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THE BANKRUPTCY OF “GLOBAL BRITAIN” STRATEGY AND THE PROSPECTS OF SINO-BRITAIN BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

БАНКРОТСТВО СТРАТЕГИИ «ГЛОБАЛЬНАЯ БРИТАНИЯ» И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ КИТАЙСКО-БРИТАНСКИХ ДВУСТОРОННИХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ



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The “Global Britain” diplomatic strategy is the core concept that guides the development of the UK’s diplomacy released by the British government in 2017. This concept attempts to build a global partnership as an important strategy for British diplomacy after Brexit. However, the post-Brexit Britain vigorously provoked European geopolitical contradictions particularly in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and identified China and Russia as the destroyers of the Western- international order. Britain completely reverts to the Cold War ideology by unlimitedly highlighting its special relationship with USA since British traditional diplomatic model fundamentally deviates from the basic concept of the “Global Britain” strategy. In the international context of the increasingly fierce competition between China and the United States, China-UK relations are correspondingly at a historically low level. However, China-UK bilateral cooperation still has huge potential for a promising future due to the complementary benefits for both sides in the fields of economy, trade and cultural exchange

Key words: “Global Britain”, Britain-America Special Relationship, Russia-Ukraine Crisis, Cold-War Ideology, China-UK Bilateral Relationship, strategy, bankruptcy, prospects, international relations, competition

Дипломатическая стратегия «Глобальная Британия» является основной концепцией, опубликованной британским правительством в 2017 г., для развития будущих международных отношений. Эта концепция пытается построить глобальное партнерство как важную стратегию британской дипломатии после Брексита. Но Британия после Брексита разожгла геополитическую напряженность в Европе на фоне российско-украинского конфликта и определила Китай и Россию как разрушителей мирового порядка. Британия возвращается к традиционной дипломатической модели, доминирующей особые отношения между Британией и США, характеризующейся идеологией холодной войны, и отклоняется от основной идеи стратегии «Глобальная Британия». В международном контексте все более жесткой конкуренции между Китаем и США китайско-британские отношения, соответственно, находятся на исторически низком уровне. Однако китайско-британское двустороннее сотрудничество по-прежнему имеет огромный потенциал и широкие перспективы, позволяющие обеим сторонам дополнять друг друга в области экономики, торговли и культурного обмена

Ключевые слова: «Глобальная Британия», особые отношения между Великобританией и Америкой, российско-украинский кризис, идеология холодной войны, китайско-британские двусторонние отношения, стратегия, банкротство, перспективы, международные отношения, конкуренция

Introduction. Britain has been trying to reshape its role in the international community since it started the process of leaving the European Union in 2016. As the systematically illustrated core concept of the post-Brexit British foreign policy, "Global Britain" has attracted widespread attention from the international community for its active tone and rich and diverse interest. However, in context of the growingly fierce competition between big-powers, contradictions among major countries have tended to intensify. Since the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the trend of the UK returning to the traditional diplomatic model and the Cold War ideology has become increasingly evident, and the "Global Britain" diplomatic strategy is more impossible than ever. Examining the realistic dilemma of the "Global Britain" strategy is of great importance for us to understand the in-depth regulations that dominate the current international politics. Only based on the full knowledge of unprecedented changes that has occurred to the world politics, an objective assessment of the prospects of Sino-Britain bilateral relationship is possible.

Global Britain: Theoretic Connotation and Practical Purpose

The diplomatic concept of "Global Britain" is particularly striking in the historical period of "Brexit". It is not only the British explanation of its diplomatic concept after "Brexit", but also the British overall response to the profoundly changing world of international politics. With a clearly strategic vision, "Global Britain" aims to ensure the UK's international status as a "successful player in global diplomacy" in face of an "increasingly challenging global political environment" [8]. Specifically, the diplomatic concept of "Global Britain" embodies four important principles of the future British diplomacy.

First, it intends to build a more international and outward-looking British diplomacy. In 2016, Boris Johnson, then the foreign secretary, repeatedly emphasized that "Brexit" means the United Kingdom will take back national sovereignty including judicial rights and economic administrative rights, but this does not mean the UK will move towards self-isolation. On the contrary, the UK will strive to develop into a more outward-looking, more cosmopolitan economy. Secondly, to build mutually beneficial and win-win bilateral relations and alliances on a larger scale, British politicians generally believe that after leaving the European Union, the UK can build bilateral relations in a wider international stage that is conducive to

its own development. On the basis of developing bilateral relations between the UK and its Western alliances, Britain believes that Asia is a key breakthrough area that it particularly emphasizes. Thirdly, to make full use of Britain's unique multilateral diplomatic status to enhance its international influence, the UK has always regarded the rule-based international political order and the multilateral diplomatic system as the core components of its foreign policy, and believes that "in an era of geopolitical disputes, the role of the multilateral international system in the 21st century will be even more important" [5]. Fourthly, to emphasize that free trade is the core value concept of British diplomacy. The UK will unswervingly uphold the concept of free trade and firmly be the guardian of the free trade system.

The international community once believed that once Britain was freed from the shackles of being a member of the EU, it could adopt the innovative diplomacy of "Global Britain" in a wider international stage. Boris Johnson believes that discussing "Global Britain" can win more widespread recognition around the world than discussing global China, global Russia and even global America [4]. International academic circles had also held a positive attitude towards this diplomatic concept [1. p. 65]. However, in the most recent years, British diplomatic practice has fundamentally violated the basic concept of "global Britain".

The Competition of Geopolitics and the Resurgence of Cold-War Ideology

Since Brexit, there has been no trend in UK foreign policy based on a "Global Britain" strategy. In fact, the ideological characteristics of the current British diplomacy have been greatly enhanced with a strong complex of western supremacy. Since the Biden administration came into power, the United Kingdom has cooperated with the Biden administration's foreign policy with a very active diplomatic stance. It actively advocates ideological diplomacy based on Western values, and makes full use of multilateral diplomatic occasions within the Western bloc to disguise the United Kingdom as the most determined American foreign policy follower. As a European partner, Britain casts itself back to the traditionally familiar diplomacy of geopolitical competition since World War II, and becomes the ideological supplier of the diplomatic alliance between the United States and Western democracies. In collaboration with America to devastate the strategic autonomy of EU, Britain seeks to divide the European Union's strategic goal by intensifying internal conflicts

within Europe, and strengthens Britain's presence in European political affairs. By strengthening the NATO alliance mechanism dominated by America and Britain, they have portrayed China as a systemic threat to the Western order, and identify China and Russia as the destroyers of the international order. The above diplomatic strategy, which is full of Cold War mentality and geopolitical competition characteristics, is a fundamental denial of the "Global Britain" diplomatic strategy.

The particularity of the bilateral relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States

The special bilateral relationship between Britain and the United States has always been the decisive factor that steers the evolution of the British diplomacy. It leads to the fact that the "Global Britain" strategy has little possibility of being implemented. In a "diplomatic memorandum" in response to parliamentary questions, the British Foreign Office defined the UK-US relationship as "the most significant and historically tested international relationship across the century", a bilateral relationship that is important to "national security and economic prosperity" of both sides [9]. The United Kingdom has made it clear that it will work with the United States to address challenges from countries such as Russia and China, and cooperate in areas such as intelligence sharing and common defense within NATO.

It is foreseeable that, based on the consistency of historical and cultural traditions and the mutual needs in real politics, the bilateral relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States will undoubtedly reject any undergo structural change. Furthermore, such a special relationship has been further strengthened under the situation of the fundamental changes in the sphere of world politics. This is an inevitable product of the Cold War mentality based on ideological confrontation and the hegemonic complex of Western civilization. Although the United Kingdom has tried to add a certain "new idea" to its foreign policy since the Cameron period, the mainstream British politicians have always embraced the theory of Western cultural superiority and the colonial complex of the old era - the only intellectually acceptable diplomatic option. Based on the traditionally special relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States, the Anglo-Saxonization of the current British foreign policy has been significantly enhanced.

On the whole, there is a possibility that the rift between the maritime civilization countries

represented by the "Five Eyes Alliance" and the continental civilization countries represented by Germany and France will further expand. As a European country in the geopolitical sense and a maritime country in the sense of traditional sea-power hegemony, Britain holds an irreplaceably important role in America's dominance over Europe [14. Pp. 185-187]. Since the current world pattern has undergone major structural changes, the Johnson administration makes no other choice but to cater to the foreign policy of the Biden government and has become the most staunch political ally of the United States in the Western camp by means of "unconditional obedience".

Deteriorating bilateral relations between Britain and Europe

It is generally believed in the international community that Britain's separation from the institutional shackles of the EU just means that Britain and Europe can carry out comprehensive cooperation as beneficiaries to each other. [6. Pp. 223-226] However, what is unexpected is that the deterioration of the bilateral relations between the UK and the EU has not been ended by Brexit. The UK's policy towards the EU has fundamentally damaged the foundation of mutual trust between the UK and the EU, and directly led to the failure of the "Global Britain". Under the influence of excessive nationalism and unjustified populism at home, Britain's diplomacy towards Europe violates the tradition of rational pragmatism and becomes a victim of British party politics. The contradiction between Britain and Europe forced Britain further slide into the embrace of the United States, which forced Britain to abandon the diplomatic strategy of "Global Britain".

After Brexit, the British economy has suffered a certain degree of damage, the EU is an indispensable partner of interest for UK's foreign relations from a comprehensive perspective. Although Britain and Europe have rescued bilateral economic and trade cooperation through economic and trade agreements, both sides have no interest in in-depth cooperation to jointly face the challenges of geopolitics and geopolitics. The UK and EU have not carried out practical and effective cooperation in foreign and security policies, and a series of economic and trade disputes arising from the Brexit agreement have not been effectively resolved. The sense of strategic mutual trust and cooperation between Britain and Europe has dropped to a historic low. Nationalist movements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have become increasingly motivated to win back

EU membership. The political game over Northern Ireland's special position in UK-EU trade is far from over. All the factors put the UK at a very reluctant position to adopt the dreamy "Global Britain".

In terms of basic facts, the deep integration of economic and trade relations between the UK and Europe is a bilateral relationship that the UK must do its best to safeguard. The EU is Britain's biggest trading partner. In 2018, 46% of all UK goods exports went to the EU market, while 53% of all goods imports came from the EU. The high commodity trade level between the UK and the EU fully indicates that the UK's foreign trade has already been highly integrated into the European market. However, in order to cover up the economic damage and social chaos of Brexit, Johnson himself even described the social crisis in Britain as a healthy correction, the harbinger of a new post-Brexit order. The imaginative prime minister framed Britain's socio-economic crisis as a revolt against the old system of dependence on the European Union and called for the country to wean itself off the "unpatriotic" business habits of the pre-January 2020 era [3]. The British government caters to the social demands of its own populist political forces and refuses to address the pressing practical issues in the bilateral relationship in a constructive way. Without the most direct external support from Europe, Britain greatly reduced its power to investing diplomatic resources globally and the diplomatic concept of "global Britain" could not be put into practice in the end.

Russia-Ukraine conflict and the strengthening of British geopolitical diplomacy

The outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict further reinforced Britain's return to geopolitical diplomacy. With the US seeking to retain control of European foreign policy, Britain has spared no effort to make the most of the Russia-Ukraine conflict to further weaken the EU. In order to increase their diplomatic leverage in the game of bilateral relations between Britain and Europe, Central and Eastern European countries should be provoked to destroy the unified pattern of Europe painstakingly managed by Germany and France and other EU leading countries. In this sense, Britain returned to the traditional European geopolitical game throughout the 20th century, and returned to the framework of ideological confrontation during the Cold War. In principle, it destroyed the diplomatic direction of "global Britain".

The mace cards for NATO to firmly secure the leading role of European security are obvious.

In the European «chess game», Nato under the leadership by USA and Britain by all means stir up geopolitical security crises. As a usual practice, Nato succeeded in hyping up the contentious political issues in relation to the so-called democratic values, and strengthening the historical awareness of confrontation between Eastern European countries and Russia. As a legacy of the Cold War, NATO led by the United States and Britain with the purpose of safeguarding European security has become the root cause of the European security crisis and the driving force behind the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This is a fundamental strategic problem that the European strategic circle cannot avoid [12. P.34].

There is a strong convergence of principles between the UK and the US on weakening the EU's internal unity. Since the outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Britain has been over-actively involved in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine with unduly excitement. Bypassing the major countries in the European hinterland, the British government rushed to the front stage to encourage Poland and other central and Eastern European countries to stimulate the further escalation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The British-led formation of the Expeditionary Alliance Force (JEF), with the support of Northern European and Central and Eastern European countries, is a prime example [11]. Such a diplomatic mentality of fueling the chaos in Europe fully reflects the basic strategy of the UK and conforms to the basic needs of the UK's realistic diplomatic interests after Brexit. Instead of adopting "Global Britain", the UK has casted itself into a role of instigator of European political crisis.

NATO's expansion strategy and the marginalization of Global Britain

If the United Kingdom has become a divisive force in the territory of Europe, NATO led by the United States and Britain has become a reactionary force against the world political trend. The diplomatic strategy of "Global Britain" has been in name only under the "Western-non-Western" Cold War political structure in the manipulation of the United States [2]. The expansion of NATO in the Asia-Pacific region is the last straw for the diplomatic strategy of "Global Britain".

The US-UK-led NATO, which had already been declared "brain dead", is luckily resumed with the outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which greatly strengthened its presence in European affairs [7. P.100]. Moreover, at the Madrid summit, NATO laid out its next Stra-

tegic Concept for the next decade in response to the so-called Russian aggression and the systemic challenge posed by China. As is clearly declared, "China's ambitions and coercive policies challenge our interests, security and values". NATO will work together to address the systemic challenge that China poses to Euro-Atlantic security. Meanwhile, NATO explicitly identifies Russia as "at the forefront of the struggle against authoritarianism in the rules-based international order".

It is clear that NATO deeply scarred by the domination of Anglo-American power needs a chaotic Europe to ensure its legitimacy. An ideological product of the Cold War, NATO has survived the post-cold war time of suspicion thanks to the three decades of geopolitical crises in Europe. The secret that the United States has been able to dominate the European military and security mechanism lies in its ability to effectively exploit the controversies between continental countries. [12. P.145] It is a consistent diplomatic strategy for the United States to try its best to obstruct the improvement of bilateral relations between Russia and Europe, so is the current crisis of the Ukraine crisis.

However, in an international landscape increasingly dominated by win-win cooperation, the US-led Cold War mentality, whose fundamental purpose is to pursue US hegemony, is bound to be a short-sighted strategic approach. Since Britain has no other choice but to follow suit, its strategic space for "Global Britain" has been radically narrowed down, as a high price of sticking to the special bilateral relationship with the USA.

The avoidable challenges and anticipated opportunities for China-UK relations

In its strategic vision of "Global Britain", the UK lays special emphasis on the importance of the bilateral relations with China and thinks highly of strengthening the economic and trade cooperation with the world's second largest economy based on the principle of realism. The reality is that while the US is doing its best to portray China as a "challenger" to the Western world's international order, China-UK bilateral relationship of mutual benefit and cooperation is doomed to fail. Since 2015, when the China-UK relationship entered the mutually confirmed "golden era", there has been no great strategic breakthrough in China-UK relations. Under the influence of the powerful diplomatic offensive of the United States, Britain gradually retreated to its habitual position in the western alliance and even plays the role of vanguard in the western anti-China group [1. P.

65]. Placing itself on the side opposite to the world most influential economy, Britain absolutely shut itself away from being a global player.

The past decade of this century witnessed the evolution of China-UK bilateral relations. Within the framework of the big-power competition, the space for the development of China-UK bilateral relations has been greatly compressed. The promised bilateral relations as much as the anticipated "Global Britain" had no ground to land under the premise that China and the United States has fallen into an unavoidable confrontation. It is a "natural" choice of British diplomacy to follow the US in its imaginary war against China on issues of fundamental principle.

In essence, there are still obviously stark differences in terms of the fundamental logic, subjective aspirations and actual needs between China and the UK in their interpretation of today's international politics. The mainstream thought of British politics is still "in the shadow of the nostalgic colonialism of the old times, and the representative British politicians still lives in the global illusion of the old empire with a lack of a clear understanding of the current radical changes that occurred to the world politics". [11. P. 19] Britain's repeated provocation of China's core interests has directly led to a low ebb in bilateral relations, which is also a diplomatic status quo that the US is happy to see.

However, British diplomacy in the post-Brexit era is inconceivable without a sound China-UK bilateral relationship as the foundation. China is the UK's third largest trading partner after the EU and the US in spite of the low-time bilateral relations. The Chinese market is a future the British business community cannot reject. Even in 2012, when the political and diplomatic relations between China and the UK hit rock bottom, the bilateral trade showed an increasing momentum. Needless to say, there is a high-potential and strong demand for the development of China-UK economic and trade relations. However, due to the impact of the Brexit, the British political environment has been in turmoil and chaos for such a long time that it has exerted an obviously negative influence on China-UK comprehensive strategic partnership in the golden era, let alone the factors derived from the USA.

Even a brief study of the current discourse of the British foreign policy will show that the British government still holds a very strong interest in a benign economic and trade relationship with China. In the post-Brexit period, to counteract the

loss of the membership status of the European Single Market and the European Customs Union, it is bound to try its best to expand economic and trade cooperation globally.

China and the UK enjoy strong complementarity and great potential in the economic and trade field. China and the UK is characterized by distinctively mutual benefits in trade, goods, services, energy conservation and environmental protection, e-commerce and many other areas. Two-way investment between China and the UK has grown steadily in spite of the unfriendly atmosphere. The UK has become China's largest investment destination in the EU and the UK is China's second largest source of foreign investment in the EU. To start negotiations on the China-UK Free Trade Agreement as soon as possible is of great and far-reaching significance for the UK to exit the economic downturn caused by Brexit [13].

Of all the fields of cooperation, China-UK cooperation in financial services is particularly of great strategic significance to both sides. The internationalization of RMB is an important measure for China to further get involved in the international community and participate in international competition. Britain has obvious advantages in the field of financial services since London boasts the financial service center in Europe. Both China and the UK have benefited from economic globalization and are advocates and defenders of free trade. In face of anti-

globalization challenges, China and the UK share broad common interests and responsibilities in upholding open cooperation and free trade in fighting against protectionism.

Conclusion. In general, in the post-Brexit period, it should be the only choice for the UK to accelerate the implementation of the "Global Britain" diplomatic strategy to hedge against the negative effects of the Brexit. It is not difficult to find that the Johnson government does have the intention of building a new pattern of British diplomacy in response to an uncertain future with "Global Britain" at its core idea. However, this fragile strategic conception, premised on the special relationship between Britain and the United States, could not be spared the Cold War mentality and the consciousness of confrontation in the old era. Therefore, this British diplomatic concept is destined to become the victim of the American hegemonic ideological diplomacy. This inevitable "alliance dilemma" will affect the actual development of British diplomacy for a long time to come.

Taking into consideration that the current world political and economic structure is in an extremely complex and significant transition period, and the relative decline of Britain's own comprehensive national power is unavoidable, the British government's ambition of "global Britain" can only give way to the maximization of the global diplomatic interests of the United States. Even though, a benign economic cooperation between China and Britain can still be anticipated.

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