of austerity programme, despite being critical about the extent of the cuts and the speed of the coalition's austerity. Nevertheless both the 2010 and 2015 elections were dominated by demands for economic stability and recovery, and many suggest that this was a principle reason for the Conservative victory

because they seemed more trustworthy over economic policies than Labour.

But could this episode of history be over? Cameron has been replaced as PM and George Osborne sacked as Chancellor by Theresa May in the wake of the Brexit referendum, with a focus on making the economy work for everyone and the '*shared society*'.



The new Chancellor Philip Hammond plans to be less dramatic with spending cuts compared to Osborne

In his first autumn statement Osborne's successor Philip Hammond instantly rejected the targets of a budget surplus by 2020 set before 2015. It is perhaps ironic that Osborne's determination for the austerity program to work eventually led to him being cut from the cabinet.

So if we have left behind this '*Age of Austerity*' in 2016, where does that leave us now? Are we in a new '*Brexit era*' or even the '*post-Referendum Age*'? From now on it is reasonable to assume that the issue of Brexit will dominate British politics for at least the next five years and probably more, and so it is realistic to consider 2016/17 as the start of a new epoch for UK politics.

The Social Contract: Humans as Slaves of Society

Geo Lee

Mankind must be free to decide their fate. Knowing this has led us to be greatly concerned with the chains shackled upon us. But now I state that the question lies further within. For we are marked slaves even with shackles unchained. Our development has been designed for servitude and thus even if we were to lose our shackles we will stare at freedom with eyes bred in slavery.



The social contract represents a formal agreement between individuals and society through obeying the customs and laws of the majority

From birth we are thrust into the social contract. Without our understanding or consent our lives are bound by the law and indoctrinated. Before we were seen fit to decide our own fate we were 'owned' by our parents.

Having set forth in life we begin to learn: at first methods of communication, the names others have placed on things and then simple arithmetic. Once the baby can understand, the propaganda begins. Given that I cannot critique the complex plethora of clauses which governs the law, I will limit myself to one.

One of the principles of the law states that we must not harm others for they will suffer. But can one comprehend the suffering of others? Empathy in some form does appear as we age, but one cannot prove exactly what everyone else experiences. If we have mastered ourselves - without repressing but

understanding - such is a great achievement in itself. But further no human can achieve without assuming. Therefore, though we have not comprehended, we must accept that others suffer likewise and thus we must not harm them.



The philosopher Socrates was condemned by Ancient Athens for criticising the democracy and social contract that was adhered to in the city

But why? Because we are made to empathise with their emotions and to pity them to endure what we have. Also, the social contract states that we cannot hurt others for our pleasure as everyone is worth equal and thus sadomasochism is a sin and a backwards one at that.

But those who hide behind the name of the law can breach this section. For the benefit of more than one individual they can justify sacrificing one. But they cannot kill others as it would cause concern about the power of the law and would make us seriously question how the law can manipulate the contract's terms and destroy the victim and even why we

should obey: in simple terms, the grounds for rebellion. So for 'protection' of the rest, and for the sole reason that they did not comply with the rules set forth, they are to be locked in a slave state. They have neither voice nor freedom. They are protected from themselves, yet every other privilege is lost. All they have is the will to live: for suicide is a sin and one cannot commit it easily in a prison. They must bear the consequences of being alive.

Scholars nod their heads in agreement - their reasoning is simple. For the benefit of themselves and others fiends must not run rampant. They were given privilege and in compensation had to restrict themselves to the law. If they had wished to cherish these offers why can they not comply?

Perhaps the question has been already indoctrinated in our heads too often to see a problem with this. It is thus: they cannot comply. There is no "exit" clause in the contract on our part. There is nowhere for

them to go and live on their own either. We are entrenched in an uncompromising bargain. Whether one wishes to stay or not has no significance if one is given no choice.

Suppose that the victim managed to secure his part. From the moment of declaration he stands on foreign soil and it would then be legitimized to capture him. If this had been a case of war, it would be legitimized to kill him. Is that not the principle of war? Two juxtaposing social contracts each proclaiming itself to be sanctimonious? The victor judges the damned on their own version of the contract.

Those who do not hide behind the name are subject to it. The conclusion is written in the introduction: we are bred to believe that what we cannot escape from is the best solution. It is too late to rescue us now, as it was with generations before us. But revolutions did exist and if anything could emancipate us from the system, it would be a revolution.



The philosopher Thomas Hobbes felt that the Social Contract was in place to allow a single monarch to rule unrestrained over humans in order to protect them from a life that was "nasty, brutish, and short"

Populism as a new ideology

David Holroyd

Populism has recently become dominant as a current political force and counters most contemporary ideologies. Instead of following a set of dogmatic principles and ethics, populism operates flexibly with the user, as those following this new 'ideology' are especially marked because they do not follow a specific set of principles. Populism thus refers to advocate the support of a leader rather than a way of life.

With the art of rhetoric, flair or personality, populist leaders have begun to emerge all around the western world – even making it to the White House. Donald Trump and Nigel Farage both represent populism with their views and style, but even Bernie Sanders from the Democratic race to become the nominee in 2016 has been classed into this set of politicians. Populism therefore can be expressed on any side of the political spectrum, not being unique to one side of politics or ideology.



Bernie Sanders rallied much support against the political establishment and inequality of Wall Street and Washington

Furthermore populism has not expanded exclusively in the western world, but countries such as the Philippines have shown that populism is powerful everywhere with the election of President Duterte in 2016. With his promises of using death squads to kill numerous drug dealers and criminals in the country, these strict and severe methods reveal how populist can be prepared to offer anything to voters in order to win support.



Rodrigo Duterte became President of the Philippines through populist slogans and promises

In addition to this modern populism tends to go hand in hand with anti-elitism and anti-establishment critics. No longer listening to the principled and delusional politicians,



Both Farage and Trump have been described as populists because of their anti-establishment rhetoric



Anti-EU protestors show their contempt by burning a flag opposite Parliament

populism encourages a leap of faith towards a wise, strong or powerful individual leader. It may be so that they hold all the answers, but the likely situation is that they have used populism as a political tool to power. However there can be benefits such as increased awareness of new issues, allowing more democratic expression, getting the apathetic

into politics and further stimulating debate over policies.

But despite the obvious flaws of putting all your eggs into one basket with a single leader and hoping that they can save the day, populism is continuing to grow quickly around the world. Unorthodox and ambiguous, populism can either be described as a powerful ideology or as something else entirely.

Whether these changes will be in the short or long term of politics is unforeseeable, but what we do know is that the recent rise of populism can reflect a great disparity with the traditional consensus, elitism and inequality between the many and the few - which explains why populism has grown such a devoted following around the world that it might even be termed as a new ideology.



Italy's populist Five Star Movement has made crucial gains democratically by opposing the political consensus

The Fringe – The Alternative Right

Jack Lazell

With the ascent of the newly declared US President Donald J. Trump, we have been given a chance to witness a dramatic change in what is considered the political norms of society. The stress of economic globalisation, the inequality brought on by neoliberalism and the increasingly unattractive face of the current political establishment has allowed a widening of this window of political dialogue to push the fringes closer to the realm of acceptability. The return of Socialist Labour is just one instance of this change, but the undermined ascent of Bernie Sanders and the shattering climb of Donald Trump has demonstrated this - but one of the many aspects they share in common is a fringe group of supporters; Trump's were the alternative right, more commonly known as the Alt-right.



Trump's infamous comments have attracted supporters of the Alt-Right movement

So what is the Alt-right? While the term Alt-right is thought to have been coined by Richard Spencer - a major face of the mob movement - but this would not be case as it in reality emerged in 2008 from the American

paleo-conservative Paul Gottfried. Even then the term was nebulous in nature as it's used as a synonym by a great variety of media sources for the various far-right movements at any given time. In my own eyes, the alternative right movement rejects the current neoliberal/neoconservative consensus in American politics, while coming from a rightist perspective and preferring to use the term Alt-right in reference to a specific subset of this group. However one should be careful to note that certain members of this group such as numerous Trumpian Populists who have begun to adopt the term New Right in order to help distinguish themselves from the more radical parts of the Alt-right who in turn call them the Alt-Lite.

The most visible element of the Alternative Right is the Breitbart loving, anti-political correctness, Trumpian New Right (not to be confused with the New Right of the Reagan/Thatcher era). Figures include the incredibly controversial Milo Yiannopoulos who can be described as the polemicist of the



Steve Bannon, previous editor of Breitbart news, now a senior Trump advisor

American Left, the utterly deranged prophet of a false future Alex Jones and his cunning contrarian Paul Watson. Or more interestingly, the so called chief manipulator Stephen Bannon, former head of Breitbart news, National Security Chief and Chief

Strategist for President Trump is strongly associated with this Alternative Right. This being said he's a more dubious case as some of his ideas flirt with the more radical elements. They tend to be a contradiction, often including a mixture of social conservatism, libertarianism, anti-Islamic and civic nationalism - the most visible form of the Alt-Right.



Milo Yiannopoulos is a Trump advocate and often expresses his controversial views over numerous subjects

The other core aspect is more infamous, headed by Richard Spencer. These are the self-proclaimed White Nationalists arguing for a 'white' ethnical state. Interestingly the demographics attracted to this section of the

Alt-Right differ from old White Supremacist groups (such as the KKK and the American Nazi Party) in that their support seems to be primarily from the middle class and also that they resemble other radical minority groups such as the Black Panthers and Nation of Islam. The mixture of socialism, social conservatism and ethnical nationalism makes them very much dated in the past in various ways. They tend to flirt with the imagery of the Nazis, most infamously at the National Policy Institute in 2016 in which Spencer said "Hail Trump" to be followed with a few salutes from the audience. This forced Trump to disavow them, yet he is still the closest they have to a figurehead.

The Alt-Right in particular seems to heavily favour the creation of ethnical states, either within existing nations or exploiting balkanisation for it to occur. They also favour natalist policies and large self-sufficient families. Anti-Semitism also arises, this time on the basis that Jews make up a disproportionate percentage of elites in sectors such as the media, although some supporters are more sympathetic to Zionism



Factions of the Alt-Right are self-confessed neo-Nazis and ethnic nationalists

and Israel due to it being in their eyes an ethno-state. The Alt-Right also rejects egalitarianism, often using differences in racial IQ and crime rate statistics to justify their views - called by supporters as “*race realism*”. It generally seems that they have a love-hate relationship with democracy, some favouring a single party state and others a form of qualified franchise. The centre of this faction is the National Policy Institute in which the figureheads of the movement meet with lectures and the like.



Many of the alt-right view Trump as a symbolism of their ideology

There also is a strong Libertarian contingent of the Alt-Right concerned with freedom and liberties. This faction however takes an intellectual heritage from men like Hans-Hermann Hoppe and embrace anarcho-capitalism with impunity, preferring a society bound together by mutual association and a



Supporters of the Alt-right march with the confederate flag waved 'patriotically'

lack of states. They also tend to be far more socially conservative than their Libertarian peers, albeit they favour letting their personal flaws lead them into a situation of poverty rather than directly intervening.

And one of the most infamous factions of the Alternative Right is the National Socialist bloc - unrepentant Nazis recollecting the Third Reich. This being said, while they share some connection to the movement it seems to be the case that there are various differences. For example they embrace white supremacy and often call for a pan-European state. Other features seem to remain identical, although there is a strong Strasserist faction also.



Trump often gets his radical news from Breitbart, which often exaggerates information

Ultimately the Alt-Right currently lacks any real unity as a movement and is very much limited by that fact. Were it the case that they were united and uniform, their potential capacity might be much greater. However they are without a doubt one of the most interesting emergences in recent times and potentially one of the most dangerous should the opportunity for them to ascend appear.

Political Alienation or Apathy – Which is Worse?

David Holroyd

In the last two decades, political apathy has usually been blamed for low voter turnout at general elections, and the worrying lack of interest of today's youth in politics can also be attributed to a sense of alienation from the system. But is apathy or alienation worse for a democracy?

After the 2001 General Election revealed the shocking lack of political engagement which led to a mere 59% turning up to vote, numerous political scientists have tried to provide clear reasons for why this has occurred, with New Labour itself claiming it was due to voter "*hapathy*" because of the strong economic situation and broad support for the government. However, the rise and fall in political participation is more of a long-term trend around the world that began to occur even before the creation of New Labour.



During the Blair years electoral turnouts reached all-time lows of 59.4% and 61.4% in 2001 and 2005 respectively

Millennials and the youngest generations seem most affected - many point to the idea that they feel particularly excluded from traditional party politics and the current political issues. However, the lack of engagement in politics is not as simple as this, as the political scientist Ada Finifter simplified

political alienation into four separate categories.

- Powerlessness – feeling unable to influence the political process
- Normlessness – believing that the rules governing political interaction are not being valued
- Meaninglessness – feeling that there is no purpose to political engagement
- Isolation – full rejection of the political conventions and goals held by a society



During contested elections such as in 2015, electoral turnout usually increases because of the possibility of a coalition government, which can be enough to tip the balance in favour of one party

From this we see that alienation usually comes around from a lack of understanding, trust and acceptance of politics, and therefore alienation is easier to solve as there is already a desire to engage in some form in politics. Apathy on the other hand comes from a general lack of interest in politics, and there is little that can be done to encourage political engagement from this point.

What is contrary to popular belief however is that not all forms of alienation have been increasing since the 1990s. In fact, the feelings

of powerlessness and normlessness have both aggregately decreased, whereas meaningfulness has stayed fairly consistent since WW2. Apathy however has steadily increased over the last fifty years, and this is particularly worrying as there is less that can be done to counter apathy in comparison to alienation, and long lasting feelings of alienation can result in apathy.

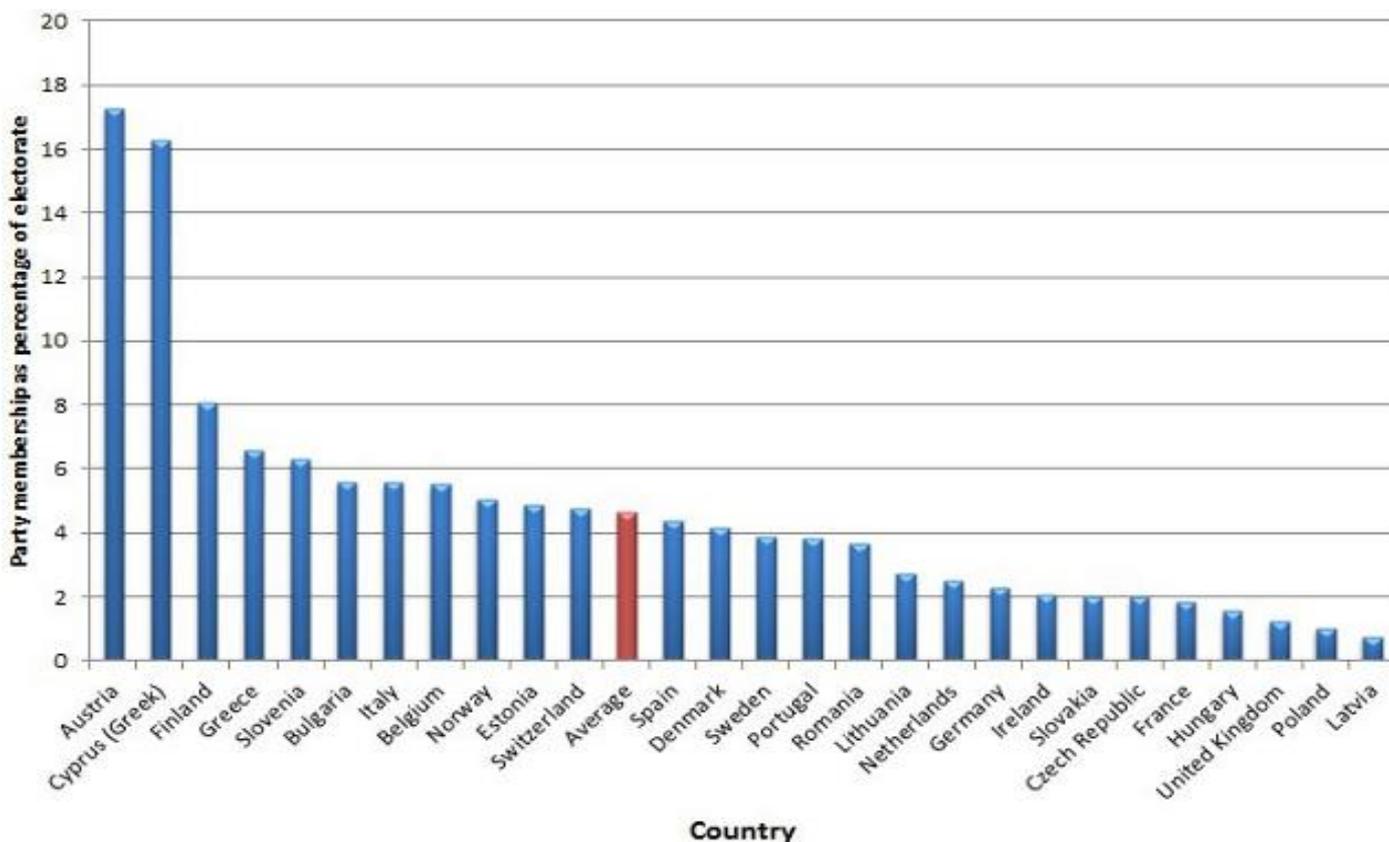


In democracy, voting in an election is the major form of political participation

Already 43% of people born after the 1980s say that they are apathetic to politics and this number is on the rise, which can cause long lasting nadirs in voter turnout during elections

and with party membership. Even in the 2015 election, only 57% of Millennials were reported to have voted compared to an average of 79% of the older generation according to the British Election Study, and this may only get worse in the future.

As a consequence, because of a lack of engagement fewer citizens will turn out to vote again and again and this means that governments are elected with less legitimacy than ever before, such as the Labour government in 2005 being supported by less than 22% of the entire public. If this continues, more people could become discouraged towards politics than ever before and we could become trapped in a vicious cycle. One positive however is that alienation remains more common than apathy, which means that there is still some hope that we can raise engagement in politics before it is too late.



Membership of political parties throughout Europe have reached all-time lows

The Case for Globalisation

Oliver Layzell

Few countries in the world have benefitted more than we have from globalisation. Where other empires were built on mercantilism, the British Empire extolled the virtues of free trade across the entire globe. Yet despite the riches it continues to bring, globalisation faces a backlash in our country today. This article will explain why that is wrong.



Globalisation has spread across the world – leading to the construction of vast ports such as in China

Let's begin with free trade. The essence of it is that it allows Britain to specialise in areas where we have a comparative advantage – the service sector, high-end manufacturing, luxury clothes, etc. If we are the best in the world in a particular sector, then integration in the global economy allows us to export as widely as possible. Without free trade, how will we sell Range Rovers to the Russians or Jaguars to the Japanese?

Yet, a counterpoint presents itself. Doesn't foreign competition damage British firms? To some extent, yes. Sure our steel industry is being driven out by Chinese competition, but

this merely reflects the fact that we can't make steel as cheaply. So why bother? Protecting failing British industries from foreign competition is like an athlete trying to enter every event at the Olympics – far better to focus on the events we as a country can win and accept that others can do some things more efficiently.

Besides, one of the biggest advantages of international trade is the low prices that comes from access to cheap labour. Tariffs would only be passed onto the consumer, driving up the cost of living, and vague national pride must always play second fiddle to the bottom line of making life good for the British consumer.

Then, let's consider migration. Far from stealing people's jobs, economic migrants are not only beneficial to the economy, but essential to the welfare state as well. An influx of working-age population allows businesses to grow by hiring more workers, and in many cases will have much-needed skills. For instance, a quarter of doctors in the NHS are foreign nationals, and even more mundane trades such as bricklaying rely on immigrants to top up a pressing labour shortage.

Regarding our welfare state, the UK's aging population is going to increase the number of people dependent on society, without largely increasing the workforce. The government notes that the number of workers for each pensioner will fall from 3.47 in 2020 to just 2.65 by 2041. And with a fertility rate of just 1.9 children per woman, the working population will continue to fall unless we allow more in.

In addition, when considering who will contribute to society and who will be a drain on benefits, aren't immigrants, prepared to cross continents in search of a better life for themselves and their family, exactly the sort of driven, entrepreneurial workers we want in Britain?



The Schengen area in Europe allows complete free movement between countries and symbolises that growth in globalisation

So to sum up, globalisation is a very good thing for our country – free trade is profitable for British companies and saves the customer money; immigration grows the economy and underwrites the welfare state.

Globalisation: A Clash of Ideas

Rory Gill

With the advent of the anti-globalist successes of 2016, it is important to understand what this new movement stands for. It comes in response to the decline of middle-class incomes and supports the principles of political and economic nationalism.

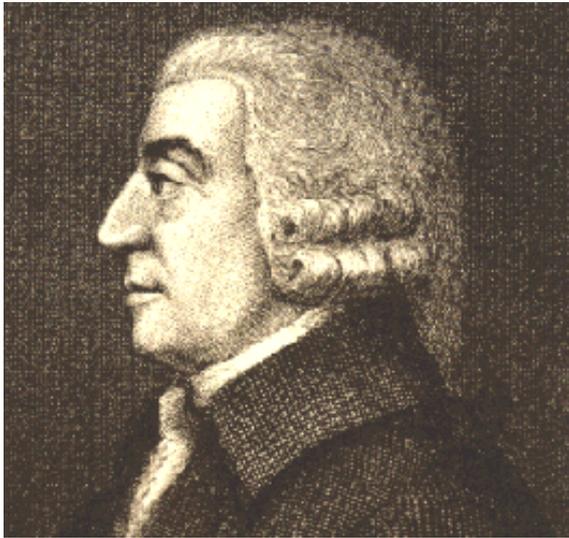
The threat for new nationalists is external in the form of supranational institutions and multinational corporations. I believe the ultimate objective of a representative government is to maximise the welfare of its nation's people. Therefore, in instances where global competition threatens domestic industry, government should be allowed to intervene to protect incomes, output and jobs.



Globalisation has caused a fall in the demand for UK steel, resulting in the industry suffering such as occurred with Port Talbot last year

It is the callousness of some globalists who believe that free trade will eventually lead to an economic nirvana only Adam Smith could dream up - where every nation becomes specialised in one specific area of production and individuals within societies become

completely homogenous in order to achieve maximum efficiency. This defeats the role of government if it allows jobs, industry and income to flood to other countries as this does not improve the welfare of citizens.



Adam Smith laid the foundations of classical free market economic theory

The idea that the destruction of jobs and industry comes with the benefit of decreased prices (even though free trade has led to a decrease in incomes while inflation has continued to rise) is, I believe, a minor benefit compared to the costs. What it costs Britain is a diversified economy where huge swathes of people don't become reliant on the money artificially generated by the banks and where people can take pride in their work. It is a very British belief that people should be allowed to work for respectable pay at a respectable job with respectable working conditions instead of competing with countries like India which have none of these things.

Next, migration. There is no issue with migrants themselves; by nature they are as industrious a people as anyone who seek to move country to find a better life for themselves and their family. The way in which liberals try to mock nationalists is by claiming that the only argument a nationalist can come up with is that 'migrants steal jobs'. This is completely untrue.

However, it is plain common sense that if there is one person in the labour market and two jobs are on offer then the worker will not only be employed but they will also be able to negotiate a good contract with respectable pay. If there are two people in the labour market with only one job on offer, then not only will one of them be unemployed but the one who is employed has to accept a lower wage.



Issues over immigration have led to protests in the UK and Europe

There is also the truism spouted by anti-nationalists that British people are lazy. This is not only offensive but is completely wrong. In fact, the British people have a tougher work ethic than most of our continental kin. We work longer hours (43.6:40.3) and have a later retirement age (68:66). The reason why we have a lower productivity is that when it comes to recession Great British industry chooses to sell off capital as opposed to firing its workers and the Great British worker chooses to work harder in less productive jobs for a lower income in tougher times.

It is simply lazy and irresponsible for the government to import cheap labour instead of investing in the people it owes responsibility to and taking advantage of the world's second best higher education institutions to avoid unemployment, joblessness and poverty.

Ukraine: The Pivot of Russia

David Holroyd

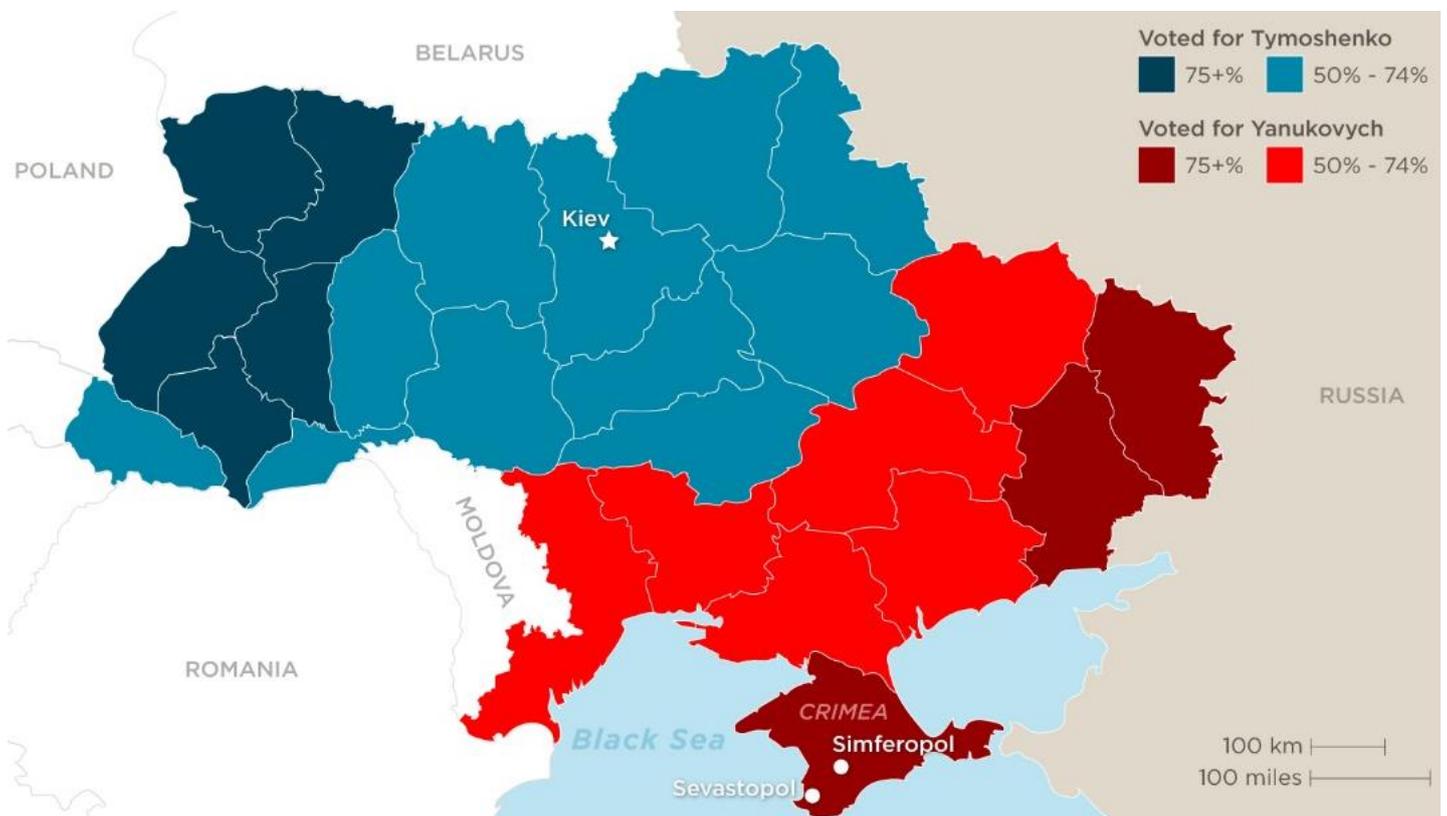
Since its independence in 1991, Ukraine has been split between Europe and Russia, with both the EU and the Russian government battling each other in trade wars to win over the support of this strategic country. Since Russia's annexation of Crimea and consequential invasion of eastern Ukraine, many fear that Ukraine could become the birthplace of a new Cold War between the USA and the Russian Federation, despite the possible easing of friction that may be the result of a Trump presidency and his support for the near-autocratic Putin.

Ukraine is a huge country - technically the second largest in Europe after Russia. It has a growing economic importance for European and Russian markets and is a major agricultural

hub with vast acres of fertile and flat land utilised for crops and animal production.

But Ukraine is exceedingly divided between those who speak Russian and those who speak Ukrainian - with three quarters of the population being ethnically Ukrainian as well as 17% being ethnically Russian, along with a total of 30% speaking Russian as their first language. Since the end of the Cold War Ukraine has elected Presidents who are either pro-Europe or pro-Russia, and this could be a significant reason for the country's role as a pivot between east and west.

During the Cold War, the region had been kept together through distinct differences in comparison to the rest of Russia, yet Ukraine is made up of areas that previously belonged



Ukraine is ethnically divided across east and west, which is revealed in Presidential elections

to other countries, such as the northwest part formerly belonging to Poland.

The Ukrainian government had even gone as far as threatening to ban Russian as a viable language, which gave Putin the opportunity he needed to propagate that it was Russia's duty to protect the ethnically Russian people in Ukraine and other former USSR countries from the western tyrannies. This promise of support is even enshrined in the Russian Federation's constitution, but it can be argued 'ethnically Russian' has come to refer to anyone who disagrees with the pro-western governments in these countries rather than people who actually call themselves Russian.

With this history being in mind, in November 2013 President Yanukovich, leader of Ukraine, backed out of a fundamental trade agreement with the EU just days before it was meant to be signed, instead advocating to join the EAEU (Eurasian Economic Union). The EU trade deal was seen by many pro-westerners as being the starting step for Ukraine to later join the EU or even NATO, and therefore they took to the streets of Kiev in protest. After 100 demonstrators were shot dead by government snipers, Yanukovich fled to Russia and his presidency was ended by the Ukrainian Parliament.



Ukrainian and Russian Presidents Yanukovich and Putin held too close a relationship for western Ukraine to tolerate

To Russia however, the ousting of Yanukovich seemed to be a coup organized by western Europe, and that the EU was to blame for the political division in former USSR countries such as Georgia, Moldova and Estonia with the seductive appeal of vital trade deals. Ukraine is also of strategic influence for Russia, as its geographical proximity and coastline of the Black Sea could be used to attack the Federation if war were to break out, but on the other hand a pro-Russian government would allow Putin to extend a stronger influence in Moldova, another former USSR country that is crucially split between a pro-Russia east and pro-Europe west.



Violent protests formed in Ukraine after the president rejected a crucial EU trade deal

The consequence of the 2014 uprising resulted in Putin choosing to annex Crimea from Ukraine, which is the size of Belgium and is 60% ethnically Russian. Having once been part of Russia before Khrushchev handed it over to the regional government of Ukraine in 1954, this action by Russia then led to fighting within the country between the Russian separatists in the east and the Ukrainian government. The Kremlin denied any involvement in the war, despite the Ukrainian authorities capturing ten Russian paratroopers who had 'accidentally' crossed the border into the conflict.

Because of this growing aggression, the US and EU resolved to impose economic sanctions on Russia, causing an economic recession in Russia. This could be a primary policy that Russia would want Trump to over-turn if possible. However many European countries such as Germany still rely heavily on Russian fuel and were therefore not prepared to have Putin close off the pipelines to Europe, and thus these sanctions were not as strong as could have otherwise been.

But Ukraine's problems continue as President Poroshenko - elected in 2014 - wants to reform ties with Europe instead and has even proposed a referendum on whether Ukraine should join NATO, which could divide the country again and cause another descent into hostility. The February 2015 talks did manage to arrange a ceasefire and a reduction in violence, but can this last forever? There remains scepticism over the future of Ukraine, as the ever-present divide between the east and west of the country may eventually result in the further fracturing of Ukraine.



Pro-Russian rebels in Ukraine have escalated violence in the east of the country and Russia has been accused of supporting these militants



Current President Poroshenko has advocated closer ties to the EU rather than Russia



Putin has been blamed by western governments as destabilising Europe in order to exert his power

The Syria Paradox

Jacob Weeks

Over the course of the last six years since public protests in Damascus sparked the Syrian Civil War, the country has become a quagmire for numerous forces fighting in the conflict. In the West we hear of the civil war sporadically on the news, and even then it does not focus on the actual conflict in Syria, but the 4.8 million refugees that have flocked to Europe as a result of it.



Bashar al-Assad has been Syria's President since his father's death in 2000 and has continued to run his country in a dictatorial manner

Over one hundred armed militias and groups have a stake in Syria, however the conflict can be simplified into four belligerents with boots on the ground: the Syrian Arab Republic, the Syrian Opposition, ISIS and the Rojava. All four of these groups have a plethora of supporting forces that themselves have an interest in the outcome of the war, most significantly Russia, supporting the Syrian government (Syrian Arab Republic) and the United States, supporting the *"moderate rebels"* or the Rojava and its factions.

The United States is sending military aid to the moderate rebels to enable them to fight the Syrian government and ISIS, while they

themselves have been conducting airstrikes against ISIS as part of Operation Inherent Resolve since 2014.

Russia's entrance on the government's side with airstrikes against ISIS and government opposition commenced on the 30th of September 2015, at a time when Russian/US relations were already poor due to the conflict in Ukraine. This move only served to exacerbate those tensions.



The UK government has been involved in the Syrian conflict since 2015 through air strikes against ISIS

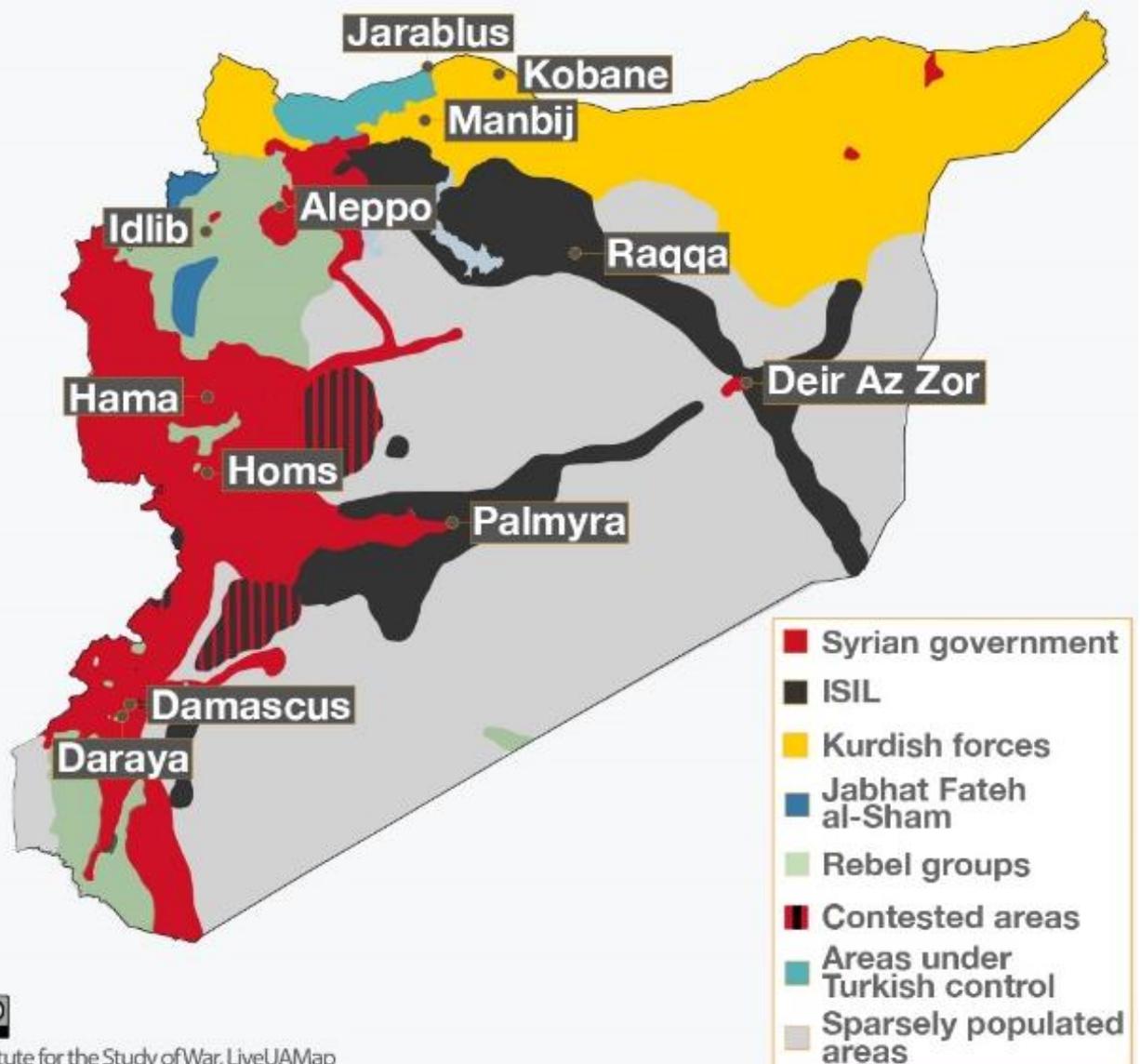
What complicates the matter is that both Russia and the US are representing their own interests in Syria, and while they overlap in some places they starkly contrast in others. Russia and the US are conducting their own separate bombing campaigns against ISIS, however the US are also supporting the *"moderate rebels"* that Russia are bombing on a daily basis. A crisis point was reached in December 2016 when US Secretary of State John Kerry said that the Syrian government and its Russian allies were guilty of *"indiscriminate and savage brutality against civilians"* after a bombing campaign to finish off the last rebels in a city that had thousands of civilians trapped inside.

To add more complexity to the issue, President Trump has been critical of Obama's actions in Syria from the start and has questioned why the US isn't working with Russia against ISIS, while at the same time there have been rampant accusations of Russia hacking the US elections. Syria could just be another chapter in the book of US-Russian rivalry. However, the convoluted nature of this war could just be the spark to turn ignite Cold War 2.0.



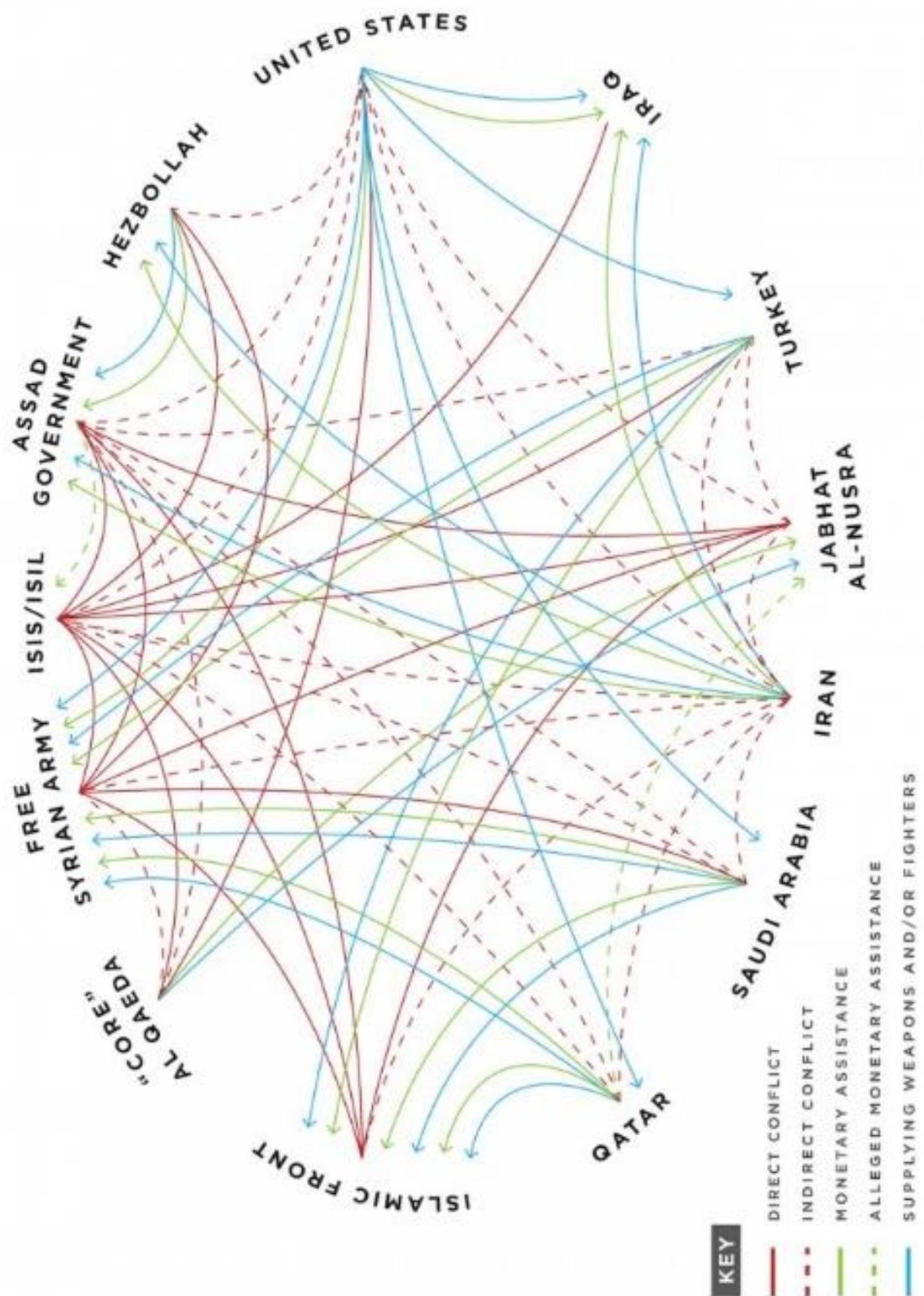
The Syrian conflict pressurised already poor Russian and American relations

Syria: Who controls what?



The Syrian Civil War is divided between many different factions all controlling specific regions of the country

THE TANGLED WEB IN THE FIGHT FOR SYRIA'S FUTURE



Separatist States: Kurdistan

A Profile of a Possible Country for the Future?

Area: Anywhere between 190,000km² to 392,000 km².

Language: Most Kurds in the region speak Kurmanji - a branch of Kurdish language.

Flag:



Population: There are estimates of around 30 million Kurds worldwide with possibly 25 million Kurdish people inside the region known as Kurdistan.

Location: The area includes east Turkey, northern Syria, northern Iraq, north-west Iran and parts of south-west Armenia.



Independence movement: All countries with Kurdish minorities have been fervent in stopping the creation of a free Kurdish state, even using oppressive means if necessary. Early Kurdish nationalism was rooted in the Ottoman Empire, but when this collapsed the Kurdish people were furious that the British and French did not grant them independence in the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

Turkey's opposition to Kurdish independence has been ruthless with claims of human rights abuses. With frequent outbreaks of violence between the Turkish authorities and Kurdish rebels (listed as terrorists) throughout the last century, Turkey is home to the majority of Kurds and would suffer significant losses if a quarter of the Turkey were to break away and declare independence.

Iraqi Kurdistan has had more success as it has declared itself a regional province with significant autonomy from the Iraqi government. This was achieved through its assistance to the NATO forces in the 2003 Iraq War, because before this they had been dreadfully oppressed by Saddam Hussein and his use of chemical weapons.



In Syria the civil war has allowed the Kurds to develop greater autonomy as the withdrawal of government forces from many majority-Kurdish areas has allowed Kurdish militant to prosper, and the Kurds have been a significant force in the fight against ISIS.

Concluding comments: The most likely region for a Kurdish state would be in northern Iraq as the Iraqi government has the least control over its Kurdish population, but the extent of Kurdish independence will depend on the likelihood of the neighbouring countries in agreeing to a free Kurdish nation - which history suggests is unlikely to occur.