

NATO AND BREXIT

For the record, I think it quite likely that UK's Tories will never trigger Article 50, which would mean the two year process of leaving the EU will never start much less finish. If that happens, we will face an increasing game of chicken between the EU – primarily Germany – and the UK, because until things settle with the UK, other right wing parties will call to Exit the EU.

All that said, I want to consider what a UK exit would mean for security, particularly as regards to the balance between privacy and dragnettery in which the EU has, in recent years, played a key but largely ineffectual role.

From a spying perspective, Brexit came just hours after the US and EU finalized a draft of the Privacy Shield that will replace the Safe Harbor agreement next week. When I read it, I wondered whether the US signed it intended to do some data analysis in the UK, an option that will likely become unavailable if and when the UK actually does leave the EU. Amazingly, the UK's hawkish Home Secretary Theresa May (who in the past has called for the UK to leave the ECHR) is considered a favorite to replace David Cameron as the Tory Prime Minister, which would be like Jim Comey serving as President. The UK will still need to sign its own IP Bill, which will expand what is authorized spying in the UK.

But all that assumes the relative structure of nesting alliances will remain the same if and when the UK departs the EU. And I don't think that will happen. On the contrary, I think the US will use the UK's departure – and security concerns including both a confrontational ~~expanding~~ Russia and the threat of terrorism – to push to give NATO an enhanced role off what it has.

Consider what Obama said in his initial statement about Brexit [my emphasis in all these passages],

The people of the United Kingdom have spoken, and we respect their decision. The special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom is enduring, and *the United Kingdom's membership in NATO remains a vital cornerstone of U.S. foreign, security, and economic policy*. So too is our relationship with the European Union, which has done so much to promote stability, stimulate economic growth, and foster the spread of democratic values and ideals across the continent and beyond. The United Kingdom and the European Union will remain indispensable partners of the United States even as they begin negotiating their ongoing relationship to ensure continued stability, security, and prosperity for Europe, Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the world.

To Cameron,

President Obama spoke by phone today with Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom to discuss the outcome of yesterday's referendum on membership in the European Union, in which a majority of British voters expressed their desire to leave the EU. The President assured Prime Minister Cameron that, *in spite of the outcome, the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom, along with the United Kingdom's membership in NATO, remain vital cornerstones of U.S. foreign, security, and economic policy*. The President also expressed his regret at the Prime Minister's decision to step aside following a leadership transition and noted that the Prime Minister has been a trusted partner and friend, whose counsel and shared dedication to democratic values, the special relationship, and the Transatlantic

community are highly valued. The President also observed that the EU, which has done so much to promote stability, stimulate economic growth, and foster the spread of democratic values and ideals across the continent and beyond, will remain an indispensable partner of the United States. The President and Prime Minister concurred that they are confident that the United Kingdom and the EU will negotiate a productive way forward to ensure financial stability, continued trade and investment, and the mutual prosperity they bring.

And to Merkel,

The President spoke today by phone with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany regarding the British people's decision to leave the European Union. Both said they regretted the decision but respected the will of the British people. The two leaders agreed that the economic and financial teams of the G-7 partners will coordinate closely to ensure all are focused on financial stability and economic growth. The President and the Chancellor affirmed that Germany and the EU will remain indispensable partners of the United States. *The leaders also noted that they looked forward to the opportunity to underscore the strength and enduring bond of transatlantic ties at the NATO Summit in Warsaw, Poland, July 8-9.*

NATO, NATO, NATO.

John Kerry and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg seem to echo that viewpoint, with Stoltenberg arguing NATO will become more important.

"We have high expectations of a very

strong NATO meeting and important deliverables,” Kerry said of the summit planned for Warsaw on July 8-9. “That will not change one iota as a consequence of the vote that has taken place.”

Kerry, who is on a lightning tour of Brussels and London intended to reassure U.S. allies following the British vote, noted that 22 EU nations, including Britain, are part of NATO.

In Brussels Kerry met NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and EU foreign policy chief Frederica Mogherini.

“After the UK decided to leave the European Union I think that NATO has become even more important as a platform for cooperation between Europe and North America but also defence and security cooperation between European NATO allies,” said Stoltenberg, whose own country Norway is in NATO but not the EU.

Retired Admiral Stavridis provides a list of four reasons why Brexit will strengthen NATO.

1. Putin’s adventurism: “NATO has provided the most resolute military balance against [Russia], and thus its stock can be expected to rise with publics in Europe.”
2. UK manpower will be freed up from EU tasks: UK “will have additional ships, troops, and aircraft to deploy on NATO missions because they will not have to support EU military efforts such as the

counter-piracy operations off the coast of East Africa or EU missions in the Balkans.”

3. By losing the UK's military power, the EU will become even more of a soft power entity ceding real military activities to NATO. “And, given that European military efforts will be greatly diminished by the loss of British military muscle, the EU can be expected to defer to NATO more frequently.”
4. The UK will have to prove itself in NATO to retain its “special relationship.” UK “will have to look for new ways to demonstrate value in its partnership with the United States if it hopes to maintain anything like the “special relationship” it has become accustomed to (and dependent on).”

It's actually the third* bullet that I think will be key – and it will be carried over into spying. Without the UK, the EU doesn't have the capability to defend itself, so it will be more dependent on NATO than it had been. Similarly, without GCHQ, the EU doesn't have heightened SIGINT power to surveil its own population. And so – I fear – whereas prior to Brexit the EU (and Germany specifically) would at least make a show of pushing back against US demands in exchange for protection, particularly given the heightened security concerns, everyone will be less willing to push back.

It's unclear whether Brexit (if it happens) will hurt the UK or EU more. It probably won't hurt the US as much as any entity in Europe. It might provide the trigger for the dismantling of the EU generally.

I think it very likely it will shift Trans-Atlantic relationships, among all parties, to a much more militaristic footing. That's dangerous – especially as things heat up with Russia. And the countervailing human rights influence of the EU will be weakened.

But I think the US will gain power, relatively, out it.

Update: I originally said "fourth" bullet but meant third. Also, I originally said an "expanding" Russia, which I changed because with the coup in Ukraine I think the "west" started the expansionary push.

Update: This piece games out a number of possibilities on data protection.