

## Is Britain's Official Brexit Date a Strategic Blunder?

### News:

This week the British Prime Minister, Theresa May formally announced March 2017 as the date to commence Britain's separation from the EU. By invoking Article 50, Britain will have two years to negotiate separate trade treaties with 27 member states, as well as the WTO. Given the scale and magnitude of the task there is no certainty that such a large number of trade deals can be successfully concluded within the specified period. However, the real question is whether Britain's exit from the EU has any strategic value for the country.

### Comment:

Immediately after May's announcement, the pound sank to a 31-year low against the dollar and the FTSE broke the 7000 barrier. The opposite movement of economic indicators mimics in many ways the reactions of the Europhile and Brexit camps.

Brexiters swiftly pointed to FTSE figures as a vote of confidence by international investors in Britain's official declaration to start divorce proceeding with the EU. Meanwhile, Europhiles lamented at the weakness of sterling—for them the demise of the currency was incontrovertible proof that Britain was hurtling towards economic chaos.

Leaving aside the two camps, political analysts have alluded to party politics playing an instrumental role in the announcement of the timetable. In their view, the Conservative Party ravaged by an overwhelming sentiment for the dislike of Brussels forced Theresa May's hand. The same divisions prompted May's predecessor Cameron to gamble with Britain's future in Europe via the June 23 referendum. The unexpected result failed to heal the deep rifts amongst the Tories and put Britain in a strategic conundrum. May is hoping to upend the rifts and correct Britain's strategic course.

The Brexit debate has been woefully mute on Britain's strategic direction in the contemporary world. Perhaps, most disappointing of all there is no public discussion about Britain's grand strategy.

For a country that once ruled the world it is odd to find the absence of a vision and a grand strategy in public discourse. The current dislike towards Europe amongst Britons is in many respects an outcome of the failure of Britain's WW2 grand strategy. Back then, Churchill calculated that America's involvement in the war effort was crucial to overcome the Axis powers. In reality, the military victory of the allies turned out to be a monumental failure for Britain's grand strategy. It marked the end of the British Empire.

Since Churchill's strategic blunder, the British elite has been debating whether Britain's future lies with Europe, or is intertwined with the fortunes of her former colony America. Such strategic deliberation remain unresolved, and unsurprisingly Britain has found itself oscillating between America and Europe to safeguard her national interests. Today, May is on the cusp of another strategic turning point—one that perhaps could seal Britain's fate for good.

The decline in Britain's strategic thinking is an important lesson for Dawa carriers that aspire to return the Ummah to the rule of the rightly guided Khilafah. It is not enough for agents of change to limit their activities to the establishment of the Islamic state. Dawa carriers must strive to engage the Ummah by articulating a practical Islamic vision for the world that makes Khilafah's grand strategy the centerpiece for revival. The nonexistence of both the Islamic vision and strategy cost Morsi dearly. For similar reasons, Muslims are turning away from movements like ISIS, Al Shabab and Boko Haram.

The Islamic heritage is a wellspring of strategic culture, which is unique, inspirational and profoundly effective. Abu Bakr's grand strategy consisted of making Islam supreme in three different theaters of military operations at the same-time—a feat unparalleled in the modern world. He succeeded in making the nascent Islamic state in Madina overcome the Arab tribes, the powerful Romans and the mighty Persians, and established a firm basis for Omar's rule. In fact, Omar could not have succeeded without Abu Baker's strategic foresight. Hence, it is incumbent on Dawa carriers to widen their horizon and think deeply about Islamic strategy when engaging the Ummah.

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