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# The Third Law of UK Nuclear Policy: for Every Protestation There is an Equal and Opposite Affirmation

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## **ABSTRACT**

Despite consecutive UK governments' continual support for and renewal of the nuclear program, the UK's nuclear arsenal has remained a contentious issue on the basis of both ethical framework and the cyclical costs of acquiring new nuclear weapons during a climate of austerity. Given the political turmoil currently faced post-Brexit, and amidst a potential upset in the global axis of power, with its inherent implications for national security, the question of the UK's nuclear program is of critical importance. This policy paper provides an expository overview of the major points of contention in the UK nuclear policy debate namely; financial, moral, and legal, with consideration given to the internal climate of the UK. Additionally it will examine the potential impact that the UK leaving the EU will have on the nuclear policy of both the EU and the UK within the methodological framework of Sagan's Three Model's for Nuclear Weapons Proliferation.

## **KEYWORDS**

non-proliferation, Brexit, nuclear programs

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 1952 the UK tested its first nuclear device, securing itself as the third member of the ‘nuclear club’ and guaranteeing its position of power on the international stage for decades to come. Despite consecutive UK governments’ continuous support for and renewal of the nuclear program, the UK’s nuclear arsenal has remained a contentious issue on the basis of both ethical framework and the cyclical costs of acquiring new nuclear weapons amid the UK’s long-term economic stagnation. Given the political turmoil currently facing the EU and the UK, particularly in regards to a potential upset in the global axis of power and its implications for national security, the question of the UK’s nuclear program is of critical importance. This policy paper provides an expository overview of the major points of contention in the UK nuclear policy debate, with special attention given to objections and subsequent affirmations. Furthermore, it examines the potential impact that the UK leaving the EU will have on the nuclear policy of both the EU and the UK. This examination includes the issues of: shifting power dynamics within the European Union as France becomes the only nuclear weapons state (NWS), the increased significance of the UK maintaining geopolitical power as an NWS post Brexit. Using the theoretical framework of Sagan’s Three Model’s of Nuclear Proliferation, policy provisions will be explored.

### ***Timeline of British Weapons System***

The UK cemented its position as a NWS in 1952, becoming the third country to successfully test an atomic bomb, behind only the United States and the Soviet Union. The 25-kiloton plutonium implosion bomb detonated off the western coast of Australia under the codename “Hurricane” was designed to test the effects of such a weapon, and limit future dependence upon the weapons systems of the United States, whilst equally placing the UK as a pivotal world power (CTBTO, 1952).

Following the success of Operation Hurricane, the UK government reached the Nassau Agreement with the United States, which allowed it to procure a SLBM submarine based missile system termed Polaris (Cabinet Office, 2008). The British Polaris Programme was announced in 1962 and construction began in 1964. The success of Operation Hurricane lead to the development of the UK’s first deployable nuclear weapons: four submarine based missile systems, which made up the WMD arsenal until a replacement programme was announced under the Thatcher government in the 1980s.

The replacement of the UK nuclear programme Polaris provoked considerable political debate, primarily due to the high costs associated with the renewal during a period of government spending cuts in other sectors. Nevertheless, nuclear renewal went ahead underneath the conditions of the Cold War. The Trident nuclear generation subsequently came into use in the 1990s, composed of warheads, submarines and missiles, coinciding with the end of the Cold War. The lifespan of the current Trident generation is coming to an end and is due to be retired in the 2020s. This has launched the current and ongoing discussions about the future of the UK nuclear deterrent.

## **PROTESTATIONS AND AFFIRMATIONS**

Arguably more than any other NWS, the United Kingdom’s nuclear deterrent programme has been, and remains, a contentious issue both publicly and politically. Numerous protestations against the possession of a nuclear arsenal exist. Yet interesting, the

affirmations mirror the protestations but presented with a different theoretical framework. Financial, moral, and legal objections, and contrary affirmations compose the principal rationale. This section will examine these areas of contention specifically in regard to the decision taken by the UK government to replace the Trident Programme<sup>1</sup>, which would renew the UK's nuclear arsenal and capabilities for the foreseeable future.

### ***Financial Protestations***

The costs of updating the Trident programme are considerable, with current outlay estimated to be upward of £50bn, which leads to the first protestation: the costs of renewal for British taxpayers. As of March 2017, the UK national debt was estimated to stand at 1.73 trillion pounds, with the budget deficit for the fiscal year ending March 2017 standing at 19.1 billion pounds (Office of National Statistics, 2017). Whilst these numbers represent a reduction in national debt and budget deficit debt, these diminutions have acquiesced at the same time as the introduction of austerity policy across the UK. As such, government majority support for the renewal of the Trident programme has been met with notable opposition from sections of the public—particularly those affected by austerity, those with moral objections, and many Scottish citizens whose devolved government is against the renewal of nuclear weapons and object to Scotland being the base for the UK nuclear arsenal.

Despite this public dissent, the House of Commons vote for Trident D5 II<sup>2</sup> renewal was backed by parliament with 472 votes to 117, with cross-party and cross-bench support of the programme from everyone except the Greens and the SNP (BBC “MPs Vote,” 2016). A Survation poll conducted for the SNP in January 2015 showed 47.2% of Scottish citizens opposing a new generation of nuclear weapons, which would continue to be based on the river Clyde in Scotland, with only 31.6% in favour (Survation, 2015). Correspondingly, further polls suggest that support for replacement of Trident is lower in Scotland than it is south of the border. However, a 2014 survey conducted by left-wing newspaper *The Guardian* on WMD awareness found 79% of respondents to be against renewal of the Trident nuclear missile system (Guardian, 2014), suggesting opposition or at the least disinterest in renewal amongst sections of the population.

Another financial remonstrance is made by Keith Harley. Harley discusses the costs and benefits of nuclear weapons defence exports, arguing not for a comprehensive cost-benefits analysis of UK defence exports but rather evincing the industrial offsets, value added industrial capabilities for the UK market, and export potential as considerations for government replacement of Trident (Hartley, 2006). Using demanding data sets, Harley presents these sides of the financial argument and concludes that the “economic costs are opportunity costs in the form of forgone alternative” through a conceptual basis and information framework, and highlights the inherent economic trade off of WMD renewal. As such, it is not inconsistent that a counter argument to the high public costs of Trident, is the expostulation of opportunity costs for the industries and shareholders who benefit from the defence industry.

It is within this framework that the protestation of high taxpayer cost can be re-

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1 This paper is not intended to provide a detailed, or comprehensive guide of the UK's weapons arsenal. For the purposes of this paper it is sufficient to know the generations of weapons systems as Polaris, and Trident.

2 Trident D5 II refers specifically to the Submarine-launched ballistic missiles, within the Trident generation.

structured as an affirmation in favour of nuclear renewal. As with any large scale, publicly funded project there are fiscal benefits to the national economy through renewal. The defence industry is a major employer within the UK, and it is estimated that upwards of 15,000 people would face termination of employment were Trident replacement not to go ahead (BBC "Guide," 2016). These are substantial numbers; yet only demonstrate those affected at the outset, in no way considering the more far-reaching economic implications. It is therefore not unreasonable to consider how this economic trade off may be regarded as a political asset which outweighs any potential electoral deficit born of the use of public funds for renewal during a time of austerity measures.

### ***Disarmament/Minimal Deterrence***

Since 1956, the UK government has maintained the posture of nuclear deterrent, not nuclear arsenal. The 2006 Defence White Paper, conducted by a UK government Commission, declares that "the UK nuclear program has only been used to deter acts of aggression against [the UK's] vital interest, never to coerce other states." Furthermore, the White Paper affirms the uncertainty of international politics, and the strategic environment in which the UK operates. Moreover, it claims a possible emergence of threat from new or old adversaries of the United Kingdom, as well as asserting that an act of nuclear terrorism cannot be ruled out. These assertions and reasons are used as the foundational affirmations for renewing the Trident arsenal by the UK government.

The findings of this white paper, are however contested by scholars, most prominently, Nick Ritchie. Ritchie (2009) states, "...it is barely conceivable that British nuclear deterrent threats and the consideration of using nuclear weapons against Russia or China will ever be part of the solution to future confrontations." Moreover, Ritchie (2013) argues that in the unlikely event of nuclear terrorism, any nuclear response by the UK would be viewed as disproportionate, and inimical to western political objectives. Furthermore, the concept of 'vital interests' could be challenged, along with the premise that the protection of these unspecified vital interests, can become coercions in themselves. The UK's strategic security position has transmuted since the establishment of the nuclear programme during the Cold War era, with changing global threats which call into question the necessity, and even utility, of a WMD arsenal.

In a secondary article, Ritchie (2013) presents the view of UK nuclear strategy asseverating, 'British nuclear policy has long been characterised as one of 'minimum deterrence,' that is, no more weapons than is necessary to deter an adversary. This concept in itself is ambiguous at best, as none of the conditions are quantifiable and can be reshaped. Ritchie even seems to unintentionally disprove his own argument concluding the [nuclear deterrent] "capacity exceeds UK requirements" (Ritchie, 2011). The 2010 Strategic Defence Review noted, "it is right that the United Kingdom should retain a credible, continuous and effective minimum nuclear deterrent for as long as the global security situation makes that necessary". This leads into one of the major areas of contention: the changing global security landscape vs global zero arguments, questioning the necessity and moral impasse of the UK retaining and renewal a nuclear arsenal whilst promoting global non-proliferation.

### ***Non-Proliferation Obligations***

Article VI of the NPT, which the UK ratified in 1968, states the objective of fur-

thering the goal of nuclear disarmament. “Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.” HM Government would argue it is indeed complying with the international treaty obligations toward disarmament. In the July 1998 Strategic Defence Review (SDR) the government announced a decrease in the delivery mechanisms of nuclear weapons, as well as the number of warheads allowed on each nuclear submarine. The 2010 SDR went a step further, reducing the maximum number of deployable warheads to forty per submarine, with the goal of reducing the stockpile by the mid-2020’s. And yet, when examining the figures more closely it becomes apparent that despite a reduction in warheads, the tonnage of warheads is increasing, meaning the actual destructive nuclear capacity of the UK is either increasing or remaining the same. “In evaluating the destructive power of a nuclear weapon, it is customary to use the concept of equivalent megatons (EMT). Equivalent megatonnage is defined as the actual megatonnage raised to the two-thirds power ( $EMT^{2/3}$ ). A single 40kt (0.04mt) Polaris warhead represents 0.12 EMT. A single 100kt (0.1mt) Trident warhead represents 0.22 EMT. 32 Polaris warheads therefore represent 3.74 EMT, whilst 40 Trident warheads represent 8.61 EMT – a 230% increase in EMT” (Ritchie, 2011). It could be argued that this intricate formula exposes the pretence of UK nuclear reduction and scale-back obligations, and further that it’s complicated nature makes it problematic for public discourse. A 2010 cross-party Trident Commission Report stated, “As a nuclear weapon state, the UK has a grave responsibility to maintain its arsenal safely and securely, and to be at the forefront of the multilateral disarmament process. Some fear that if the UK were to decide on a full like-for-like Trident renewal, the UK the same or better capabilities...we would risk transmitting the message that we are not serious about moving...towards the elimination of nuclear weapons”.

### ***Moral Protestations***

Any discussion of weapons of mass destruction must consider the moral aspect of the argument. This paper does not intent to address the various moral objections about the presence of nuclear weapons, nor their use, but rather primarily to consider the general public posture toward nuclear objection. The moral aspect, whilst relevant, tends again to play out more in public opinion than in policy position. Andrea Berger, an employee of The Royal United Services Institute states, “...even in the most extreme circumstances... the humanitarian consequences of [deploying nuclear weapons] would be so grotesque as to be unfathomable” (BBC “Guide,” 2016). Her opinion is not alone, yet many other scholars are sceptical of the potential ‘moral’ impact of getting rid of nuclear weapons. Whilst it can be argued that the reduction to total elimination, could send a positive message to non Nuclear Weapon states, or those currently in development, it could also be argued that the UK has a moral obligation to other states who depend upon the protection provided by the UK nuclear program – e.g. the European Union. This argument would premise on the moral rationale that a states primary responsibility is the survival of the nation. Following from which, it could be argued that secondary to that principle obligation is the defence or protection of allied nations against nuclear attack or intimidation.

The United Kingdom is arguably one of the strongest EU defence postures as one

of only two member states possessing full-spectrum military capabilities (Institute for Government, 2017). The consequences of the UK's decision to leave the European Union are yet to be seen, however, there will be a considerable impact on EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The European Union met in September 2016 noting, "the result could impact the future of the British Trident system and the loss of decision making power with the CFSP, which implements disarmament and non-proliferation agreements" (NTI, 2017). The conventional weapons capabilities of the EU are currently supplemented by both the UK and French NW programmes, and are provided with significant financial support. HM Government has indicated a desire to maintain close defence relations with the EU post-Brexit. However arguably more than ever, the influence and role of the UK as a pivotal world power will be assured through its possession of NW's. Furthermore, the direct loss of these nationally owned weapons would have security implications for the European Union post Brexit. However, given the prospective nature of these events, and suppositions implicitly attached, any prognosticated policy should be based in application of established methodology.

#### **NUCLEAR WEAPONS AFTER BREXIT**

Given that this is a predictive argument concerning future policy, Sagan's three models of proliferation will be employed to examine how the UK's decision to exit the European Union could potentially affect UK nuclear policy. According to the Institute for Government (2017) the UK's exit from the EU does not intrinsically change its nuclear policy, because "the power to develop and implement security and defence policy lies with member states, not the EU." That is, there are no legal mechanisms requiring a change. Furthermore, evaluation under Sagan's three models suggests that the incentives for the UK to retain their nuclear weapons will only increase after the UK leaves the Union.

#### ***Security Model***

According to Sagan's Security model (2012), states make decisions to develop nuclear weapons or to exercise nuclear restraint based on their position in a "multipolar world" (p. 62). Before examining changing military and security threats to a post-Brexit UK, it is significant to consider how the poles around the UK will shift as the UK leaves the EU. As an EU member state, the UK has participated in CSDP, an effort set up at the 1998 St. Malo Summit "designed to allow EU members states to combine their security and defence efforts should the need arise" (Institute for Government, 2016). While the past decade has been characterized by the efforts of many member states to build a closer, more integrated EU defence policy, the UK has resisted further integration; it vetoed an increase in the European Defence Agency (EDA) budget for six consecutive years (Maas, 2016) and vetoed the establishment of EU military headquarters in Brussels (Waterfield, 2011). Without the UK, however, the EU will likely be able to implement a more integrated defence policy; as can be observed from an already increased EDA budget. While the UK resisted the fiscal contributions and additional responsibilities necessary to further integration while in the Union, if the integration proceeds without the UK, the UK may find its position outside an ever-closer Union is more troubling than inside. An even more-integrated EU is unlikely to pose a direct military or security threat to the UK, the sentiments of isolation that stronger EU defence force will create are likely to encourage the UK to double down

on its position as an NWS.

Sagan’s security model postulates that states develop nuclear weapons to “protect their sovereignty and national security” by “balance[ing] any rival state that develops *nuclear* weapons by gaining access to a nuclear deterrent” (p. 57). Given the UK’s long history as a NWS with a deterrent system as well as the global climate of nuclear proliferation, additional distinct threats to sovereignty and national security are unlikely to emerge after a UK exit from the EU.

Under Sagan’s security model, nuclear restraint is exercised because “external security threats [are] radically changed or reevaluated” leading to a perceived “absence of the fundamental military threats that produce positive proliferation decisions” (p. 61). To apply this model to a post-Brexit UK, we must consider how already existing threats will be evaluated differently as a result of Brexit. The 2014 Trident Commission Final Report lays out the three threat types the UK faces, all of which arguably make it necessary to maintain their nuclear weapons. In 2016, during her first speech as Prime Minister, Theresa May discussed all three of these threats as reasons that the UK must retain its nuclear capacity. Comparison of the language between both the Trident Commission Report and May’s speech, suggests that there has been no significant re-conceptualisation that would produce changes compatible with nuclear restraint.

Table 1

Threat	Trident Commission Final Report (2014)	Theresa May House of Commons Speech (2016)
Current Nuclear State	“The first is a re-emergence of a nuclear threat from a state with a significant nuclear arsenal and overwhelming conventional capabilities, and with an aggressive posture. The only current example of this possibility is Russia.”	“There is the threat from existing nuclear states such as Russia. We know that President Putin is upgrading his nuclear forces. In the past two years, there has been a disturbing increase in both Russian rhetoric about the use of nuclear weapons and the frequency of snap nuclear exercises. . . . There is no doubt about President Putin’s willingness to undermine the rules-based international system in order to advance his own interests.”

New Nuclear State	“The second possibility is an existing or emerging nuclear-armed state that attains global reach and enters into direct strategic competition with the UK.”	“There is the threat from countries that wish to acquire nuclear capabilities illegally. North Korea has stated a clear intent to develop and deploy a nuclear weapon, and it continues to work towards that goal, in flagrant violation of a series of United Nations Security Council resolutions. . . . There is, of course, the danger that North Korea might share its technology or its weapons with other countries or organisations that wish to do us harm.”
New Nuclear Threat	“The third is the emergence of a future massive overwhelming threat involving bio-weapons or other comparable mass destruction technologies still unknown in which a state might consider the explicit use or threat of use against the UK, but be deterred by the UK’s possession of nuclear weapons.”	“There is the question of future nuclear threats that we cannot even anticipate today. . . . Once nuclear weapons have been given up, it is almost impossible to get them back, and the process of creating a new deterrent takes many decades. We could not redevelop a deterrent fast enough to respond to a new and unforeseen nuclear threat, so the decision on whether to renew our nuclear deterrent hinges not just on the threats we face today, but on an assessment of what the world will be like over the coming decades. It is impossible to say for certain that no such extreme threats will emerge in the next 30 or 40 years to threaten our security and way of life, and it would be an act of gross irresponsibility to lose the ability to meet such threats by discarding the ultimate insurance against those risks in the future.”

Theresa May and Trident Commission on the UK Nuclear Program.

### ***Domestic Politics Model***

According to Sagan’s Domestic Politics Model, decisions concerning restraint or proliferation are made not on the basis of what “serves the national interests of a state” but instead what serves “the parochial bureaucratic or political interests of at least some

individual actors within the state,” particularly “the state’s nuclear energy establishment,” “important units within the professional military,” and “politicians” (p. 65). This model complicates the previous one because “international threats are seen as being more malleable and more subject to interpretation and can therefore produce a variety of responses from domestic actors,” which implies that “security threats are not the central cause of weapons decisions” but are instead “windows of opportunity” (p. 65).

As the UK Government navigates its departure from the EU, a primary interest of the Conservative Government is protecting its majority in Parliament. Given that a Conservative Government proposed and executed the Brexit Referendum, and that another Conservative Government will preside over the negotiation and execution of Brexit, the Conservative Party is in a particularly vulnerable position should the UK suffer as a result of leaving the EU. Consequently, particularly in the domestic policy arena, the UK Government is incentivized to employ policies that will at minimum *appear* to mitigate the challenges presented by Brexit.

As discussed above, further EU defence integration without the UK will cultivate feelings of isolation and fear of inferiority among British nationals. The Government can effectively respond to these sentiments by both directing military fears elsewhere and appearing to secure the nation against perceived developing threats. This is accomplished through treatment of military and security threats that emphasize potential, ambiguous, future threats that can be responded to through nuclear weapons retention, rather than emphasizing concrete and particular threats such as Iran, Russia, or North Korea which can only be resolved through specific policies and actions. Thus it is clear that while expressly opposing “retaining a military nuclear capability as a general insurance against an uncertain future,” (British American Security Information Council, 2014) the Government actually promotes the retention of nuclear weapons because “if there is more than a negligible chance that the possession of nuclear weapons might play a decisive future role in the defence of the United Kingdom and its allies, in preventing nuclear blackmail, or in affecting the wider security context within which the UK sits, then they should be retained” (p. 5). The particular stress on retaining nuclear weapons as a deterrent against potential future threats puts the Conservative Government in the position of appearing to protect the nation, while actually creating and subverting a threat in order to gain more political support.

An additional harm the UK faces as a result of Brexit is economic downturn and job loss. In encouraging the renewal of Trident, the Government makes the case that the UK’s nuclear program is not just about defence but is also about providing “30,000 jobs here in the United Kingdom” as well as “the development of skills here in the United Kingdom that will be of benefit to our engineering and design base for many years to come” (May, 2016). The domestic politics need for positive job growth incentivizes the Government to renew Trident and in so doing to guarantee a certain amount of jobs.

Sagan further posits that “major internal political changes” are often conduits to changes in policy favouring restraint (p. 69). However, this assertion by Sagan has not been observed in the case of the UK where the government position on nuclear restraint has not changed despite considerable domestic changes. The resignation of David Cameron as Prime Minister and the formation of a new Government following the UK’s vote to leave the EU would potentially serve such a purpose for Sagan’s model. However, there has not been a major shift in the Government’s position since the May Government entered power,

as demonstrated by May's speech mirroring the 2014 Trident report. This is not surprising, however, given that before becoming Prime Minister, Theresa May served as Home Secretary for six years, a post that included responsibility for "security and terrorism" ("Ministerial Role") Continuity in nuclear weapons policy between the Cameron Government and the May Government is therefore to be expected. The incongruity between Sagan's Model and the UK case study could be dampened by the continuity of political party in the wake of the Brexit decision. However, it should be noted that since the UK first adopted nuclear weapons capabilities, each government has maintained the nuclear arsenal regardless of political persuasion, or domestic tensions. As such, it could be argued that whilst many elements of Sagan's model fit, this element of his framework, which suggest policy change in favour of restraint, is arguably inaccurate in this specific case.

### ***Norms Model***

According to Sagan's Norms model, "military organizations and their weapons . . . are part of what modern states believe they have to possess to be legitimate, modern states" (p. 74). These "perceptions of legitimacy and prestige" shift over time, but seem to consistently influence states' decisions (p. 76). Thus, according to Sagan's third model, the decision to proliferate or restrain is ultimately a question of defining and increasing legitimacy and prestige. As the UK leaves the EU, many would argue the distinct legitimacy and prestige associated with both the general membership and the particularly privileged position the UK maintains within the EU. Because of this many would argue that the desire to reemphasize alternative types of legitimacy and prestige will rise. The retention, and renewal, of a nuclear arsenal could do this. Where retention itself would arguably not alter the global posture of the UK, a renewal provides at the very least the opportunity for weapons upgrade, and re-establishment of global political positioning.

With its decision to leave the EU, the UK is altering its international axel, yet retains its prestige as one of five nuclear weapons states. The legitimacy and prestige associated with the UK's status as an NWS becomes more important after Brexit because it can be leveraged in multiple, varied arenas in place of the legitimacy and prestige associated with EU membership. The form of legitimacy and prestige resulting from the UK's nuclear capabilities is anchored in the ability to effectively protect the self and others from nuclear threats and is thus amplified through retention of nuclear weapons.

The first form that this legitimacy and prestige takes is the capabilities to protect the UK from nuclear threats through the deterrent system. This prestige is rooted in the exclusive nature of membership in the NWS club. Particularly revealing is Theresa May's (2016) language that "we will maintain the most significant security and military capability in Europe." The superlative here emphasizes not just that the UK has robust military capacities, but that they are the highest capabilities in Europe. This suggests that as the UK leaves the EU, one particularly important way for it to maintain prestige is to maintain the nuclear weapons system that sets it apart from the rest of Europe. Furthermore, given the economic and political vulnerability of the UK during the transitional period, nuclear weapons provide assurance of the UK's unmistakable place at the top. The sense of invincibility created by the nuclear weapons was communicated by May (2016) when she said that the through the "retention of our own independent deterrent" the UK is able to "send an unequivocal message to any adversary that the cost of an attack on our United Kingdom or our allies will

always be far greater than anything it might hope to gain through such an attack.” In other words, the legitimacy accorded the UK through its nuclear weapons takes the form of an assurance of particular safety rooted in its elite membership in the NWS club.

The second form that this legitimacy and prestige takes is the power to negotiate global issues of nuclear proliferation as a member of the NWS club. Over the course of its membership in the EU, the UK was able to consistently leverage the power of its economy and military forces to direct the EU in the directions it found most suitable. While the UK will lose the particular legitimacy and negotiating power it has leveraged within the EU the situation could unfold in one of two ways. Either the UK could lose position—and particularly during Brexit negotiations—, be at the mercy of EU members states who have the power to construct policies that affect the UK going forward. Alternatively, the UK may be able to utilize its full spectrum standing as a bargaining chip in the negotiations—although some states may view this as a hostile posture. In either instance, the UK retains a very powerful seat at the nuclear negotiating table. This seat will become more important in a post-Brexit world as the Government seeks to affirm that the UK is still able to leverage its power to achieve its own ends. Without its nuclear weapon status, the Trident Commission’s Final Report argues, “it is doubtful that the UK would retain continuing influence on the thinking or process of nuclear negotiations if it ceased all its nuclear weapon activities.” Therefore, given the increased importance of the legitimacy of that influence, it is clear the UK will retain their weapons.

The third form that this legitimacy and prestige takes is the UK’s position as defenders of non-nuclear states. May (2016) argues that “being recognised as one of the five nuclear weapons states under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty confers [on us] unique responsibilities, because many of the nations that signed the treaty in the 1960s did so on the understanding that they were protected by NATO’s nuclear umbrella, including the UK deterrent.” The UK’s nuclear weapons allow them to maintain a status as protector of other states – a status that makes the UK necessary and important to many states. Thus, though the UK will face a certain degree of international isolation as a result of its exclusion from the EU, its responsibilities to other non-nuclear states ensure a certain degree of international cooperation.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thus it has been shown that there are many objections and contending affirmations for the retention of UK nuclear deterrent capabilities. These protestations and opposing affirmations take the form of financial, moral, and legal objections within the international non-proliferation framework to which the UK is party. Financially, the cost of Trident renewal is considerable, and has garnered much public opposition within the current conditions of austerity. Morally, the objections are less complex, with the rationale that nuclear weapons are grotesque, inhumane, and unnecessary. The moral objections are further strengthened by the UK’s position as a proponent of non-proliferation. Conflictingly, affirmations for renewal cite the fiscal benefits to the UK economy and job market. Morally it is argued that the UK has a duty to protect its citizens and allies in the global climate of threat and uncertainty. The current global trend toward nuclear proliferation, in defiance of persistent international pressure in favour of non-proliferation led by the NW5, is promoted continually as the principal rationale for UK nuclear posture. Along with the

arguments of an uncertain global strategic environment, and the necessity of nuclear parity with peer adversaries in the face of an impending Brexit, the retention of nuclear capabilities is arguably more necessary than ever. This expository review of affirmations and protestations of Trident renewal, as well as the theoretical framework of Sagan, suggest the incentives for the UK to retain their nuclear weapons will only increase after the UK leaves the European Union. This is due to the belief that states look to their weapons and military assets as a means of legitimacy in international community. Leaving the EU will inevitably alter the UK's global position, which will need to be re-established. The case study of the UK demonstrate that Sagan's models are an imperfect fit for the complexities of international power dynamics post-Brexit, and do not hold true in all regards. Yet, the sustention of a nuclear arsenal will arguably always provide the UK with advantaged bargaining power internationally. As such it is unjustifiable under Sagan's model to presume the UK will not renew or disarm anytime in the near future.

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