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Gobierno de Gibraltar

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Por el bien de Gibraltar, los diputados británicos deberían apoyar el acuerdo de Brexit de Theresa May

FABIÁN PICARDO

Gibraltar nunca cederá su soberanía británica, pero deseamos mantener una relación amistosa con España, algo que debería ser recíproco. Por tanto, creo firmemente que abandonar la Unión Europea de forma abrupta después de 46 años de membresía no es una buena idea. Existen circunstancias en las que podría ser inevitable no lograr un Acuerdo de Retirada. Pero el acuerdo que tenemos sobre la mesa, por muy imperfecto que sea, es el mejor para todos.

Muchos ciudadanos británicos ejercen su derecho comunitario de vivir en España y venir a trabajar a Gibraltar todos los días, y otros se trasladan en el sentido contrario. Una salida sin acuerdo tendría enormes consecuencias en sus vidas cotidianas, en lo relativo a los pagos a la seguridad social, la sanidad, el intercambio de datos y otros muchos aspectos.

Nuestro principal mercado es el Reino Unido, pero también vendemos nuestros servicios al mercado único de la Unión Europea. El acuerdo de May nos garantiza el acceso a este mercado durante el mismo periodo que el resto del Reino Unido y protege los derechos de los trabajadores transfronterizos y la libertad de movimiento. Su acuerdo también rechaza los recientes intentos de España de excluirnos de los futuros acuerdos comerciales entre el Reino Unido y la UE. May se mantuvo firme e insistió en que negociará los acuerdos futuros para el Reino Unido en su totalidad. Por tanto, es necesario tener en cuenta que cualquier replanteamiento del Acuerdo de Retirada podría poner en peligro ese importante logro por parte del Reino Unido.

No cabe duda de que una salida sin acuerdo sería mejor que un mal acuerdo que no protegiera la soberanía de Gibraltar o nuestros intereses económicos. Pero este acuerdo protege la soberanía británica de Gibraltar, así como nuestros intereses económicos actuales y futuros. Así, este acuerdo es mucho mejor para Gibraltar que una hipotética salida sin acuerdo.

Por todos estos motivos, en lo que respecta a Gibraltar, el acuerdo propuesto por May funciona, porque protege nuestros intereses en el marco del proceso de salida y nuestros intereses en las futuras negociaciones. Así, si yo estuviera presente en la Cámara de los Comunes el próximo martes en calidad de diputado por Gibraltar, usaría mi voto para apoyar el acuerdo de May. No es perfecto, pero los compromisos siempre son imperfectos. La naturaleza de los acuerdos es que son compromisos, y los que no se conforman con menos de todo lo que quieren suelen acabar por no lograr nada de lo que desean.

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No obstante, como Gibraltar no tiene derecho a voto en la Cámara de los Comunes, insto a todos los miembros del Parlamento que son amigos de Gibraltar a pensar en estos hechos, a reflexionar sobre qué conllevaría para Gibraltar optar por la alternativa y a votar a favor del acuerdo de Brexit que la Primera Ministra ha logrado para toda la familia británica. La realidad es que, independientemente de sus intenciones, los que voten en contra de este acuerdo con miras a lograr una salida sin acuerdo no están ayudando a Gibraltar.

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Comment

Europe must get ready to take on Russia

Nato would find itself cruelly exposed by a war on two fronts waged by Moscow and Beijing

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You know a country is desperate for American TLC when it offers to host a tank division on Nato's eastern border and call it Fort Trump. Poland has just done so and its calculation was perhaps that the name alone would be enough to put Russian soldiers to flight, rather as a large orange scarecrow might protect a farmer's crops. It was a bad call, nonetheless.

Russian military colleges such as the Frunze academy are buzzing with ideas about the future of warfare. Guest lecturers pop in with fresh experience of bombing Syria or annexing Crimea, and boast about Russian success in hybrid campaigns. They apparently tell their officer pupils that Nato is now crippled by self-doubt, is vulnerable and cranks only sluggishly into action. The Fort Trump idea makes the point for them: it is Cold War thinking, static combat at a time when every indicator is that the pace of war is accelerating. Mobility, speed and spreading strategic confusion is all in the new age of Blitzkrieg.

Not surprisingly President Trump quite likes the notion of Fort Trump, but it would be both a political and military blunder. Politically because it will reshuffle the cards in the

Kremlin's favour. Moscow will argue that it is a Nato encroachment and use it as an excuse to further boost its already formidable garrison in Kaliningrad. The paranoid narrative of western encirclement will fuel another round of increases in military spending. Belarus, which has so far played a usefully neutral role in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, is likely to be tugged closer to it. It needs to defend its northern frontier with Belarus as well as its eastern borderlands. The knock-on effect of Fort Trump will be a less secure Ukraine. And the US will find itself in the frontline of a huge cyberoffensive from Russian hackers. Critically, though, it will position the Baltic region as the predominant area of East-West confrontation when Russia is actually playing a much broader and longer game.

Moscow and Beijing could soon sign a non-aggression pact

Every Russian commander understands the advantage of forcing an enemy to fight on two or more fronts. Hitler made peace with Stalin in 1939 to avoid the dilemma. When he reneged on the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact two years later and invaded Russia, he signed his death warrant. Russia's way of securing its borders against Nato is thus to force the West to choose between defending allies on two seas, the Baltic and the Black. In the north, Nato members Estonia, Latvia,

Lithuania and Poland are unsettled by Russian activity. To the south, Nato members Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria are on alert following the clash between Russian and Ukrainian vessels on the Sea of Azov. Vladimir Putin wrote off the power play as a "border incident" but it was far more than that: the first time that the Russian military openly confronted Ukraine rather than masking its war on the country with the use of special forces and local proxies.

The Black Sea borders on flashpoint areas in the north Caucasus and the Middle East. Many of Putin's recent interventions have been in the south: Georgia in 2008, Ukraine 2014, Syria 2015, Montenegro 2017, Macedonia 2018. Now he has found a way of challenging simultaneously Nato's northeastern and southeastern flanks. Ukraine wants Turkey to seal off the Bosphorus and for Nato to send a convoy into the Azov sea. That isn't going to happen. In fact, very little is. A Fort Trump isn't going to stop a disruptive leader who can ignite all will frozen conflicts, spring surprises and demonstrate the West's inability to assert itself anywhere close to the Russian motherland.

We have to rethink our defence of the European borderlands. Nato armies and governments need to be more flexible and fleet of foot. The road, rail and air infrastructure of Nato's eastern members has to be modernised. The foreign units that serve short rotations in the Baltics — thus signalling to Russia that the alliance has a defensive tripwire —

could put in stints in the south too, in Romania for example.

The ultimate challenge of the war on two fronts, the one that could rip apart the transatlantic axis, is about a decade away. Military forecasters are already using the medium of science fiction to explore the idea that a resurgent Russia and a rising China could soon combine forces. Congressional reports support fears that the US might soon lose its military edge over China. In one influential book, *2020 World of War* by the defence experts Paul Cornish and Kingsley Donaldson, Trump is confronted by an armed showdown with Beijing in the South China Sea just as Putin launches a new gambit in the Baltic. Trump's imagined response: "We Americans are busy; You Europeans sort it out!" A recent fictional scenario posted by a military history professor in a journal much read by US officers, sees a Chinese-Russian non-aggression pact being signed in 2023 as the opening move in a two-front war that can't be won by the alliance.

These writings should serve as a wake-up call to the Europeans. In a world of multiple fast-moving global crises, the defence of the West against a Russian military push may come down to Europeans with chronically inadequate levels of military spending, poorly thought-out strategies and no political stomach for a fight. America's existential threat lies in the Far East and it will be governed for the foreseeable future by an America First administration. Time to talk out loud about this. War is too serious a business to be left to the novelists.



For Gibraltar's sake, MPs should back May's Brexit deal

Fabian Picardo

Gibraltar will never give up its British sovereignty but we want friendly relations with Spain, just as they should with us. So I firmly believe that leaving the European Union with a "thump" after 46 years of membership is not a good idea. There are circumstances where no deal might be unavoidable. But the deal on the table, imperfect though it is, remains the best for us all.

Many British citizens exercise EU rights to live in Spain and come to work in Gibraltar every day, while a handful commute the other way. Without a deal, there would be a profound effect on their day-to-day lives, involving social security payments, healthcare, data-sharing and more.

Our principal market is Britain but we also sell services into the EU single market. Mrs May's deal guarantees us access to this market for as long as the rest of the UK has it, and protects rights of established cross-border workers and of freedom of movement. Her deal also rejects recent Spanish attempts to exclude us from future UK/EU trade deals. She stood firm and insisted that she would negotiate future deals for the whole of the United Kingdom. So I must bear in mind that any resumption of the withdrawal agreement might threaten that significant British achievement.

Of course, no deal would still be better than a bad deal that did not protect Gibraltar's sovereignty or our economic interests. But this deal does protect Gibraltar's British sovereignty, and our current and future economic interests. So this deal is far, far better for Gibraltar than no deal.

For all these reasons, as far as Gibraltar is concerned, the deal proposed by Mrs May works because it protects our interests in the process of withdrawal and it protects our interests for the future negotiations. So if I were sitting in the Commons next Tuesday as the MP for Gibraltar, I would use my vote to back Mrs May's deal. It is imperfect but all compromises are imperfect. The nature of deals is that they are compromises, and those who won't settle for less than everything they want tend to get nothing of what they want.

But since Gibraltar has no vote of its own in the Commons, I call on all members of parliament who are Gibraltar's friends to think about these facts, think about what the alternative could mean for Gibraltar and to vote for this Brexit deal and to vote for Mrs May's deal, whatever their intentions, those voting against this deal in hope of no deal are not helping Gibraltar.

Fabian Picardo is the chief minister of Gibraltar

Emma Duncan Notebook

Four-legged refugee has divided my own family

I made the mistake of taking in a refugee recently, and it's tearing our family apart. My next-door neighbours moved out six months ago and asked if I would look after their cat until they found a permanent home. As a bleeding-heart liberal, I was obviously bound to welcome this outcast into our caring, inclusive household. But I had failed to take into account the deeply held views of the indigenous population.

The dog won't let the cat into the house, so it lives in an elevated hutch at the end of the garden, meowing plaintively, which irritates my children, makes me feel guilty and infuriates the dog. He runs round in circles barking, which infuriates the neighbours, who put cross notes through my letterbox. I am uncertain how to proceed. Perhaps I should hold a referendum that should clarify the situation and allow us to put the issue behind us.

Green-eyed monster

You know the guy who used to whisper into the ear of Roman emperors "remember you too are mortal"? Capitalism has designed its own version: the 360-degree health assessment. Dark warnings I received at a recent assessment have driven me to the gym but these visits have brought an unexpected pleasure. To mitigate the boredom, I have been listening to Stephen Fry's retelling of the Greek myths. Next time somebody speaks of "Gaia" in a green and spiritual manner to signify the nurturing relationship between Mother Earth and her children, I shall point out that Gaia mated with her brother, Uranus, and persuaded Chronos, one of the children of that union, to castrate his father. Watch how you wield those classical references.

Sajid's left-right hook

I hadn't realised that Sajid Javid was such a deft pugilist until I heard him throw a perfect left-right on the radio on Monday morning. The first punch was aimed at leftwingers who wince at any mention of the fact that gangs convicted of grooming and child abuse have mostly been of Pakistani origin. Javid's response was "if you ignore that ... what you end up doing is fuelling the voices of extremism". The second he landed on rightwingers who dismissed the bullying of a Syrian schoolboy ("water-boarding" pitches made a man of me") and the idea that he was the target of racism. Javid's response was "those memories flooded back to me ... because I was Asian, I was punched to the ground". One of the many virtues of diversity among politicians is that people from ethnic minorities can speak more frankly

about their communities and carry more conviction talking about them than white people do.

Decluttered Christmas

When my train stopped at the seventh circle of hell, aka Bicester Shopping Village, the other day, a woman with seven shiny carrier bags crammed with stuff got on and sat opposite me. She occupied one seat, her bags two. I tried to read; she watched videos on her phone with the volume on. We exchanged fleeting glances of mutual dislike and incomprehension. I'm not quite ready to join a monastic order — who would look after the cat, let alone the dog? — but my indifference to stuff is turning into hostility, and I am decluttering Christmas. I've told the children that stockings are over. As for presents, most people will get copies of a verse biography of St Francis of Assisi by Ann Wroe, who writes most of *The Economist's* obituaries. As well as being in a long time, it is a very slim volume, which will not inconvenience you or your fellow passengers on the 518 from Oxford Parkway to Marylebone.

Emma Duncan is social policy editor of *The Economist*

Matthew Parris is away

