Brexit and Competing Visions of Europe: Searching for an answer to Dean Acheson’s Question?

Tim Oliver
European University Institute
• The post-war search for a ‘role’
• Britain in Europe: awkward or quiet partner?
• Referendum debates about roles
• Choices for post-Brexit Britain in the world
Churchill’s three circles, 1948

USA

Europe

UK

Empire/Commonwealth

‘Where the weather comes from’
Brits abroad (2005)
Neither the sure prevention of war, nor the continuous rise of world organisation will be gained without what I have called the fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples. This means a **special relationship** between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States.


*Speech at Fulton, Missouri, 5th March 1946*
Great Britain has lost an Empire and has not yet found a role. The attempt to play a separate power role apart from Europe, a role based on a special relationship with the United States, and on being head of a commonwealth which has no political structure, or unity, or strength, this role is about played out. Great Britain, attempting to work alone and to be a broker between the United States and Russia, has seemed to conduct policy as weak as its military power.
The Awkward Partner or Quiet European?
The Bruges speech
'My aims for Britain in the community can be simply stated. I want us to be where we belong. At the very heart of Europe. Working with our partners in building the future. That is a challenge we take up with enthusiasm.'

*John Major, 1991*
‘And it shall be a government, too, that gives this country strength and confidence in leadership both at home and abroad, particularly in respect of Europe’

Tony Blair, 2 May 1997, on the steps of 10 Downing Street
'I stand here today proud to be British and proud to be European, representing a country that does not see itself as an island adrift from Europe but as a country at the centre of Europe, not in Europe's slipstream but firmly in its mainstream.'

_Gordon Brown, European Parliament 2009_
Awkward--
• Underestimated difficulties and differences
• Clash of political outlooks and models
• Difficult domestic politics
  • Destroys PMs, splits parties
• Large member state willing to say ‘NO’
• Atlanticism – America first
• ‘Global hub’ – look beyond Europe

Quiet European--
• Confusing popularity with effectiveness?
• Britain overcome EU stubbornness
• Atlanticism the norm in Europe
• Success in wide-range of policy areas
• EU today reflects large parts of Bruges Speech
  • Spun as Eurosceptic, but look at contents
• Modern EU = a British EU, albeit with lots of problems
Referendum debates about roles

• Triggered by ongoing doubts (esp. Tory) about UK’s role in Europe
  • Strategic rationale declined since 1989?
  • A changing EU, UK partners moving on

• Roles in the Referendum debate
  • Remain: economic cost (and ‘World War III’)
  • Leave: ‘open for business, closed to foreigners’

• What is Britain’s strategy for Brexit: _ends_ (role), ways and means?
  • Ends: for UK (what type of country), for UK-EU relations and UK in the world
  • Still in search of a role?
### Choices for post-Brexit Britain in the world

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| Strategic posture | Minimal self-defence forces | US orientated interoperability | European orientated interoperability | Long-range strategic forces with cooperative capab., + int. development | Expeditionary forces, diplomacy and development. |