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**A long and winding road
to the balance of power**

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ABSTRACT

Il Seicento e il Settecento furono caratterizzati da grandi guerre che coinvolsero gran parte delle potenze europee. Per evitare conflitti o renderli il più possibile non distruttivi, gli stati cercarono di affidarsi maggiormente a iniziative politiche e diplomatiche piuttosto che a quelle militari. Nello studio delle relazioni internazionali, l'equilibrio di potenza, applicato alla politica europea dal 1648, implicitamente con Westfalia ed esplicitamente con Utrecht, si riferisce alla politica perseguita dagli stati per controbilanciare un tentativo di egemonia da parte di un altro stato. Possedere un potere schiacciante, infatti, lo incoraggerebbe a imporre la propria volontà sugli altri. Questo concetto è fondamentale ed è considerato il giusto criterio per raggiungere la pace e la tranquillità. Ogni sistema richiede un equilibratore, che ha il compito di intervenire quando l'emergere di uno stato o di un'alleanza in grado di mettere a repentaglio l'equilibrio complessivo è evidente. Ne consegue che il suo ruolo è quello di sostenere il più debole contro il più forte, mantenendo l'equilibrio attraverso la sua flessibilità diplomatica e spostando il suo sostegno da una parte all'altra. Interessata a bloccare ogni tentativo da parte di uno stato europeo di creare una posizione dominante sul continente, a partire dal Settecento fu la Gran Bretagna a eccellere in questa linea di condotta. Nel primo capitolo di questa tesi, analizzerò il comportamento del paese, che, come vedremo, sarà volto a mantenere e consolidare il proprio dominio coloniale e marittimo, operando in modo imparziale grazie ai suoi interessi per lo più oltreoceano ed extraeuropei. Quelli inglesi, infatti, sono sempre stati più globali che europei e proprio la sua espansione mondiale ha costituito la base della grandezza dell'Impero, sancita soprattutto dalla vittoria nella Guerra dei Sette Anni, che fu un evento spartiacque nel più ampio contesto internazionale dell'Europa. La maggior parte delle fonti primarie utilizzate in questo primo capitolo sono libri cartacei ed elettronici, ma anche enciclopedie e dizionari.

Alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale, molti britannici credevano che la responsabilità della Gran Bretagna fosse quella di guidare non solo l'Impero inglese e il Commonwealth, ma anche l'Europa. Per questo motivo, nel secondo capitolo l'attenzione si sposterà sul continente europeo, e in particolare su Winston Churchill che

già nel 1946 propose la creazione degli Stati Uniti d'Europa. Analizzando alcune parti dei discorsi del Primo Ministro britannico, sarà evidente che il sentimento di disaffezione delle istituzioni e della popolazione inglese nei confronti dell'evoluzione del processo di integrazione europea fu immediato. A tal proposito, vedremo che la linea seguita dal governo fu quella di sostenere l'unità continentale tenendo fuori dal progetto il paese, a garanzia della sua missione imperiale. Secondo gli inglesi la Gran Bretagna non poteva essere pensata come un unico stato isolato. L'Impero infatti non apparteneva a un solo continente, ma a tutti. Questa affermazione è comprovata dal fatto che Churchill rifiutò anche l'adesione alla Comunità Europea del Carbone e dell'Acciaio, in quanto, secondo il britannico, la partecipazione all'istituzione avrebbe sacrificato i rapporti tra la Gran Bretagna e gli Stati Uniti d'America e il Commonwealth. Le cose cambiarono nel 1973 quando, in un momento in cui l'economia britannica stava perdendo primato e competitività, Harold Macmillan decise di entrare nella Comunità Economica Europea. Sin dall'adesione, tuttavia, la sua partecipazione fu sempre a condizione che l'attività della CEE non contraddicesse i suoi impegni e interessi mondiali. Inoltre, come cercherò di dimostrare, piuttosto che una vittoria della solidarietà europea, l'adesione è sempre stata percepita come una sconfitta dell'eccezionalismo britannico, e le divergenze tra Gran Bretagna e Unione Europea sono maturate nel tempo fino a sfociare nel "divorzio", confermando il sentimento di "diversità" del paese. Gli articoli di giornale, come *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, e i documenti depositati negli archivi dell'Università mi hanno permesso di sviluppare questo secondo capitolo. Utilizzando i portali dei periodici elettronici, infatti, ho potuto analizzare, ad esempio, le reazioni dei vari stati ai discorsi di Winston Churchill e lo scetticismo inglese.

Per settant'anni, da Churchill alla Brexit, la regina Elisabetta II è stata lo specchio del suo paese. Ha rappresentato l'incarnazione della monarchia inglese ed è stata testimone di enormi cambiamenti politici in patria e all'estero. Tuttavia, pur rimanendo un simbolo duraturo di continuità, ha cercato di adattare l'antica istituzione della monarchia alle esigenze dell'era moderna. Infatti, sebbene la nazione su cui regnava a volte faticasse a trovare il suo posto in un nuovo ordine mondiale, Elisabetta II rimase un segno di stabilità. Nella prima parte del terzo capitolo cercherò di capire se il legame instaurato fosse con l'istituzione della monarchia o con la regina stessa. A tal proposito, dimostrerò che la monarchia è Elisabetta II per la maggior parte delle persone e secondo i

repubblicani, il suo futuro è in serio pericolo ora che è morta. Il modello che ha lasciato al figlio Carlo III non sarà facile da replicare, soprattutto perché questi ha ereditato un paese in continua oscillazione tra attaccamento alla tradizione e necessità di rinnovamento, politicamente diviso e alle prese con uno dei momenti più complessi della sua storia recente. Negli ultimi sei anni, infatti, si sono avvicendati quattro Primi Ministri, evidenziando la forte instabilità politica. Se dunque la parola d'ordine del nuovo sovrano è unità, le prime preoccupazioni arriveranno dal fronte interno, necessario per mantenere la stabilità anche all'interno del Commonwealth.

Il monarca del Regno Unito è infatti il capo di stato di altre 14 nazioni che hanno fatto parte dell'Impero. In Australia, ad esempio, la morte della Regina ha rinnovato gli appelli a diventare una repubblica, tema presente da diversi anni nella politica nazionale. L'ex colonia britannica continua ad essere una monarchia costituzionale, ma gli australiani pensano sia giunto il momento di entrare in un'era australiana, in cui possono scegliere chi li rappresenta e chi svolge i loro ruoli costituzionali. Tuttavia, la dipendenza dell'Australia dal Regno Unito è ancora oggi evidente nell'accordo in base al quale l'Australia acquisterà tecnologia per la produzione di sottomarini a propulsione nucleare dal Regno Unito e dagli Stati Uniti. Grazie alla grande quantità di dati e informazioni disponibili gratuitamente online, soprattutto sui quotidiani, come *The Australian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *Financial Review*, vedremo che l'obiettivo di AUKUS è soprattutto quello di bilanciare il potere nell'Indo-Pacifico, cooperando per preservare la sicurezza nella regione, al fine di difendere i paesi dalla rapida evoluzione delle minacce, soprattutto quella cinese. Vedremo che l'Indo-Pacifico sta diventando un centro di potere globale e sta spostando l'asse mondiale dall'Atlantico al Pacifico, dove la stabilità dell'area dipende soprattutto dalle azioni e dai rapporti tra Stati Uniti e Cina. Sebbene l'Australia abbia sempre svolto il ruolo di equilibratore tra le due superpotenze, come previsto dal concetto di equilibrio, gli altri paesi Indo-Pacifichi hanno riadattato le proprie priorità di politica estera e hanno avviato una serie di iniziative bilaterali, trilaterali e multilaterali, al fine di bilanciare la forte influenza di Pechino nella regione e impedire alla Cina di imporre la propria volontà sugli altri. Nell'ultima parte del terzo capitolo, questo patto di sicurezza trilaterale mi permetterà di dimostrare che l'equilibrio di potere non è solo un concetto europeo e che gli interessi britannici sono sempre stati rivolti al mondo e non solo ed esclusivamente all'Europa. Per la Gran

Bretagna, infatti, AUKUS è una via di successo per la "Global Britain" del paese, in quanto viene vista come un'opportunità per svolgere un ruolo maggiore come contributore alla sicurezza internazionale e come un'occasione d'oro per riaffermare il suo ruolo, dopo essersi isolato a seguito dell'uscita dall'Unione Europea.

INTRODUCTION

In international relations, the balance of power is a central concept that refers to the policy pursued by states to counterbalance one's attempt at hegemony. As we will see, in particular the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were characterized by major wars that involved most European powers. And yet, in order to avoid conflicts or make them as non-destructive as possible, states tried to rely more on political and diplomatic rather than military initiatives. The balance of power, which is applied to European politics since 1648, implicitly with Westphalia and explicitly with Utrecht, is therefore considered the right criterion for achieving peace and tranquility.

Every system requires a balancer, who must intervene when the emergence of a state or alliance capable of jeopardizing the overall balance is evident. It supports the weaker state against the stronger one, maintaining the equilibrium through its diplomatic flexibility and shifting its support from one side to the other. From the eighteenth century, it was Great Britain that excelled in this line of conduct. In fact, as will be seen in the first chapter of this dissertation, the country was concerned with maintaining and consolidating its colonial and maritime dominance, and therefore interested in blocking any attempt by a European state to create a dominant position on the continent. In order to operate impartially, having the major interests outside the region is one of the main characteristics of a balancer and the ones of Britain were mostly overseas and extra-European, both in commerce and the colonies. In other words, British primary interests have always been more global than European and precisely the country's world expansion formed the basis of the greatness of the Empire, sanctioned above all by the victory in the Seven Years' War. Most of the primary sources used in this first chapter are mostly paper and electronic books, but also encyclopedias and dictionaries. Furthermore, thanks to some secondary sources, and in particular with the databases made available by the Ca' Foscari University, especially with JSTOR that contains articles from hundreds of academic journals of international publishers, I was able to deepen the critical literature on the subject.

At the end of the Second World War, many Britons believed that Great Britain's responsibility was to lead not just the British Empire and Commonwealth but Europe also. For this reason, in chapter two the focus will shift to Europe, and in particular to

Winston Churchill who proposed the creation of a United States of Europe as early as 1946. English institutions and people's feeling of disaffection with regard to the evolution of the European integration process was however immediately evident, as Great Britain was not part of the plan. To put it differently, after World War II, the line that the British governments followed was that of supporting continental unity by keeping England out as a guarantee of its imperial mission. Therefore, according to the British, the country could not be thought of as a single state in isolation. The British Empire belonged to no single continent, but to all. This statement is proved by the fact that Churchill refused also the admission in the European Coal and Steel Community, as, in the Prime Minister's opinion, taking part to the institution would have sacrificed relations between Britain and the United States of America and the Commonwealth. In 1973, at a time when the British economy was losing the primacy and competitiveness, things changed, and Harold Macmillan decided to enter the European Economic Community. However, since its admission Britain's participation was always on condition that the activity of the EEC did not contradict its commitments and world interests. As will be seen, accession has however always been perceived as a defeat for British exceptionalism rather than a victory for European solidarity, and the differences between Great Britain and the European Union have matured over time until they lead to the "divorce", confirming the feeling of "diversity" of the country. The articles in the newspapers (e.g. *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*) and the documents deposited in the Ca' Foscari databases allowed me to develop this second chapter. Using the portals of electronic periodicals, I was in fact able to analyze the reactions of the various states to Winston Churchill's speeches and to English skepticism.

For seventy years, from Churchill to Brexit, Queen Elizabeth II was the mirror of her country. She represented the incarnation of the English monarchy and was the witness of enormous political changes at home and abroad. However, while remaining an enduring symbol of continuity, she sought to adapt the ancient institution of monarchy to the needs of the modern era. Indeed, although the nation over which she reigned at times struggled to find its place in a new world order, Queen Elizabeth II remained a sign of stability. In the first part of the third chapter, I will try to understand if this link was with the institution of the monarchy or with the queen herself. As will be seen, the monarchy is Elizabeth II for most people and according to republicans, its future is in

serious jeopardy now that she is died. In this regard, the model that she left to her son Charles III will not be easy to replicate, above all because he has inherited a country in constant oscillation between attachment to tradition and the need for renewal, politically divided and grappling with one of the most complex moments in its recent history. In the last six years, in fact, four Prime Ministers have alternated, highlighting the strong political instability. Therefore, if the watchword for the new sovereign is unity, the first concerns will come from the home front, which is necessary to maintain the stability also within the Commonwealth.

The Queen or King of the United Kingdom is in fact the head of state of 14 other nations that have been part of the Empire. In Australia, for example, the Queen's death has renewed calls to become a republic, a theme that has been present in national politics for several years. The former British colony continues to be a constitutional monarchy, but Australians think that it is time to move into an Australian era, in which they can choose who represents them and who performs their constitutional roles. However, Australia's dependence on the United Kingdom is still evident today in the agreement under which Australia will purchase technology for the production of nuclear-powered submarines from the United Kingdom and the United States. Thanks to the large amount of data and information available freely online, especially in newspapers (e.g. *The Australian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *Financial Review*), we will see that the aim of AUKUS is "working hand in glove to preserve security in the Indo-Pacific region, in order to defend the countries against rapidly evolving threats"¹. I believe that this trilateral security pact is the perfect example to prove both that the balance of power is not merely a European concept and also that the interests of the United Kingdom have always been directed towards the world and not only and exclusively on the European continent. Furthermore, since the United Kingdom is eager to paint the three-way pact as a success for "Global Britain", AUKUS is a chance to play a greater role as a contributor to the international security.

In this regard, the Indo-Pacific is becoming a center of global power and is moving the world axis from the Atlantic to the Pacific, where the stability of the area depends

¹ *Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom Announcing the Creation of AUKUS*, 2021 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/15/remarks-by-president-biden-prime-minister-morrison-of-australia-and-prime-minister-johnson-of-the-united-kingdom-announcing-the-creation-of-aukus/>

especially on the actions of, and relations between the United States and China. Although Australia has always played the role of balancer between the two superpowers, as foreseen by the concept of equilibrium, other Indo-Pacific countries have readjusted their foreign policy priorities and have set up a series of bilateral, trilateral and multilateral initiatives, in order to balance Beijing's heavy influence in the region and prevent China from imposing its will on others. Therefore, the trilateral security pact can be seen not only as an example of balance of power outside Europe, but the partnership between the Anglo-Saxon brothers is a golden opportunity also to reaffirm the United Kingdom's role, which isolated itself following the exit from the European Union.

CHAPTER 1

Balance or hegemony?

1.1 The role of the balancer and the absence of alliance memory

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have been characterized by major wars that involved most European powers. In order to avoid conflicts or make them as non-destructive as possible, states sought to rely more on political and diplomatic initiatives rather than military ones. To fulfill these purposes, they adhered to the balance of power, which, in addition to be one of the oldest, is also thought to be “the central theoretical concept in international relations”¹. According to this theory, no single state or coalition of states can possess overwhelming power, as the hegemony of a single state would encourage it to impose its will on others². Power, however, should not be understood as a static principle, in which the leading European states practice a policy of international relations based on the rigid maintenance of existing conditions. Even a balance of power, in fact, cannot hope to produce an everlasting stability, as power is never permanently balanced. This implies that it has to be constantly adjusted, either towards the restoration of a previous equilibrium, or more commonly, towards the creation of a new one³.

The aim of the political behaviors is, therefore, to prevent each one's policy of expansion from creating European hegemony. In other words, in the balance of power theory, any state or alliance that aspires to hegemony must be opposed and the balance, which is understood as an approximately equal distribution of power, must be sought by weakening the potentially stronger party or by strengthening the weaker one. This can be done by means of compensation, of a territorial or political nature, or with an adequate military policy. Historically, the most used technique, and which constitutes the essence of the balance of power principle, is that of the creation of coalitions, the composition of which is susceptible to continuous adjustments, since the states pay

¹ Paul, T. V., Wirtz J. J., Fortmann, M., *Balance of Power. Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, p. 29

² Paul, T. V., Wirtz J. J., Fortmann, M., *Balance of Power*, p. 5

³ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 13

constant attention to the evolution of the reciprocal balance of forces and are therefore ready to change ally if a new situation requires it.

Becoming aware of the international political reality of his times, Emer de Vattel developed the principle of the balance of power between nations, which is conceived as alliances that are created specifically for their political needs⁴. In this regard, he re-addressed "[t]he fate of small nations in the arena of eighteenth-century European trade rivalries and hegemonic politics"⁵, maintaining that "states, as societies of men, stood in the same relation towards one another as regarded their rights and obligations as individuals within any state: just as a dwarf is equal in form to a giant, so a small republic cannot be considered less than a sovereign state or a powerful kingdom"⁶. In "Le Droit des gens" 1758, Vattel explicitly asserted the right for states to combine together against another state that has become excessively strong, in order to maintain the balance of power. In this regard, he wrote that: "Europe forms a political system, an integral body, closely connected by the relations and different interests of the nations inhabiting this part of the world. It is not, as formerly, a confused heap of detached pieces, each of which thought herself very little concerned in the fate of the others, and seldom regarded things which did not immediately concern her. The continual attention of sovereigns to every occurrence, the constant residence of ministers, and the perpetual negotiations, make of modern Europe a kind of republic, of which the members, each independent but all mixed together by the tides of common interest, can unite for the maintenance of order and liberty. Hence arose that famous scheme of the political balance, for the equilibrium of power: by which is understood such a disposition of things that no one potentate is able absolutely to dominate and prescribe laws to the others"⁷.

By dividing Europe into nearly equal states, their forces would be balanced and they would fear to offend one another, thus hesitating to plan too great designs⁸. In George

⁴ Fiocchi Malaspina, E., *L'eterno ritorno del Droit des gens di Emer de Vattel*, Epubli, 2017, p. 88

⁵ Stapelbroek, K., Trampus, A., *The Legacy of Vattel's Droit des gens*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, pp. 5-6

⁶ Stapelbroek, K., Trampus, A., *The Legacy of Vattel's Droit des gens*, pp. 14-16

⁷ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648-1815*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991, p. 13

⁸ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648-1815*, p. 5

Orwell's telling phrase, however, "some are more equal than others"⁹, and according to Thucydides "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must"¹⁰. In fact, since the attempts made by the major states to conquer smaller ones and gain more power did not lack, the consequence was that the balance of power was normally maintained at the expense of the smaller states. Historically, small and large weak states have been the victims of the balance of power, and were used as make-weights to appease the political or territorial designs of the more powerful actors in the system¹¹, implying that there was no equality between states, and the strong could do everything they wanted. Furthermore, if they do not check the rise of a hegemon, weaker states may eventually lose their territorial integrity or even their independence, proving that the balance against the dominance of a preponderant power is seen as necessary and beneficial¹². The most logical way to obtain a balance of power is for the other states, and especially for smaller ones, to align among themselves and "with the great-power opponents of the powerful threatening state"¹³. In other words, since, after some alleged infringement, the balance was often re-established at the expense of smaller states or minor powers, the system, on the one hand, needed buffer states and compensation territories to avoid direct confrontations between the major powers, and, on the other hand, it functioned in such a way as to consume them progressively¹⁴. Whether limited or global, however, any balance of power system requires a balancer¹⁵, which intervenes when the emergence of a state or alliance that is capable of jeopardizing the overall balance becomes clear. The balancer allies itself with the weaker or non-revisionist elements in the system, allowing the weaker group to overawe or, if necessary, to physically overcome the powers that threaten the system¹⁶. This means that the role of the balancer is to support the weaker against the stronger, maintaining the equilibrium through its diplomatic flexibility and shifting its support from one side

⁹ Müller, L., *Neutrality in World History*, New York: Routledge, 2019, p. 1

¹⁰ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 5.89

¹¹ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 72

¹² Paul, T. V., Wirtz J. J., Fortmann, M., *Balance of Power*, p. 5

¹³ Liska, G., *International Equilibrium: A Theoretical Essay on the Politics and Organization of Security*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957, p. 34

¹⁴ Formigoni, G., *Storia della politica internazionale nell'età contemporanea*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018, p. 52

¹⁵ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 65

¹⁶ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 70

to the other. Therefore, it is always clear which party the balancer will defend, that is, the status-quo side or, if the situation is not a threat to the entire system, the weaker side. Clearly, in fact, it will never be in the balancer's interest to support the strongest or revisionist side, as this would lead to the overturn of the system and the loss of the balancer position¹⁷. Then, when the states that make up the system are restored to the overall equilibrium, the balancer withdraws to resume its position as a neutral but watchful guardian.

From the eighteenth century, in this line of conduct as an external, but decisive, maneuvering force in the system, Britain excelled. Thus, could Winston Churchill declare that, "for four hundred years the foreign policy of England has been to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most dominating power on the continent" and that "it is a law of public policy which we are following, and not a mere expedient dictated by accidental circumstances, or likes and dislikes, or any other sentiment"¹⁸. Britain was concerned above all to maintain and consolidate its colonial and maritime dominance, and it was therefore interested in blocking any attempt by a European state to create a dominant position on the continent. To put it differently, crucial for the English trade and commercial treaties were the peace and balance in Europe. In this regard, Charles Davenant, an English mercantilist writer, claimed that England should have played the balancer's role, meaning that it should not just have followed its own interests, but also the interests of Europe. He defended the 'traditional' role of England as the balancer by maintaining that "for many years we have pretended to hold the balance of Europe, and the body of the people will neither think it consistent with our honour nor our safety to quit that post"¹⁹.

After the Glorious Revolution of 1688, however, probably not many would have imagined for Britain a future of great power, arbiter of European balances and mistress of the world's seas. The kingdoms of William of Orange and Maria Stuart could not compete in size and population with the France of the Sun King and in wealth, maritime and colonial power with the Netherlands. Also Spain, despite its deep crisis, had a much

¹⁷ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 68

¹⁸ Paul, T. V., Wirtz J. J., Fortmann, M., *Balance of Power*, p. 33

¹⁹ Davenant, C., *An Essay upon the Balance of Power*, p. 302; Janžekovič, I., *Balance of Power from the Thirty Years' War and the Peace of Westphalia (1648) to the War of the Spanish Succession and the Peace of Utrecht (1713)*, History of European Ideas, 2022, p. 11

larger empire than the modest overseas domains of the English crown. Even the Habsburg empire in central-eastern Europe, although economically backward, was certainly larger and more populated. However, "[t]he threats of invasion had to be taken seriously in wartime, and the navy was Britain's only credible defense against it"²⁰.

Britain had also many internal problems. First, unlike most other European states which still regarded religious uniformity as a necessary prerequisite for political stability, Britain and Ireland were deeply torn over religion. The bond between the three kingdoms was fragile, in particular the one between England and Scotland, which maintained separate parliaments and institutions. Then, in 1707, the Act of Union sanctioned not only personal but also the institutional union between the two kingdoms, seeing the birth of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. However, although the Scottish Parliament was abolished, the Scottish representation in the English Parliament was guaranteed. The political consolidation resulting from these developments, together with the formation of a relatively cohesive internal empire were stepping stones for the initiation of the creation of the external empire.

The revolutions of the seventeenth century did not interrupt the tendency to extend the sphere of British interests in Europe and throughout the world. And, despite these elements of fragility, it was a dynamic reality in strong economic and political expansion. In the eighteenth century, Britain was a European power closely interested in the continent's balance of power, and the reason was "not only or principally because it was ruled by a Dutch or Hanoverian sovereign, but because it felt herself threatened by powerful neighbors"²¹. At the beginning of the century, British naval power was unrivaled in the world, both in terms of commercial and military fleet. At the end of the century, the growing economic strength, the growth in production, and the Industrial Revolution, gave the country further foundations to sustainably reinforce the maritime preponderance, and also to confirm her role as a decisive European financial centre. In the context of this continuity, Britain underwent radical transformations with the Industrial Revolution both in terms of economic and social development, acquiring and maintaining on this terrain, for almost the entire course of the nineteenth century, a

²⁰ Marshall, P. J., Low, A., *History of the British Empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 169

²¹ Marshall, P. J., Low, A., *History of the British Empire*, p. 169

clear supremacy over all the other great European powers and the rest of the world. In this regard, at the forefront of research in economic history there is the issue of the great divergence between Europe and China.

According to Pomeranz, the nineteenth century saw England head and shoulders above the rest of the developing world, meaning that "European industrialization was still quite limited outside of Britain until at least 1860"²². Before the Industrial Revolution, Europe and Asia were the only continents containing "developed" states and had a similar rate of market growth, living standards, agricultural productivity, and the effectiveness of their social and economic institutions. However, with the Industrial Revolution, even the previous homogeneous alignments between some areas of Europe and Asia began to diverge. Two factors are attributed to the great divergence: the prevalence of England's coal reserves and England's proximity to the Americas and Africa²³. According to historian's studies, the discovery of America was precisely one of the factors that triggered the great divergence: from the "New World" new products and large quantities of precious metals poured into Europe, producing the excess wealth to be allocated to industrial development and, consequently, to social and economic improvement. Asia, stranded on the other side of the world, had no newly discovered continents to draw upon. What distinguished Europe, or more precisely Britain, was coal, and access to the New World. In fact, some of Europe's largest coal deposits were located in the promising area of Britain, and "this placed them near excellent water transport, Europe's most commercially dynamic economy"²⁴. In this regard, however, as it is maintained by Pomeranz, if Asia had been closer to the Americas than to Europe, the fates of these continents would have been reversed.

However, both the timing and the causes of the great divergence between China and Europe have brought Roy Bin Wong and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal to disagree with Pomeranz. Although the divide became more and more evident in the nineteenth century; in their view, it was still visible some two centuries earlier and had little to do with the factors of coal and colonies that Pomeranz highlights. The two authors maintain

²² Pomeranz, K., *The Great Divergence – China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 16

²³ Pomeranz, K., *The Great Divergence*, p. 45

²⁴ Pomeranz, K., *The Great Divergence*, p. 66

that both China and Europe experienced long periods of unification and fragmentation. In China empire was the norm, while in Europe division prevailed more often. However, if on the one hand, “war offered to those who lived through it little more than misery”; on the other hand, it “also produced a series of distortions that pushed Europe toward urbanization and capital-using technologies several centuries before 1700”²⁵. In other words, the persistent threat of war in Europe produced positive conditions for economic change, and its absence in China allowed the Qing dynasty to implement policies, such as promoting the expansion of agriculture, keeping taxes low, and not interfering with internal commerce, that were unlikely to produce industrialization²⁶.

In this dissertation, however, I argue that the explanation of the Industrial Revolution, which developed in Britain, is fundamentally economic. In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in fact, England extended her lead by creating an intercontinental trading network that included the Americas and India, and this intercontinental trade expansion depended mostly on the acquisition of colonies, mercantilist trade promotion, and naval power. The consequence of this success created the country's high wage and cheap energy economy, which constitute the springboard for the Industrial Revolution. Then, if on the one hand, energy was costly in Europe and particularly expensive in China; on the other hand, British coal fields had the cheapest energy in the world. Therefore, thanks to its extraordinary economic power, which at least in part had already established itself before the Industrial Revolution itself, Britain eventually became the largest and most dynamic imperial power in the world. In other words, the advantage represented by the wide availability of coal and the hegemonic position that England was able to conquer in the intercontinental trading system played a decisive role in the start of industrialization.

Britain's primary interests were overseas and extra-European, both in commerce and the colonies. Having the major interests outside the region is indeed one of the main characteristics of a balancer, in order to operate impartially. Based on this assumption, in fact, the balancer's intervention should override all other considerations and be guided only by the desire to maintain or re-establish the international equilibrium. It

²⁵ Rosenthal, J., Bin Wong, R., *Before and Beyond Divergence: The Politics of Economic Change in China and Europe*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011, p. 228

²⁶ Rosenthal, J., Bin Wong, R., *Before and Beyond Divergence*, p. 230

cannot think of having neither permanent friends nor lasting enemies, implying that it can only have the permanence of its balancing strategy. There should, therefore, be no such thought as 'old alliances', 'ancient enmities' or 'special relationships'. In this regard, the historic role of the British great power of "throwing her weight now in this scale and now in that, but ever on the side opposed to the political dictatorship of the strongest single state or group at a given time"²⁷ was also noted by Sir Eyre Crowe, a German born Briton working for the British Foreign Office, in his famous "*Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany*" of 1907. The memorandum, in which the British foreign policy with regard to France and Germany is discussed, was highly influential and widely circulated in the foreign office. Germany's growing power and status on the European continent put itself in direct confrontation with Britain, and Crowe's core idea was that a war between Britain and Germany could not be avoided for long. According to Crowe, in fact, Germany desired hegemony, first in Europe, and eventually in the world, presenting a threat to the balance of power similar to the threat posed by Philip II of Spain, the Bourbons and Napoleon.

In the eighteenth century, reneging on treaty obligations was another Britain's balancer foreign policy and her habit of concluding a separate peace at the end of a war was the most interesting aspect of this behavior. The British participation in the War of the Spanish Succession, in the War of the Austrian Succession, and in the Seven Years' War, all ended with Britain abandoning her major ally. However, although it tended to make peace early, without achieving all her allies' aims, Britain "did so only when the threat to the balance of power seemed to have been averted"²⁸. At the cost of leaving her continental allies, with the Peace of Utrecht that ended the War of the Spanish Succession, Britain realized "one of the most sensational coups in the history of the British Empire"²⁹. Then, already in early 1748 during the War of the Austrian Succession, it also abandoned her Austrian ally. More precisely, Britain, the Dutch Republic and France signed the preliminaries of peace in April of that year, and Austria, left by her allies, was eventually forced to agree to the Anglo-French peace terms, although they included none of her major objectives. Finally, in 1762 during the Seven Years' War, also

²⁷ Paul, T. V., Wirtz J. J., Fortmann, M., *Balance of Power*, p. 33

²⁸ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 63

²⁹ Marshall, P. J., Low, A., *History of the British Empire*, p. 156

Prussia was left to struggle on alone, as Britain withdrew from the conflict by signing a separate peace with France³⁰.

1.2 The affirmation of the balance of power concept

Since it was signed, the Peace of Westphalia has become a reference point in the history of international relations and international law³¹. In the century and a half before this peace, the relations between the European powers had been dominated by “the apparent attempt of the House of Habsburg to achieve hegemony and even, at times, universal monarchy”³². Therefore, “[t]he illustrative evidence for the balance of power theories draws on the modern European great-power system beginning with the Treaty of Westphalia”³³. The mid-seventeenth century marks the birth of the system of European states, whose cardinal principle is the balance of power. This concept began to be applied to European politics in 1648, when the Peace of Westphalia was stipulated to end the Thirty Years’ War, which arose as a spatially bounded religious conflict but it then led to profound changes in European history and it soon became an international power struggle.

Many were the states entailed and the involvement of such a wide range of European kingdoms meant that its end celebrated the beginning of a new international order. In this regard, if on the one hand, the Peace of Westphalia represented the definitive conclusion of religious wars’ period; on the other hand, it established the beginning of a process of secularization of international relations, which would henceforth be based on the interests of the states and not on confessional interests. The treaties signed marked indeed the end of decades-long wars and set up a system based on the balance of power to guarantee perpetual peace in Europe, and to force the participants to help the weakest state in time of need. Therefore, it is customary to consider the Peace of Westphalia a symbolically and politically decisive moment, which showed that European political pluralism had by now been acquired and that a first version of a system of

³⁰ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 64

³¹ Janžekovič, I., *The Balance of Power from the Thirty Years’ War and the Peace of Westphalia (1648) to the War of the Spanish Succession and the Peace of Utrecht (1713)*, p. 11

³² McKay, D., Scott, H. M., *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648 - 1815*, New York: Routledge, p. 1

³³ Paul, T. V., Wirtz J. J., Fortmann, M., *Balance of Power*, p. 40

independent states, which mutually recognized the prerogatives of sovereignty, had been achieved.

“The Peace of Westphalia was not, itself, founded on balance of power”³⁴. In fact, “the arguments advanced and the principles on which the Treaty of Westphalia was signed were those of law and justice”. However, “the inadequacy of these principles as a foundation for international security was already evident in the motives of many states; hence the term balance began to appear more frequently as a secondary diplomatic goal”³⁵. The balance of power system strongly attests to the norms of Westphalian sovereignty³⁶, meaning that since sovereign states have a legitimate right to exist, regardless of their power capabilities and their size, the balance of power is essential to prevent a lawless situation from emerging. The Peace of Westphalia established also the principle of non-interference, which is not separated from the balance of power. According to the concept of respect for the sovereignty of other states, each signatory would undertake to respect the territorial rights of the other signatory states and refrain from intervening in their internal affairs. In other words, the balance of power is the real achievement of Westphalia and with it the birth of an international law and diplomacy that will be made instruments to ensure stability and peace, considering war in Europe, from now on, an exception and not the rule. This equilibrium was briefly interrupted by the French Revolution, which set out to export to other peoples the ideals of liberty and equality born of the Enlightenment, thus violating the principle of non-interference enshrined in Westphalia. However, it was especially in the age that began after the Peace of Westphalia that the notion of balance of power began to secure widespread currency and to feature widely in discussions of European politics³⁷. More specifically, the concept of the balance of power was used for the first time in an international treaty with the Utrecht agreements, in particular in the first section of the agreement between Spain and England (July 13, 1713)³⁸. This concept “was, therefore, present in

³⁴ Croxton, D., *Westphalia: The Last Christian Peace*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013, p. 377

³⁵ Croxton, D., *Westphalia: The Last Christian Peace*, 2013, p. 377

³⁶ Paul, T. V., Wirtz J. J., Fortmann, M., *Balance of Power*, p. 5

³⁷ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648-1815*, p. 8

³⁸ Trampus, A., *Dalla libertà religiosa allo Stato nazione*, Roma: Viella, 2016, p. 95

international treaties: implicitly in Westphalia and explicitly in Utrecht³⁹. Since the Peace of Utrecht, in fact, having become a leading principle, the balance of power was referenced repeatedly in the treaties.

In the seventeenth century, the system was centred on the sovereigns' activity, which was built on continuous negotiations and which formed a sort of republic, whose members were independent but, at the same time, linked by the common interest for the preservation of order and peace. In this century, the idea of the balance of power often "acted in opposition to the idea of universal monarchy wanting to secure hegemony abroad and harmony at home"⁴⁰. In fact, the balance of power "represents a disposition of things, by means of which no power is in the condition of predominating in an absolute and exclusive way with respect to the others"⁴¹. However, in Europe, a patrimonial and dynastic conception of the state was prevailing. Each kingdom was considered as a patrimony of the dynasty that ruled it, generation after generation, passing down power from a sovereign to his legitimate heir. And, in an unstable political landscape, dominated by competition between the various dynasties, in order to gain the respect and obedience of their subjects, the monarchs had to prove capable not only of defending, but also of expanding the borders of their reign. This could be achieved in two ways: by marrying members of other ruling kingdoms, or by waging wars, which if won allowed for new territories to be seized. Soon, the politics of marriage and the politics of power became difficult to distinguish: the great ruling families were almost all related to each other and, therefore, if a European throne remained vacant, sovereigns could claim the right to occupy it and thus had a valid justification for declaring war on the other claimants.

In the second part of the seventeenth century, the European arrangements had begun to change and in the first part of the eighteenth century three wars of succession were fought. These conflicts officially began for dynastic reasons, but their real aim was to establish new balances between the European states, altering their reciprocal power relations and, above all, preventing a single state from acquiring too much power and

³⁹ Janžekovič, I., *The Balance of Power from the Thirty Years' War and the Peace of Westphalia (1648) to the War of the Spanish Succession and the Peace of Utrecht (1713)*, p. 12

⁴⁰ Janžekovič, I., *The Balance of Power from the Thirty Years' War and the Peace of Westphalia (1648) to the War of the Spanish Succession and the Peace of Utrecht (1713)*, p. 12

⁴¹ Fiocchi Malaspina, E., *L'eterno ritorno del Droit des gens di Emer de Vattel*, p. 89

destabilizing the entire continent. Some states were on a downward slope, such as Spain, which had entered a deepening political and economic crisis; and others appeared to be on the rise on the continental chessboard, such as France, which had established itself as the model of monarchical absolutism and had waged an almost uninterrupted series of wars with neighboring countries, aimed at expanding its domains. At the turn of the new century and after the upheavals of the revolution, also Britain was ready to play a leading role.

The tremendous Thirty Years War saw France's power grow, while Spain's was rather in decline. Although it was in deep crisis, thanks to her colonial empire and the European spaces it politically influenced or occupied, it was still considered a great power, as it was the owner of a vast domain, with possessions in the territories of Italy, in the Southern Netherlands, being also the holder of an immense colonial empire scattered in Africa, in the three Americas and in the Great Ocean⁴². This situation, however, formed the preconditions for new geopolitical arrangements. In the last years of the seventeenth century, a political problem arose when King Charles II of Spain was dying without an heir, leaving ample space for a French plan to unite the two crowns, namely of France and Spain, with the consequence of constituting a great European state capable of prevailing over the others. In 1701, after the death of King Charles II, the War of the Spanish Succession broke out and it ended in 1713 with the Peace of Utrecht, which represents the full affirmation of the principle of the balance of power in Europe. As early as 1698, foreseeing the imminent death of King Charles II, the United Provinces, Britain and France established that the possessions should have been divided between the possible heirs at least in two parts, in order to ensure a balance of power within the continent. Surprisingly, King Charles II named in his will as his universal heir the young Philip of Bourbon, nephew of Louis XIV, King of France, provided that the two crowns of Spain and France remained separate. No one in Europe, however, believed that the Sun King would abide by the pacts, giving up the creation of an immense kingdom in Western Europe. Not accepting such a concentration of power, the other states, primarily Austria and Britain, sided together with Holland, Portugal and Savoy against France and Spain.

⁴² Wilson, P. H., *The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy*, Harvard: Belknap Press, 2011, p. 124

At the beginning of the conflict, it seemed possible for France to resume its push eastwards, but in the end, in order to safeguard the coexistence of several sovereign states in Europe and avoid territorial changes such as to generate disproportionate power, a political concept had to be developed. It was the Treaty of Utrecht that officially affirmed the concept of *iustum potentiae equilibrium*, which is thought to be the best and most secure foundation of mutual friendship and lasting agreement in every quarter⁴³. Established for the first time in Articles 2 and 6, through this expression the contracting parties explicitly declared that it was the right criterion for achieving "general peace and tranquility in Europe"⁴⁴. With this principle, no state was to become so large as to be able to dominate the continent unchallenged, reducing the other states to the status of minor powers unable to influence the overall situation. Therefore, if on the one hand the War of the Spanish Succession was essentially a coalition war with the aim of containing French expansionism in order to end the threat of Louis XIV's hegemony; on the other hand, its conclusion with the Peace of Utrecht in 1713 brought into being a system of balance of power in Europe, which provided also the stage for the emergence of Britain as its balancer⁴⁵. With the Peace of Utrecht in 1713 the British state obtained Gibraltar and Menorca from Spain, which were essential for the control of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic connection, and it gained some territories in North America, including Acadia and Newfoundland from France. In the War of the Spanish Succession, France survived the wars with its territory almost intact, but its European predominance was at an end. Its defeat was the work of a European coalition, which was led by Britain, allowing its rise as a great power⁴⁶. The latter's success came not so much from treaties and trading concessions as from the ability of its merchants and of the royal navy to exclude and destroy competitors. Its small population, lack of a standing army and its important non-European interests meant that it could not dominate the continent in the style of Louis XIV's France style⁴⁷. In fact, Britain did not take its place: the defeat of France ended the era of the predominance of one power

⁴³ Trampus, A., *Dalla libertà religiosa allo Stato nazione*, p. 100

⁴⁴ Osiander, A., *The States System of Europe, 1640 – 1990*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 123

⁴⁵ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 106

⁴⁶ Mckay, D., Scott, H. M., *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648 – 1815*, p. 42

⁴⁷ Mckay, D., Scott, H. M., *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648 – 1815*, p. 95

and led to a more fluid European states system⁴⁸. However, even though the acquisitions of the Peace of Utrecht lay the foundations for the English greatness, it did not close the game for the conquest of a primacy that was no longer only European.

1.3 The Anglo-French contest for hegemony

In British eyes, peace was based on the idea of an overall balance which could be adjusted by an occasional intervention by Britain⁴⁹. In this regard, it was usually willing to intervene in quarrels that disturbed the general peace and upset the balance which had been established at Utrecht.

Although throughout the first part of the eighteenth-century smaller states managed to expand, adopting aggressive policies or exploiting the regional rivalries and weaknesses of the major European powers, the struggle for hegemony, in Europe and the world, saw France and England as the main protagonists and rivals. In fact, “despite the efforts of some British and French statesman to establish a durable peace by a system of collective security, old contests had continued after the Peace of Utrecht”⁵⁰. At stake there was the top position in the ever-expanding world-system that Europe was building, meaning that the strategic and economic rivalry between the two powers, namely France and Britain, was the leitmotif of the European history of the eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth century. France and Britain have been traditional enemies for centuries and the struggle for mastery between them was the “single dominant idea” after 1713⁵¹.

Interestingly, in 1716, these two powers began successful negotiations for the conclusion of an alliance and, in December of the same year, the treaty was signed. When the Dutch United Provinces acceded in this entente, in January 1717, it became the Triple Alliance, and the accession of Austria the year later transformed it into the Quadruple Alliance. With this agreement, both France and Britain had much to gain. In fact, both powers had not only been isolated by the Treaty of Utrecht's negotiations but also had dynasties whose hold on power was unsure. In fact, if on the one hand, another

⁴⁸ Mckay, D., Scott, H. M., *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648 – 1815*, p. 94

⁴⁹ Mckay, D., Scott, H. M., *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648 – 1815*, p. 96

⁵⁰ Schroeder, P. W., *The Transformation of European Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 3

⁵¹ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 109

Jacobite insurrection threatened Britain; on the other hand, France was governed by a regent, “since the sickly Louis XV succeeded to the throne in 1715 at the age of only 5”⁵². As a genuine factor in international politics, the Anglo-French entente lasted until 1731, when Louis XV was 21 and produced an heir.

“In seeking to construct a European system [...] the French diplomatic network almost perfectly complemented the British”⁵³. In other words, since British military power was essentially sea-based, and French power was land-based, their military resources were complementary⁵⁴. However, although the entente had been instrumental in the development of France and Britain’s European foreign policy views of the period, for both it represented a dramatic change of policy. In fact, this alliance was defined by Richard Lodge as “quite as deserving to be called a diplomatic revolution as the Austro-French alliance of 1756, to which the term is usually applied”⁵⁵. The consequence of the Anglo-French alliance is that, by 1716, virtually every state in Europe was susceptible to some degree of influence from either France or Britain. This diplomatic revolution was “the only aberration in this century of apocalyptic rhetoric and incessant hostilities between the two powers”, since excluding this entente Britain and France “were either in a state of ‘cold’ or real war”⁵⁶.

In the long run, the Anglo-French alliance brought some benefits. “France gained security abroad and was allowed, during the critical period of Louis XV's minority, to recuperate in peace after the damaging last war”⁵⁷. However, the entente was never popular in either state, and “the two nations continued to dislike each other as fiercely as ever”⁵⁸. The alliance of 1716–31 was incapable of transforming the fundamental assumptions governing both powers’ approach to the international system; rather, it merely suppressed their hostile effects until the domestic political structures of both states became more secure. On the continent, in fact, Britain viewed France in negative terms, and it sought to prevent France from allying with a third power and distracting

⁵² Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 109

⁵³ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 109

⁵⁴ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 109

⁵⁵ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 109

⁵⁶ Horn, D. B., *Great Britain and Europe in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 382

⁵⁷ Mckay, D., Scott, H. M., *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648 – 1815*, p. 111

⁵⁸ Mckay, D., Scott, H. M., *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648 – 1815*, p. 110

London from its lucrative overseas trade⁵⁹. After Walpole's ministry, in fact, successive British governments frequently expected other European states to be as Francophobic as the Board of Trade and tended to interpret European politics through the prism of respective support or opposition to France⁶⁰. France, for its part, under Fleury began seeking hegemony in Europe and favored alliances only if its partners "were prepared to accept an international system presided over by France and in which French interests were given free rein"⁶¹.

"This chronic hostility can largely be attributed to the mercantilist ideology underscoring their respective trade policies"⁶². The mercantilist view thought of economic prosperity as an element of state prestige and a source of tax revenue for the sovereign, seeing such prosperity as the result of a fierce competition with other states. The mercantilists were convinced that the global level of wealth, expressed by gold and precious metals in circulation, was more or less stable. They assumed that in order to enrich themselves, each state had to hoard resources, increasing exports of goods and limiting imports and the consequent disbursement of money. Therefore, to prevent the outflow of valuable metals, the direct aim of the state became to promote economic activities, strictly supervise production, and control trade, through an efficient system of customs. During the seventeenth century, however, all these needs became a possible new justification for open conflicts and wars between states⁶³.

At the forefront of adopting these criteria, there were the seventeenth-century France, and Britain, which used this economic policy to undermine the Dutch maritime semi-monopoly. In this regard, with the Navigation Act of 1651, goods from Asia, Africa or America could not be imported in foreign ships. European goods had only to be carried either in English vessels or in the countries of origin ships, while "the coasting trade was to be reserved entirely for vessels owned by Englishmen"⁶⁴. In fact, all colonial goods had to arrive in English ports on English ships, in order not only to increase the country's

⁵⁹ Sofka, J. R., *The eighteenth century international system: parity or primacy?*, Review of International Studies, 2001, p. 154

⁶⁰ Sofka, J. R., *The eighteenth century international system: parity or primacy?*, p. 154

⁶¹ Sofka, J. R., *The eighteenth century international system: parity or primacy?*, p. 154

⁶² Horn, D. B., *Great Britain and Europe in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 382

⁶³ Holsti, K. J., *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order 1648-1989*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1991, p. 52

⁶⁴ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power The System of International Relations, 1648 – 1815*, p. 208

potential naval strength and reduce freight charges but also to undermine the decisive role of Dutch intermediaries for trade from the East to Europe. Bitter naval wars broke out, ending with British victories and sanctioning the beginning of the centuries-old English preponderance in commercial and military control of the seas. In this contest, therefore, victory was extremely important, as "it is only the balance of money in a state that makes the difference in its greatness and power", meaning that the addition of money to the nation's stock was "to increase the power, the greatness and the plenty of the state"⁶⁵.

From the second half of the seventeenth to the first part of the eighteenth century, many European countries had conducted their economic policy in line with the theory of mercantilism, which was based on a number of principles. The first concerned the idea that the wealth of a state was identified with the amount of gold and silver in circulation within its borders, and which were necessary to cover the ever-increasing costs of wars that were very frequent at the time, implying that the trade balance had to remain in surplus at all times⁶⁶. Therefore, a favorable balance of trade was needed, since "an increase in the amount of money circulating in an economy served as a stimulus to trade and industry: trade could prosper only when there was an abundance of money in the country"⁶⁷. To this end, the state had to intervene directly in economic matters to steer the market, adopting a protectionist policy on the basis of which exports were encouraged while imports from abroad were hit by high duties and thus discouraged. In order to support this policy, the state would have to stimulate both the emergence of domestic manufactures to facilitate domestic production and large trading companies capable of handling trade with the colonies.

By equating wealth with power and by posing the supply of economic resources as fixed, the economic policy of mercantilism led French and British ministers "to conceive of the main areas of colonial rivalry, namely North America, India and the Caribbean islands, in zero-sum terms"⁶⁸. This means that "if there is a winner, there must be a loser. If one country succeeds in exporting more goods, or more valuable goods, than it imports, then

⁶⁵ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power The System of International Relations, 1648 – 1815*, p. 205

⁶⁶ Magnusson, L., *The Political Economy of Mercantilism*, New York: Routledge, 2018, p. 217

⁶⁷ Magnusson, L., *The Political Economy of Mercantilism*, p. 112

⁶⁸ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 25

the trade surplus is for that state's benefit. And there must be a loser as a consequence of that benefit"⁶⁹. British naval, military and merchant supremacy translates, in fact, into ease of access to the finished products of English industry and into the availability of industrial raw materials and agricultural products at lower costs. The desire for colonies, therefore, resulted directly from the desire for trade. This statement is confirmed by Montesquieu, who states that: "[t]he end of their establishment is not the foundation of a town or a new empire but the extension of commerce"⁷⁰. According to the philosopher, "[i]t is a fundamental law of Europe that all trade with an overseas colony is regarded as a pure monopoly", meaning that trade in the colonies was always reserved to the motherland and its nationals. Consequently, "both British and French ministries, which were governed by this relentless and predatory economic orthodoxy of mercantilism, practiced overt hegemonic policies in relation to the colonial axis of the international system"⁷¹. In this regard, one overriding principle was that all the imports of the colonies had to come from the motherland and all the exports had to be sent only to that country. For this reason, in fact, historian John Seeley affirmed that "the history of the British greatness did not take place in Britain but in America and Asia". In Britain, the trade to and from English colonies was reserved by the Navigation Acts of 1651 and 1660, and the Staple Act of 1663. In France, Colbert established that "all trade to Canada and the French West Indies was undertaken only by French merchants who alone were accorded the passports which were required for undertaking that trade". He indeed ordered that "with no exception whatever, all foreign ships were to be excluded from trade with the islands" and even that the colonial authorities should "sink all foreign ships that come thither"⁷². The increasingly acrimonious relationship between the two powers and the corresponding inability to compromise were the consequences of this axiom that trade was the lifeblood of the state, a concept that was institutionalized by Colbert in France and the Board of Trade in Britain. Therefore, the "balance of trade" became almost as important a concern of every government as the "balance of power"⁷³, meaning that since it dictated the balance of money, it was believed that this

⁶⁹ Müller, L., *Neutrality in World History*, p. 49

⁷⁰ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power The System of International Relations, 1648 – 1815*, p. 226

⁷¹ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 22

⁷² Luard, E., *The Balance of Power The System of International Relations, 1648 – 1815*, p. 229

⁷³ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power The System of International Relations, 1648 – 1815*, p. 206

would determine whether a nation was rich or poor. This was proved by a statement of one writer that maintained: "[i]f the exports of Britain exceed its imports, foreigners must pay the balance in treasure and the nation grows rich. But if the imports of Britain exceed its exports, we must pay the foreigners the balance in treasure and the nation grows poor"⁷⁴.

It was generally believed that the total quantity of resources available was finite⁷⁵. Consequently, an increase in one state's trade must have involved a reduction of others' trade. Based on this assumption, Colbert stated that "one nation could improve its commerce, its merchant marine, or its manufactures, only by taking away something from the trade, the shipping or the industry of another country"⁷⁶. This meant that "each state was believed to have an interest, not only in increasing its own trade, but in damaging that of its rivals"⁷⁷. This technique is also demonstrated by British merchants that noted that "our trade will only improve by the total extinction of theirs"⁷⁸. Therefore, any gain for one party was perceived as an automatic loss for the other, implying that security could only be achieved through the destruction of the other party's resources and assets.

1.4 From a supreme European to a global imperial power

Securing European peace through the balance of power proved far from easy, as the interests of the states were in conflict. Between 1715 and 1740, there were no major European wars, but a number of conflicts exemplified the vulnerabilities of the eighteenth-century balance of power system. The Polish Succession War, for example, which broke out in 1733 between Austria and France and ended in 1738, was over the succession to the elective throne of Poland and demonstrated that the established balance of power was becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. What was lacking was a structured basis to face the strains produced by a dynastic succession crisis in the major states. In fact, a crisis in a minor state such as Poland could be coped with without

⁷⁴ Magnusson, L., *The Political Economy of Mercantilism*, 2015, p. 121

⁷⁵ Sofka, J. R., *The eighteenth century international system: parity or primacy?*, p. 154

⁷⁶ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power The System of International Relations, 1648 – 1815*, p. 204

⁷⁷ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648-1815*, p. 215

⁷⁸ Dorn, W., *Competition for Empire, 1740–1763*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1940, p. 9

a general conflict, but a succession crisis in a major one, such as Spain with the failure of the Habsburg line, would produce a bigger war.

In 1740, the international system was anarchic, with powers left free to expand until controlled by the balance of power mechanism. In those years, Prussia was not a recognized great power and the major powers in Europe had raised no fear of her expansion to that point. However, the emergence of Prussia, and in a few years, of Russia, “were to decisively shatter the bipolar concept of the balance and replace it with a much more complex multipolar one”⁷⁹. It was precisely the irruption of Prussia into the group of major powers and the aggression and desire for territorial expansion of its ruler Frederick II that were the prime factor in the destabilization of the state system in mid-century, when Europe was rocked by the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–8) and the Seven Years’ War (1756–63).

As far as 1740 another conflict of continental dimensions flared up again and the pretext was a dynastic question. Already in 1713, Emperor Charles VI of Habsburg found it necessary to make public a Pragmatic Sanction, namely a provision with which he established that his successor could also have taken place via female lineage⁸⁰. But at the time of his death in 1740, the sovereigns of France, Spain and Prussia refused to recognize as his legitimate heir Maria Theresa, daughter of Charles VI and designated by him to succeed him. The United Provinces of Holland, Britain and the Savoy, on the other hand, supported her. This conflict, which involved almost all European powers, broke out upon the accession of Maria Theresa of Austria to the Austrian throne, basically because of the expansionist aims of Frederick II of Prussia, who was eager to begin his reign with a prestigious political success, namely the extension of Prussian sovereignty over Silesia, a region controlled by the Habsburgs and very rich in natural resources. The War of the Austrian Succession is thought to be “the first major European conflict following the attempt at the Peace of Utrecht in 1713 to fix an enduring peace that included a set of commercial treaties that configured the exchange and power relations between European states”⁸¹. The war continued for eight years, on the battlefields of Bohemia, Germany, Flanders and Northern Italy, without the powers

⁷⁹ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 113

⁸⁰ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648-1815*, p. 78

⁸¹ Stapelbroek, K., Trampus, A., *The Legacy of Vattel’s Droit des gens*, p. 16

involved being able to achieve decisive victories. Therefore, in 1748, the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, which was based on the status quo ante bellum⁸², was concluded. However, if on the one hand, with this agreement, Maria Theresa of Austria was recognized as empress by the other European sovereigns and Frederick II of Prussia was in turn able to declare himself the winner, as he maintained possession of Silesia; on the other hand, on the international level, the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle did not ensure a stable order.

While the problems of dynastic succession appeared to have been resolved by the middle of the eighteenth century, the ambitions of conquest of the more aggressive and dynamic states had not subsided. There were two main reasons for tension. The first concerned continental balances: the rise of Prussia as a new power in central and eastern Europe was viewed with concern by both Maria Theresa's Austria, who hoped to regain Silesia, and Russia, which saw its borders threatened. The second reason for tension was linked to the competition for dominance of the seas and trade with the colonies, which pitted France and Britain ever more bitterly against each other. A planetary conflict was now underway between these two powers, with the French engaged in obstructing British colonial dominance that affected also the other European powers. Therefore, towards the middle of the eighteenth century the interests of Britain and France became increasingly conflicting, and the maritime and commercial rivalry between the two powers escalated. The frictions between the British colonies in North America and the French settlements in Canada and Louisiana were joined by confrontations in the Indian subcontinent. In fact, more fraught with consequences than the outcome of the clash between France and Great Britain is the subsequent takeover of India by the latter through the East India Company.

By 1755, however, a situation of undeclared war had been reached. In fact, "[a] direct look at French preparations and British operations made it evident that already at the beginning of 1755 the war between France and Great Britain could scarcely be avoided"⁸³. The opportunity for a new conflict presented itself with the Treaty of Westminster concluded in 1756 between Britain and Prussia, which was immediately countered by an alliance formed by France, Austria and Russia. The entente between the powers of France and Austria was the most dramatic result of the diplomacy of this

⁸² Marshall, P. J., Low, A., *History of the British Empire*, p. 158

⁸³ Danley, M. H., Speelman, P. J., *The Seven Years' War Global Views*, Leiden: Brill, 2012, p. 8

period⁸⁴, since for nearly a century they had been the two poles of a bipolar balance of power system. This surprising development proves that the needs of the moment required that friends be made into enemies, and enemies into friends, often at a moment's notice⁸⁵. "The absence of alliance memory", in fact, suggests that alliances should be flexible and temporary, and if a realignment would serve to benefit the equilibrium, states should be prepared to abandon their old allies and seek new ones, regardless of past friendships or hostility⁸⁶. Both powers, namely France and Britain, indeed, sought this alliance to insure themselves for a struggle against the state which each saw as its real enemy. In the case of France this was Britain and in Austria's case it was Prussia. Prussia had been an ally of France for decades, and Austria had been an ally of Britain for seventy years. However, Austria saw France as a potential partner against Prussia; while France wanted Austria to assist her in war against Britain. Only in May 1756 did France agree to join Austria, when war with Britain was already imminent. The French indecision was due to the fact that France, at the height of her power, had never been "joined by another power of the first rank"⁸⁷. However, it itself, by helping the Habsburgs for Silesia, saw the agreement as a way to strengthen her place in Europe and hoped to acquire directly or indirectly the Belgian Netherlands and thus strengthen its Atlantic position against England. This intertwining of interests therefore gave rise to the two formations. With Austria, France and Russia on one side, and Prussia and Britain on the other side, in 1756 began a conflict that lasted until 1763 and for this reason was called the Seven Years' War.

It is often said that the origins of this conflict are in the War of the Austrian Succession, of which the Seven Years' War was a mere continuation. These two conflicts should be seen as an integral whole, as the peace treaties that concluded the War of the Austrian Succession "were widely recognized as little more than an armistice that merely postponed decision on the main issues at stake"⁸⁸. In fact, "[o]n the one hand there was the Anglo–French contest for global power and on the other the question remained

⁸⁴ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648-1815*, p. 80

⁸⁵ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648-1815*, p. 26

⁸⁶ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 56

⁸⁷ Dehio, L., *Equilibrio o egemonia. Considerazioni sopra un problema fondamentale della storia moderna*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998, p. 116

⁸⁸ Szabo, F. A. J., *The Seven Years' War in Europe*, New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 2

whether Frederick of Prussia's 1740 grasp for great power status would succeed" ⁸⁹. Therefore, the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, which ended the conflict, was essentially a peace of exhaustion, which is proved by the fact that "[b]y basically restoring the status quo, it solved none of Europe's international problems" and "the peace left few participants satisfied, and no participants feeling secure" ⁹⁰.

The Seven Years' War was a watershed event in the larger international context of Europe. Since it was the first conflict in history to be fought not only on European soil, but also in various parts of the globe where European powers had colonial possessions, it is no longer considered a mere inner-European conflict but, as described by Winston Churchill⁹¹, it is referred to as a first world war between France and Britain for overseas supremacy. More precisely, the fighting took place on all continents, apart from Australia, and it extended itself from Bengal to southern India, from the Philippines through Africa to the Caribbean, from North America through the Balearic Islands to Silesia, East Prussia and Westphalia. With two parallel lines of separate conflicts, one between France and Britain on the seas, in the colonies and in West Germany, and the other between Frederick II and the coalition of his opponents in East Germany, in Silesia, on the borders of Bohemia and Poland, also two separate treaties, the Treaty of Paris, which regulates maritime and colonial issues, and the Treaty of Hubertusburg, which establishes the status quo ante and regulates the European territorial issues, were signed to put an end to both conflicts⁹².

The Seven Years' War eventually "led to the rise of the five great powers that would dominate European history into the twentieth century: Britain, France, Prussia, Austria, and Russia"⁹³. It then confirmed the cession to the Prussians of the rich province of Silesia, already obtained during the previous War of Austrian Succession, and established Prussia as a great continental power in Europe. For Britain, the Seven Years'

⁸⁹ Szabo, F. A. J., *The Seven Years' War in Europe*, p. 424

⁹⁰ Szabo, F. A. J., *The Seven Years' War in Europe*, p. 8

⁹¹ Neal, L., *Interpreting Power and Profit in Economic History: A Case Study of the Seven Years' War, 1777*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2119442>

⁹² Treccani, *Guerra dei Sette Anni*, <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/sette-anni-guerra-dei/#:~:text=Combattuta%20in%20quattro%20continenti%2C%20afferm%C3%B2,Austria%20d'avanti%20all'affermata%20superiorit%C3%A0>

⁹³ Danley, M. H., Speelman, P. J., *The Seven Years' War Global Views*, 2012, p. 532

War was truly an Imperial war “in a way that no previous war had been”⁹⁴. In fact, Britain's 1763 victory over France on the non-European front put a brake on French colonial expansion, as it succeeded also in conquering Quebec, the Ohio territories, part of the West Indies, Cuba and large parts of India. With the Peace of Paris, Britain was also granted Canada, Spanish Florida, Louisiana and, in Africa, Senegambia⁹⁵. However, while this war verified the greatness of Britain, thus a maritime and colonial power capable of dominating the seas of the entire planet, it also highlighted the symptoms of French decadence.

“Much of the theory and practice of maintaining the balance of power in Europe helped preserve the relative security of the naval and economic strength of the global power”⁹⁶. In contrast to previous wars, in fact, the main focus of the Seven Years' War was the maritime and colonial influence in overseas territories, and the sweeping British colonial gains in this conflict highlights a feature of the eighteenth-century balance of power thinking. In this regard, as the century progressed, the question of the colonial and commercial empires of the great powers began to receive increasing attention. It was clear that “the wealth derived from their trade and colonies was a crucial element in the ability of states, such as Britain, to exercise their role in the European balance of power”⁹⁷. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Britain was the strongest proponent of the balance of power theory. It itself, as the leading global economic and naval power, had the most to lose from the extension of the balance of power concept beyond Europe to include the balance of naval and economic power on a global scale. However, it is also no surprise that Britain has long defined its interests in terms of pursuing a balance of power on the continent but a preponderance of naval and colonial power on a global scale.

Therefore, at the end of the Seven Years' War, “Britain was victorious and invulnerable on the seas, France defeated and weakened, Austria and Prussia worn out by war, Russia secure and dominant in the east and north”⁹⁸. In fact, if Britain with this conflict evolved

⁹⁴ Marshall, P. J., Low, A., *History of the British Empire*, p. 159

⁹⁵ Zanichelli, *Gran Bretagna*, <https://dizionariupi.zanichelli.it/storiadigitale/p/percorso/77/la-gran-bretagna-del-settecento-verso-il-predominio-mondiale-britannico>

⁹⁶ Paul, T. V., Wirtz J. J., Fortmann, M., *Balance of Power*, p. 43

⁹⁷ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 115

⁹⁸ Schroeder, P. W., *The Transformation of European Politics 1763 – 1848*, p. 3

from a supreme European to a global imperial power with a clear future in overseas expansion, France lost her status as a dominant colonial power in the Atlantic area and in India⁹⁹, being defeated by Prussia on land as well by Britain at sea. France was still the greatest power in Europe in terms of population and military strength, but it had not lived up to the reputation it had won in the previous wars. It still claimed to be the leading country in Europe, even though, in reality, it was greatly weakened by internal discord and deeply shaken by the blow to its moral prestige. France, therefore, was no longer the arbiter of the European situation.

“The Seven Years’ War on the European continent was costly, bitter and sanguinary far beyond what might be imagined from the frequently expressed stereotypical image of the ‘civilized’ and ‘limited’ warfare of that century”¹⁰⁰. While victorious, in fact, this conflict weighed heavily on British finances. The London government adopted a series of measures with the aim of shifting at least part of the costs of the war and the defense of the colonies to the colonists themselves with measures such as the Sugar Act of 1764, which aimed at stopping the smuggling of sugar from the Caribbean, or the Stamp Act of 1765, which levied a stamp duty on printed matter¹⁰¹. From an economic point of view, as well as financial, their interests were increasingly divergent. The privilege accorded to British products or products re-exported by the British harmed Americans, who claimed the freedom to trade freely. No American deputy sat in the Parliament, and the settlers claimed the illegitimacy of the measures, since they have been adopted without the consent of their representatives. The need for the consent of the subjects’ representatives to taxation, which is one of the cardinal principles of the British constitution that emerged from the Glorious Revolution, had been violated. And given the disappearance of the French and Spanish threat, the colonists no longer felt the need for the military protection of the motherland and in 1776 an assembly of representatives of the colonies proclaimed independence, opening hostilities.

Having a more structured military apparatus, in the first phase of the conflict, Britain had the advantage, but “France was more than eager to take revenge on the British and

⁹⁹ Planert, U., Blackaby, F., *Napoleon's Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 9

¹⁰⁰ Szabo, F. A. J., *The Seven Years’ War in Europe*, p. 434

¹⁰¹ Salvadori, M. L., *Rivoluzione americana*, 2006

<https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/rivoluzione-americana>

tightened up relations with Spain and the Netherlands, states that had also suffered from British ambitions. When the British started their campaign against the disloyal colonists in North America, they faced three countries hoping to challenge British dominance by supporting the new United States. The American War of Independence turned, in fact, into a global conflict with military campaigns occurring in the Caribbean, Europe, India and Africa, as well as North America"¹⁰². The end of the conflict was marked by the surrender of the English army at Yorktown in 1781, and the 1783 Treaty of Paris ratified the independence of the colonies. France, Spain and the Netherlands hoped to break down the British maritime and colonial dominance; but their hopes remained frustrated. If on the one hand the treaty signed took away from Britain some advantageous positions or some old or newly acquired territories, it did not destroy Britain's maritime and commercial preponderance. On the contrary, it found in the loss of the American colonies the stimulus to proceed to new colonial occupations that would compensate her for the lost territories. This decisive primacy, achieved with the Seven Years' War and then with the wars with revolutionary and Napoleonic France (1792-1815), will indeed remain essentially intact throughout the nineteenth century, despite the loss of American colonies.

Therefore, the Seven Years' War, which was fought on four continents, asserted Prussia's military supremacy in Europe; Britain's preponderance on the seas and its dominance in America and India; it decisively introduced Russia into the politics of the Western states, and finally marked the decline of Austria before the asserted superiority of Prussia, and that of France before England, which succeeded her in the domination of vast non-European territories. This conflict is, however, overshadowed "by the monumentality of the struggles against Louis XIV and Bonaparte, but it was no less prodigious in its consequences for the fortunes of Western civilization. Indeed, by introducing a number of permanent shifts in the geo-political dimensions of European, and, for that matter, global politics, it may ironically have been even more influential than the colossal efforts to defeat hegemonic thrusts in the interests of a more traditionally balanced status quo"¹⁰³.

¹⁰² Planert, U., Blackaby, F., *Napoleon's Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective*, p. 10

¹⁰³ Szabo, F. A. J., *The Seven Years' War in Europe*, p. 434

1.5 Redrawing Europe's map

In the last years of the eighteenth century and during the first ten years of the nineteenth century, all Europe was shocked by the military campaigns undertaken by Napoleon Bonaparte, who for a short time managed to extend his dominion over a large part of the continent. In Napoleon's political and military activity he was animated by the ideal of uniting all European peoples under the aegis of his empire, and wanted to establish a continental assembly to safeguard the common good of the large European family. Napoleon's actions were presented by he himself as intended for the liberation of oppressed national forces in the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, which was written by Emmanuel-Auguste-Dieudonné Las Cases. Las Cases recorded daily all that the Emperor did or said while dealing with the person of Napoleon during the first 18 months of his exile¹⁰⁴. The other states of the continent showed however that they did not share his conception whereby France would have had a position of absolute dominance; and the opposition manifested itself in the long series of coalition wars that the European states waged against Napoleon, precisely with the intention of putting an end to his hegemonic aims over the entire continent.

The Napoleonic Empire set itself two clear objectives from the outset: to expand its borders and to have supremacy over other powers. According to his imperial logic, and by aspiring to total control over continental Europe, the Emperor would have found himself entirely subjected to French hegemony, meaning not only political control over European states, which he gained through his victorious military campaigns, but also control of the seas and major trading ports. In 1804, when he assumed the title of Emperor, Napoleon planned the invasion of England, which remained his only adversary in Europe. Britain's crushing naval victory at Trafalgar in 1805, however, demonstrated that France lacked the naval power to realize such a project¹⁰⁵. At that point, Britain, Russia and Austria formed an anti-French coalition, with the aim of protecting and supporting "each other against any attempt to infringe their rights and territories"¹⁰⁶. However, Napoleon reacted quickly, beating the Austrians at Ulm and the Austro-

¹⁰⁴ Las Cases, E., *Memoirs of the life, exile, and conversations of the Emperor Napoleon*, p. 6
<https://gutenberg.org/cache/epub/53967/pg53967-images.html>

¹⁰⁵ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648-1815*, p. 94

¹⁰⁶ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 118

Russians at Austerlitz, in what was perhaps his greatest success. His victories and the creation of the Confederation of the Rhine under French control led to the formation of a new coalition between Prussia, Britain and Russia. Prussian troops were defeated at the Battle of Jena in 1806 and the Emperor, once again triumphant, proclaimed a continental blockade to strike at British trade.

It was only when Napoleon failed his attempt to challenge Britain's maritime supremacy that "France turned to establishing a continental empire in Europe". In fact, his "strategy to bring Great Britain to its knees, not by military but by commercial means and to inflict the first economic war of modern times, initiated an intervention policy on the continent that in the end led to the downfall of the Napoleonic Empire"¹⁰⁷. French and British hostilities during the Napoleonic Wars grew from a long period of commercial rivalry and warfare dating to the late 1600s. "During periods of war and peace, Britain and France pursued mercantilist policies restricting trade via blockade and tariffs with other states to enhance their own economic development"¹⁰⁸. However, "world trade was seen as finite, static, as a zero-sum game; and a country only could increase its trade at the expense of its competitors, trade was war, and war was one of the best ways to increase trade"¹⁰⁹. Therefore, mercantilist ideas, together with ideological differences, shaped Anglo–French hostility.

After the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, it was clear that the French navy could do nothing against the British fleet; and Napoleon began to strengthen the continental blockade, namely a large-scale embargo against British trade on the European continent. He wanted to destroy Britain's trading capacity in order to drain it financially. With the Berlin Decree of 1806, in fact, it was proclaimed that "the British Isles [were] in a state of blockade"¹¹⁰, meaning that trade and correspondence with Britain were banned. Napoleon prohibited the maintenance of trade relations with the British power to all the countries of the continent that were subjugated, allied or controlled by France. With the continental blockade, all states over which Napoleon's hegemony extended had to accept the continental blockade and adapt their economies to the needs of France.

¹⁰⁷ Planert, U., Blackaby, F., *Napoleon's Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective*, p. 11

¹⁰⁸ Aaslestad, K., Joor, J., *Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015, p. 3

¹⁰⁹ Aaslestad, K., Joor, J., *Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System*, p. 3

¹¹⁰ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648-1815*, p. 94

Therefore, “Europe was virtually under the control of one man and the balance of power was at an end”¹¹¹.

The continental blockade aimed at achieving two objectives: to devastate the British economy and to reorganize the entire system of production and trade on the continent according to French interests. In this design, France is placed at the center and as the industrial core of the satellite states, which are reduced to the status of suppliers of raw materials and markets for French products. The blockade proved, however, to be a failure because the British forced it. In fact, in 1807, “the British responded to the Berlin Decree with a series of Orders in Council that sought to tighten the blockade of France and its allies, deny French trade with neutrals and prevent Britain’s enemies from trading with their colonies”¹¹². Britain therefore instituted a counter blockade, severely damaging the French economy and causing shortages of raw materials and consumer products such as sugar, coffee and cotton.

The continental blockade’s decrees merely made the situation worse, since it extended to all seas, and thus to the whole world. “The continental blockade added to the existing instability of the Atlantic world and, by closing Europe’s ports to products coming from or going to the colonies, drew it deeper into the titanic clash between France and England”¹¹³. For the countries affected, in fact, the impact was not only on their populations but also on their economies. However, despite the difficulty and the costs of the wars, “Napoleon’s continental blockade unintentionally left Britain in a far stronger global commercial position in 1815”¹¹⁴. More specifically, “[t]he wars against France cost Britain dearly and burdened the British population; defense of the realm and civilian administration increased fivefold by 1813 and six-fold by 1815. Britain paid more than 60 million pounds, or 10 per cent of the revenue collected for the war, as subsidies to Austrians, Prussians, Portuguese and others fighting against Bonaparte, who preferred their aid in hard currency”¹¹⁵.

¹¹¹ Luard, E., *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648-1815*, p. 94

¹¹² Aaslestad, K., Joor, J., *Revisiting Napoleon’s Continental System*, p. 4

¹¹³ Planert, U., Blackaby, F., *Napoleon’s Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014, p. 24

¹¹⁴ Aaslestad, K., Joor, J., *Revisiting Napoleon’s Continental System: Local, Regional and European Experiences*, 2015, p. 9

¹¹⁵ Aaslestad, K., Joor, J., *Revisiting Napoleon’s Continental System*, p. 9

A new map of the world was taking shape, one over which Britain reigned supreme. However, “if Britain expanded its commercial reach during the wars, elsewhere in Europe and across the globe, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars seriously impeded trade. The war raised the relative price of importable goods everywhere, but they were significantly pronounced during the years of the Blockade with increases of 100 per cent or 200 per cent”¹¹⁶. Thus, the effects of the continental blockade proved to be negative, displeasing all states and increasing hostilities against France, which, despite considerable efforts, was neither able to manage nor control the entire continent. The European countries were indeed not so compliant either and violated the blockade on several occasions, causing the wrath of Napoleonic France. An example is the Russian Empire, which if on the one hand was Britain's main European economic partner at the time; on the other hand, it was also one of France's main enemies and great obstacle to the full realization of the continental blockade. In 1810, in fact, Russia decided to open its ports to neutral trade. The French Empire reached its maximum extent by 1810, and in 1812 Napoleon decided to invade Russia. Initial successes, with the capture of Moscow, were thwarted by the scorched-earth tactics adopted by the Russians, to which Britain made an exclusively political and diplomatic contribution, albeit relentless and valuable, which eventually forced the French troops into a disastrous retreat. France threatened the survival of the state system and Russia wanted to overturn and reduce French preponderant power to a size compatible with the safety of neighboring states. In fact, “[i]n 1812-1813, Russia's policy was equilibrist in nature” and “was based, consciously or unconsciously, on a concern with the preservation of the state system as a means toward achieving a balance of power in Europe”¹¹⁷.

In order to restore a European equilibrium and defeat Napoleon’s hegemonic France, the allies, namely Austria, Prussia, Russia and Britain, were in agreement that the French power needed to be reduced and a new overall equilibrium established¹¹⁸. Finally, in March 1814, allied troops entered Paris and in April Napoleon abdicated. The Treaty of Paris of 1814 echoed Utrecht in stating that it was designed to put in place a system of

¹¹⁶ Aaslestad, K., Joor, J., *Revisiting Napoleon’s Continental System*, p. 11

¹¹⁷ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 119

¹¹⁸ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 117

"real and permanent balance of power in Europe"¹¹⁹. The Bourbon monarchy was restored in France, and Napoleon was sent into exile on the island of Elba, from which he escaped in March 1815. After having regained control of France, the Emperor was then definitely defeated in June 1815 by the Anglo-Prussians at the Battle of Waterloo, which marked both the end of the Napoleonic Empire and "the consummation of the rise of the great powers which had taken place since 1648"¹²⁰. However, although "Napoleon made and remade most of the European continent almost at his will for well over a decade"¹²¹, he was unable to divide and deal separately with the enemy forces targeting France, proving the fact that "the international community affirms the desirability of maintaining a balance of power, and a major coalition war against a state deemed to have hegemonic aspirations results in the defeat of the expansionist state"¹²².

Therefore, whether on the one hand, the eighteenth-century system had been characterized by loose coordination; on the other hand, "[t]here is hardly any other era as abundant in profound change as the decades around 1800"¹²³. In June 1815, when the European great powers signed the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna, setting off the end of the Napoleonic era, the world became a different place. During the deliberations of the Congress of Vienna, Vattel and the Droit des gens were frequently referred to, "since there was a possibility of reconstructing an international system of European balances which, seen as a deterrent to new despotism, was meant to re-establish the peace guaranteed by the traditional powers of the ancien régime"¹²⁴. In other words, after the Emperor's defeat, representatives of the victorious powers met to re-establish the European political balance, with the intention of restoring the pre-1789 situation, eradicating also "any outcomes of the French Revolution and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars"¹²⁵. This attempt marked the entire first half of the nineteenth century, which is a period known as the "Restoration Age". At the Congress

¹¹⁹ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 110

¹²⁰ Mckay, D., Scott, H. M., *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648 - 1815*, p. 344

¹²¹ Broers, M., Hicks, P., Guimera, A., *The Napoleonic Empire and the New European Political Culture*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 1

¹²² Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 110

¹²³ Planert, U., Blackaby, F., *Napoleon's Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective*, p. 1

¹²⁴ Stapelbroek, K., Trampus, A., *The Legacy of Vattel's Droit des gens*, p. 184

¹²⁵ Müller, L., *Neutrality in World History*, p. 89

of Vienna, the major powers tried to establish “a political and territorial order that corresponded to the interests of the victorious states and, at the same time, prevented the formation of a new continental European hegemonic power”¹²⁶. The Vienna settlement was “a system-creating exercise similar to the peace settlement of Utrecht (1713)”, although it had a more lasting success¹²⁷. It was similar in that its aim was to recast the European order “to give it greater stability and make it more resistant to the danger of a state seeking to dominate the continent”¹²⁸.

In redrawing Europe’s borders, the winners were inspired above all by two principles. The first is the principle of legitimacy, according to which the legitimate sovereigns deposed by the French Revolution and Napoleon had the right to return to the throne; and the second is the principle of balance, according to which the priority was to ensure that no great power could impose its dominion over Europe to the detriment of other states. However, as argued by Quincy Wright, “[e]ach statesman considered the balance of power good for others but not for himself. Each tried to get out of the system in order to ‘hold the balance’ and to establish a hegemony, perhaps eventually an empire, over all the others.” Although the Congress of Vienna seemed to promote a balance of power and a mutual reconciliation of interests to establish a long-lasting international peace in Europe, two clear hegemons came out. “The Russian Empire in the east and, even more, the British Empire emerged as the real winners from the Napoleonic era”¹²⁹, demonstrating that they benefited the most from the changes around 1800.

In the various phases of the Congress of Vienna, Britain reaffirmed its function as the needle of the scales in Europe, not making territorial claims on the European continent, but rather being concerned with ensuring a balance that would prevent the emergence of new hegemonic ambitions, as well as consolidating her position as the greatest maritime power both on the Mediterranean (where it bought Malta) and on the Asian routes (where it acquired the Cape of Good Hope and the island of Ceylon, formerly Dutch colonies). In this way, “British leaders advocated a balance on land while preferring hegemony at sea”¹³⁰. The English, in fact, “while pretending to protect the

¹²⁶ Planert, U., Blackaby, F., *Napoleon's Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective*, p. 2

¹²⁷ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 124

¹²⁸ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 124

¹²⁹ Planert, U., Blackaby, F., *Napoleon's Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective*, p. 6

¹³⁰ Paul, T. V., Wirtz J. J., Fortmann, M., *Balance of Power*, p. 43

balance on land which no one threatened, were entirely destroying the balance at sea that no one was defending”¹³¹. Although the British economic and financial conditions were shaken, due to the enormous effort endured in the fight against France, especially during the period of the continental blockade, England had emerged victorious in the twenty-year struggle against revolutionary and Napoleonic France. It had broken the attempt at continental hegemony, had increased its colonial empire and naval power, and its primacy in colonies and seas was unshakeable. After 1815, the queen of the oceans had no serious rival to fear, neither at sea nor in international trade. Britain stood out as the sole imperial world power, and "had nobody to thank more for its prominence than its former archenemy"¹³².

Having restored order in Europe and redrawn the political map, the great powers tried to set up diplomatic and military instruments to guarantee the preservation of the international balances that had emerged from the Congress of Vienna. The most important is the Holy Alliance, which is a supranational organization founded on the principle of solidarity between sovereigns by divine grace and aimed at guaranteeing the maintenance of the status quo in all European states through periodic congresses and, in case of more immediate dangers, resorting to armed intervention¹³³. This alliance was born thanks to an initiative of Tsar Alexander I and then joined also by the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia. Britain, however, considered its content inconsistent for practical purposes, as well as incompatible with the foundations of its own constitutional regime and decided not to adhere to it. In this regard, Giovanni Battista Marochetti, a lawyer, noted that in Europe there was “a real destruction of the principle of the balance of power, which began with Napoleon and continued with the results obtained with the Holy Alliance. The latter was depicted by him as a set of dominating states, within which the smaller states, defined as second and third order, such as Piedmont, Bavaria and the kingdom of Naples did not belong”¹³⁴. According to Marochetti, in fact, “there could not have been such strong differences between the states nor did some of them have to be subjected to the decisions of others, because it

¹³¹ Paul, T. V., Wirtz J. J., Fortmann, M., *Balance of Power*, p. 43

¹³² Planert, U., Blackaby, F., *Napoleon's Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective*, p. 2

¹³³ Knapton, E. J., *The Origins of the Treaty of Holy Alliance*, 1941, pg. 135

¹³⁴ Fiocchi Malaspina, E., *L'eterno ritorno del Droit des gens di Emer de Vattel*, 2017, p. 232

contravened the fundamental principle argued by Vattel on which all international law is based, meaning that all states are equal, without some kind of distinction and have equal rights within the international community”¹³⁵. Later, however, the British Foreign Secretary Castlereagh promoted a second treaty, the Quadruple Alliance, which was signed in November 1815 between the four victorious powers, namely Great Britain, Russia, Austria and Prussia. It committed the contracting parties to guard against possible attempts at revenge by France and to intervene against any revolutionary upheaval that threatened the European balance.

The dual alliance system represented a novelty both because it explicitly linked the maintenance of international order to the internal order of individual states, and because it provided for a series of periodic consultations between the major powers, giving rise to a sort of European *directoire* with the task of peacefully resolving any disagreements between states¹³⁶. The European Concert, which was an ongoing dialogue between the major powers that helped to reduce tensions on the continent and ensure Europe a forty-year period of peace, was born. Its emergence was indeed due to the experience of the previous thirty years that had demonstrated to the statesmen of Europe, not that the balance of power system should be abolished or replaced, but rather that it needed to be refined and modernized in the light of new conditions. The Concert, therefore, had both the goal of securing harmony and cooperation by conciliation and of minimizing the tendency of the powers to group into opposing combinations.

Starting with the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and for over half a century, Britain was at the center of the international system. The country had worked successfully in Vienna and had created an order on the European continent that would have allowed it for a policy of balance and effective countering of any new hegemonic attempts. In other words, the European international system and the following years of peace gave Britain “the means to focus on its imperial status and economic supremacy that facilitated the

¹³⁵ Fiocchi Malaspina, E., *L'eterno ritorno del Droit des gens di Emer de Vattel*, 2017, p. 232

¹³⁶ Jeannesson, S., *The Concert of Europe*, 2020,
<https://ehne.fr/en/encyclopedia/themes/europe-europeans-and-world/organizing-international-system/concert-europe#:~:text=The%20Concert%20of%20Europe&text=From%201815%20to%201914%2C%20the,Europe%20from%20another%20broad%20conflict.>

establishment of a liberal free trade system which benefited the island and other European countries, at the expense of the extra-European world"¹³⁷.

In guaranteeing the centrality and hegemony that the British exercise in international relations, three pillars on which this position was based have been adopted. The first was the free trade, on which the country's foreign policy choices were measured. British industry, in fact, dominated unchallenged until the last decades of the nineteenth century. It was able to produce the best goods at the cheapest prices and had raised the flag of free trade at an international level¹³⁸. As long as the other countries did not possess the resources to build their own adequate industrial base, liberalism represented an undoubted advantage both for British producers and for foreign consumers. The second pillar was the gold standard, meaning the convertibility into gold of the pound, which became fully operational in 1821 and made paper money printed in London the reference currency for international trade and the city's Stock Exchange the financial center of the world. The third pillar concerned the balance of power, as a criterion and informal tool for regulating and organizing the European system of relations between states. To put it differently, all these pillars combined allowed to pass from the anarchic international system that was born in 1648 to the new one composed of a *primus inter pares*, namely Britain, that performed the task of balancing the equilibrium between the powers, in order to prevent the emergence of any form of hegemony on the continent.

The balance of power is therefore "the principle which gives unity to the political plot of European history"¹³⁹. In this regard, Joseph Nye has argued that the nineteenth-century balance of power system can be subdivided into five reasonably distinct periods, based on process. The first period, from 1815 to 1822 was the true Concert period, composed of great power cooperation. Then, from 1822 to 1854, the system continued but in a less structured form. The third period, from 1854 to 1870 was succeeded by an era of conflict, until this was superseded by the Bismarckian period, from 1870 to 1890, when Bismarck played the balance of power politics through a flexible alliance system.

¹³⁷ Planert, U., Blackaby, F., *Napoleon's Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective*, p. 12

¹³⁸ O'Brien, P. K., Allen Pigman, G., *Free Trade, British Hegemony and the International Economic Order in the Nineteenth Century*, *Review of International Studies*, 1992, p. 94

¹³⁹ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 170

Whereas, the period from 1890 to 1914, “saw a growing rigidity in the alliance system leading to the polarization of Europe and the outbreak of war between the great powers in 1914”¹⁴⁰.

¹⁴⁰ Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*, p. 123

CHAPTER 2

Reluctant Europeans

2.1 Rule Britannia

As we have seen in the first chapter, implicitly in Westphalia and explicitly in Utrecht, the balance of power concept has always been present in international treaties. From the eighteenth century, it was Britain that excelled in the role of the balancer as an external but decisive and maneuvering force. Over the centuries, Great Britain has invested time and resources in maintaining and expanding its colonial empire, intervening on the continent only when there was a particularly serious threat for the stability of its role as the European balancer, and above all for the one as a world power, to then resume isolationist tendencies again. In the second chapter of this dissertation, we will see that it was precisely Winston Churchill, former British Prime Minister, who proposed the creation of the “United States of Europe”, in which French, Germans and other European powers had to put aside their differences and work together in common cause to defend and maintain the supremacy in the European continent. However, I will also show that, strategically, Britain wanted to position itself as a friend and sponsor of the European project, whose unity it explicitly hoped and supported, but did not want to be a member of it, in such a way as to guarantee once again its intercontinental imperial position, especially through the two pivots of its international politics: the Commonwealth and the ‘special relationship’ with the United States.

Britain has built an empire by keeping away from European conflicts and intervening on the continent only to fight threats of hegemony and restore the balance of power. With the aim of harmonizing its interests with those of as many powers as possible, the policy of equilibrium pursued by the British Empire proved useful both to itself and to the continent. As we have seen, throughout the eighteenth century and into the era of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic War, it has undoubtedly been a European and an imperial power at once. This was not a rejection of a European role, but rather a continuing recognition that especially when conflict arose, the British country would always have a responsibility in the European continent. After 1815, it emerged as the victor in a Europe that was a "far less competitive one than in the preceding two

centuries", which allowed Britain to carry on "a policy of manipulating the continent of Europe into a balance of power that enabled it a free hand to pursue its imperial ambitions"¹. The British Empire, in fact, waged war with other European states for control within Europe, but it also engaged in intense competition with those very same powers in the extra-European world. The reason was that only by guaranteeing peace and stability in Europe "could it pursue its imperial interests outside it"².

The unity of the European continent has long been thought and hoped, despite the different objectives, processes and contexts. However, it is the First World War that marks the end of the myth and utopia, which have always prevailed over the reasons of economy and politics, and see the emergence of movements to unite Europe. Therefore, the horror and carnage of the first world conflict have been the stimulus behind the wish to end the destructive antagonistic rivalry of European nation states³. In 1923, Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi promoted the first project and the first movement for European integration. His goal was not only to spare Europe from further fratricidal wars, but also wanted to warn the European continent against the threat deriving from the new centers of power that were being established in the world: the United States, Japan and the Soviet Union. Kalergi's Pan-European Union grew and in 1927 Aristide Briand, former Prime Minister of France, became the honorary president of this oldest European unification movement. In 1929, in a speech to the rostrum of the League of Nations, an international organization set up by the victorious powers of the First World War with the purpose of maintaining peace and developing international cooperation in the economic and social fields, Briand proposed a "European federation", built "not upon the idea of unity but of union"⁴, which was intended to create lasting economic and political ties between nations without undermining their sovereignty in any way⁵. In this respect, between the 1930s and 1940s, two different ideologies regarding the union of the European continent were formed. On the one hand, there is functionalism,

¹ Grob-Fitzgibbon, B., *Continental Drift: Britain and Europe from the End of Empire to the Rise of Euroscepticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, p. 9

² Grob-Fitzgibbon, B., *Continental Drift*, p. 9

³ Dedman, M., *The Origins & Development of the European Union 1945-2008: A History of European Integration*, London: Routledge, 2009, p. 14

⁴ *Briand Plan for the Federation of Europe*, Advocate of Peace through Justice, Vol. 92, No. 3, 1930, p. 195, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20681475>

⁵ Mammarella, G., Cacace, P., *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, Bari: Laterza, 2013, p. 21

which believed in a union of states that minimally affected national sovereignty; and, on the other hand, there is federalism, which advocated the formation of a multinational federal state. Although the functionalist approach was predominant during the course of the twentieth century, in the immediate post-war period it was federalism that reached its peak, first of all within the defeated countries, which saw in Europe a project of possible redemption thanks to the reintegration into the international community⁶. Especially for the economic aspects, this plan aroused some consensus, such as those of Gustav Stresemann, chancellor and foreign minister of the Weimar Republic, who came to propose the need for a European currency, and of the economist John Maynard Keynes, who accused the protectionism fostered by high tariffs as the main obstacle to a "European renaissance"⁷. The reactions of the British were instead skeptical and suspicious, as they have always been the supporters of free trade on a global scale. Despite the proposal of the European federation found great consensus, 1929 was the year of the Great Depression and it caused any kind of collaboration between states to fade away. Each government, in fact, sought autonomous solutions to the economic crisis, choosing to deal with the consequences by their own means, appealing to national interests and patriotic sentiments.

In the first post-war, the idea of a united Europe remained only a project of international politics. "Interest in such movements and proposals had no great effect on the realities of European economic and political affairs. Such organizations [in fact] never achieved a mass following but remained a minority preoccupation of certain intellectuals"⁸. Following the outbreak of the Second World War, however, the unification of the European continent became the goal of major international politics, as it was natural to think about how to put an end to wars that had become devastating. Therefore, during the second post-war period, it was no longer a question of isolated voices, but of expressions of a debate involving movements of opinion and government policies⁹.

At the end of the Second World War, "many Britons believed that the United Kingdom's responsibility was to lead not just the British Empire and Commonwealth but Europe

⁶ Mammarella, G., Cacace, P., *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, p. 25

⁷ Mammarella, G., Cacace, P., *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, p. 21

⁸ Dedman, M., *The Origins & Development of the European Union*, 2009, p. 14

⁹ Mammarella, G., Cacace, P., *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, 2013, p. 17

also"¹⁰. In this regard, it was precisely Winston Churchill, a former army officer, war correspondent and Prime Minister of Britain, who became convinced that only a united Europe could guarantee peace. In 1946, after suffering a crushing defeat in the British general election, he began to fully immerse himself in the politics and problems of the postwar world. If on the one hand, the world "slowly learned the full extent of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi regime through the trials at Nuremberg"¹¹; on the other hand, the alliance of victors composed of Great Britain, the United States and Russia started to unravel. And yet, in Churchill's eyes, it became more and more obvious that Soviet Russia aimed at extending its sphere of influence to the heart of the European continent. In his famous 'Sinews of Peace' speech at Fulton, Missouri, in March 1946, the former British Prime Minister based his hope for the future of world peace on a "fraternal association of two of the great victorious allies, Britain and the United States"¹², warning the world that an 'iron curtain' had descended from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic. In this discourse, however, there is an ignored and often forgotten aspect, which played a dominant role in Churchill's postwar political life. In this occasion, he called for "a new unity in Europe from which no nation should be permanently outcast"¹³. Therefore, after the devastation of the first half of the twentieth century, the only way to ensure lasting peace was to build a European Union, which will become one of the most successful creations of peaceful cooperation in human history. Fulton's speech attracted such publicity as to teach Churchill that "his standing as Britain's indomitable wartime leader gave him free rein to speak on any topic that interested him"¹⁴. Throughout his career, he used a simple and precise language, which allowed him to deliver effective speeches that all could understand. By giving inspirational discourses, Churchill was able to encourage people to have faith in him, especially when Britain was desperate. British people could therefore identify with him and trust his vision. To put it differently, by using the power of charisma for better leadership, he was able to set and reach the goals of his country.

¹⁰ Grob-Fitzgibbon, B., *Continental Drift*, 2016, p. 7

¹¹ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand: The Struggle to Unite Europe*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2017, p. 14

¹² *Churchill Speech Reaction*, in *The Western Daily Press*, 20 September 1946

¹³ Churchill, W., *The Sinews of Peace*, in *International Churchill Society*, 1946

¹⁴ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, 2017, p. 15

The mere mention of Churchill's name attracted also the attention of audiences all around the world. In this regard, after serious and long reflection, in September 1946, at the University of Zurich, on the occasion of receiving an Honorary degree, Winston Churchill delivered a speech that marked the initiation of the postwar process of European integration and paved the way for the European Union. Information from Switzerland confirmed that he revised his speech very carefully¹⁵, and read it with "plain, unaffected gestures; sometimes emphasizing a word or a short sentence in a serene, and undemonstrative tone"¹⁶. He opened simply and quietly, by stating: "I wish to speak to you today about the tragedy of Europe, this noble continent [...]". And yet, after diagnosing the European illness, he prepared his listeners for a bold cure. The sovereign remedy was "to recreate the European family, or as much of it as we can, and provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom. We must build a kind of United States of Europe"¹⁷, where "small nations will count as much as large ones and gain their honors by their contribution to the common cause"¹⁸. Churchill was therefore not only a Briton, but also a European. He became a pioneer of the European ideal, so much so that after the Second World War, at the height of his international fame, he told his wife "If I were 10 years younger, I might be the first President of the United States of Europe"¹⁹. And yet, what he called the United States of Europe, an idea only vaguely dreamed of at the time, was a project on which "we must begin now"²⁰.

Turning to one of the most delicate parts of his speech, he said "I am now going to say something that will astonish you". Indeed, he astonished more than the Swiss by proposing nothing less than a partnership between France and Germany, "an idea that he knew was anathema to the French"²¹. In this way only, could "France recover the

¹⁵ *The London Letter*, in *The Press and Journal*, 20 September 1946

¹⁶ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, p. 17

¹⁷ Wall, S., *Reluctant European: Britain and the European Union from 1945 to Brexit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 7

¹⁸ Grob-Fitzgibbon, B., *Continental Drift*, 2016, p. 38

¹⁹ Salmon, T., Nicoll, W., *Building European Union: A Documentary History and Analysis*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 29

²⁰ Young, H., *This Blessed Plot: Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair*, New York: Macmillan, 1999, p. 16

²¹ Watson, A., *Churchill's Legacy: Two Speeches to Save the World*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016, p. 16

moral and cultural leadership of Europe. There could be no revival of Europe without a spiritually great France and a spiritually great Germany”²². The suggestion is all the more astonishing coming, as it does, from the man who was prepared to fight Germany to the last breath²³. However, “[w]hen the initial surprise has passed, we venture to say it will be concluded that the idea is not really surprising. To put the former Prime Minister's proposition another way: What hope would there be of permanent peace in Europe should Germany and France refuse to get together? The answer is obvious. None”²⁴. Churchill is realistic, which means that this was the only key to ensuring lasting freedom, peace and prosperity for all of Europe. Therefore, to unite the continent, the European bloc could only weld itself around the axis between France and Germany which, twice in half a century, had broken the peace and European balances.

When in the post-war Churchill delivered the Zurich speech, the European continent was still in ruins, and its future was highly unknown. He said: “The cannons have ceased firing. The fighting has stopped. But the dangers have not stopped”²⁵. Churchill used doomy and gloomy words to better paint the picture of a future that could easily get dark again, unless European countries, and especially France and Germany, cooperate to build a common future. In the introduction of his discourse, he wished to speak “about the tragedy of Europe, this noble continent [...]”, but he ended with famous and potent words of hope that changed the world: “Let Europe arise”²⁶.

Interestingly, a few months before the Churchill's speech, already in July 1946, at Metz, he requested the French to do everything in their power to urgently regain their national strength and work together with the British to take the lead in the unification of Europe. In this regard, the Zurich discourse ended with a passionate plea: "Using my privilege as your old and faithful friend, I do not hesitate to urge upon all Frenchmen, worn or worried though they may be, to unite in the task of leading Europe back in peace and freedom to broader and better days. By saving yourselves you will save Europe and by

²² Mammarella, G., Cacace, P., *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, 2013, p. 19

²³ *United States of Europe*, in *The Northern Whig and Belfast Post*, 20 September 1946

²⁴ *United States of Europe*, in *The Northern Whig and Belfast Post*

²⁵ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, 2017, p. 22

²⁶ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, 2017, p. 23

saving Europe you will save yourselves"²⁷. With regard to Germany, the former British Prime Minister left his audience in no doubt as to where the two world wars outbroke. In his opinion, they arose "out of the vain passion of a newly-united Germany to play the dominating part in the world", and "for the crimes and massacres that were committed by the Germans there was no equal at any time in human history"²⁸. Germany, therefore, "must be deprived of the power to rearm and make another aggressive war. [...] We must all turn our backs upon the horrors of the past and look to the future". According to Churchill, in order to build the United States of Europe, "[t]he French must understand that their resentment towards Germany cannot compromise the rebuilding of a strong and liveable Europe", and Germans "now have a last chance to make up for their past"²⁹. Germany, in fact, "was no longer the immediate danger to European peace; it was the chaos and degeneration engendered by the war and aggravated by the Soviet Union that threatened the continent"³⁰. In other words, to defend and maintain the supremacy in the European continent, French, Germans and other Europeans powers had to put aside their differences and work together in common cause.

The Zurich speech made a great impact. It "was a beacon"³¹. One of the earliest and most positive reviews of the discourse came from Max Petitpierre, the Swiss Federal Councilor. In a telegram immediately sent to Churchill on September 19, he congratulated the Briton on his "profound and courageous" speech. "Like you, I am convinced that Europe's health lies in the union of its peoples, not as a whole, but by pursuing the federalist formula with which my country has gained centuries of experience. This allows each country to preserve its own personality and to respect those of other countries. I hope that everyone, without exception, will listen to your moved appeal, so that Europe can finally experience peace in freedom"³². In this regard, Count Coudenhove-Kalergi immediately cabled to the Dolder Hotel: "It is an

²⁷ Churchill, W., Gilbert, M., *Churchill: The Power of Words*, Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2013, p. 606

²⁸ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, p. 19

²⁹ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, p. 104

³⁰ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, p. 90

³¹ Young, H., *This Blessed Plot*, p 16

³² Stephens, T., *Als Churchill in der Schweiz Politik und Vergnügen verband*, in Swissinfo.ch, 2015

unbelievable blessing to have the world's leading international statesman behind the idea of Pan-Europe". And, in a longer handwritten letter directed to Churchill himself, the founder of the Pan-European Union wrote: "Your speech made me one of the happiest men on earth, I cannot express my feelings of gratitude for all it meant for Europe, for the Pan European Movement and for me! Your help is incalculable in its tremendous consequences: now that you have raised the European question the Governments can no longer ignore it"³³. In Italy, the government and the public opinion immediately welcomed the invitation to create a United States of Europe. Alcide de Gasperi, the Italian Prime Minister, stated: "We are finally emerging from the humiliating post-war situation and re-entering, like everyone else, the European family in which we will be able to assert our conciliatory and universalist tendencies which aim at consolidating peace and at the security of minor nations"³⁴.

The crimes of Germany against humanity, including extermination, revolted the world completely and converted Germany into a pariah nation³⁵. However, as stated before, Churchill looked ahead to a new united Europe, which urgently needed the good effort and collaboration of all its peoples, including the Germans. For most Europeans, however, this was a "premature offer of reconciliation to a country whose leaders little more than a year earlier fought tooth and nail to maintain the five-year-long occupation of Europe"³⁶. In fact, Churchill's proposal that France and Germany should become partners as a first step in the restoration of Europe shocked the Frenchmen. "Leading French officials express considerable skepticism about the feasibility of Churchill's suggestion", said Reuter's Paris correspondent³⁷. In this regard, Churchill tried to find support of General Charles de Gaulle, who imagined would be just as worried about the Soviet threat in the East as disposed to seek a common European solution³⁸. The French country however feared Germany and was determined to prevent any restoration of its economic power, meaning that France wanted Germany to remain excluded and

³³ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, 2017, p. 116

³⁴ De Gasperi, A., *L'Unione Europea vuole la pace*, Speech in the Chamber of Deputies, 1949 <https://www.lanostrapatria.europa.org/de-gasperie-la-ced/documenti/de-gasperie-lunione-europea-vuole-la-pace/>

³⁵ Watson, A., *Churchill's Legacy*, p. 108

³⁶ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, 2017, p. 20

³⁷ *Churchill Speech Reaction*, in *The Western Daily Press*, 20 September 1946

³⁸ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, 2017, p. 131

occupied in its turn. And yet, this view was expressed trenchantly by the General better than anyone else. He maintained that “the reference in Mr Churchill’s Zurich speech to a Franco-German partnership had been badly received in France”³⁹. According to de Gaulle, in fact, Germany was a state that no longer existed. “The French were violently opposed to recreating any kind of unified, centralized Reich and were also gravely suspicious of the policy of the American and British governments”⁴⁰. The General believed firmly in the project, but he detested the idea that a United Europe would have to start with Franco-German rapprochement. In this respect, he stressed the fact that if French support was to be won for the idea of European Union, France must have entered as a founding partner with Britain.

European main newspapers were divided on the Zurich speech. Churchill firstly read his own address on the front page of the Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, which recognized the importance of the discourse but also believed that it “held the danger of aggravating tensions between East and West”⁴¹. Communist quarters described the proposal as yet another attempt to build up a Western bloc against the Soviet Union⁴². Of the same opinion was also the *Nachts Express* in Berlin, a Russian-controlled newspaper, which wrote that Churchill was “strengthening his front for a third World War”⁴³. Furthermore, the Belgrade Radio in its new bulletin at 8 pm, the Soviet-controlled Berlin and the Leipzig radio did not mention the speech, which had also been ignored by the French-controlled Baden-Baden radio⁴⁴. As we have seen, the Franco-German reconciliation was the most difficult proposition in Churchill's speech. In France, conservative and moderate newspapers were hostile to the idea of a rapprochement between the two countries, so much so that *l’Humanité* wrote: “British policy aims to make us into a more and more “spiritual” people, in the sense that Hitler wanted to transform France into a vegetable garden and a “Luna Park” for his German overlords”⁴⁵. The *Manchester Guardian* questioned instead the feasibility of Churchill's proposals, and condemned the

³⁹ Watson, A., *Churchill's Legacy*, p. 108

⁴⁰ Watson, A., *Churchill's Legacy*, p. 108

⁴¹ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, 2017, p. 113

⁴² *Churchill Speech Reaction*, in *The Western Daily Press*, 20 September 1946

⁴³ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, 2017, p. 113

⁴⁴ *Churchill Speech Reaction*, in *The Western Daily Press*, 20 September 1946

⁴⁵ *Le coup des grands sentiments*, in *l’Humanité*, 20 September 1946

timing of the speech, focusing on the confusion it appeared among world leaders, who at the time were summoned in Paris for negotiations on a postwar peace settlement⁴⁶. On the same line, there was also the Liberal News Chronicle, which was concerned about the impact of Churchill's speech on the Paris talks and wrote: "There is a widely expressed view that Mr Churchill has picked a curious time to advocate a policy which was certain, as he must have known, to embarrass the hard and uphill effort which 21 nations are now making in Paris to hold together the victorious war alliance"⁴⁷. On the hard line was The Times, which thought that the inclusion of Germany within the unity postulates was unacceptable to the European opinion of that time, and it was "the most problematic turn of the speech"⁴⁸. The Observer was of a completely different opinion and stated: "The recently evolved Churchill ideas, which are both older and newer, correspond more nearly to the needs of today and tomorrow"⁴⁹. What Churchill meant by the notion of British sponsorship of the Franco-German partnership was considered by The Australian Weekly Review. According to the newspaper, although Churchill might have better addressed French concerns of the Reich "by stating explicitly that Britain would come in as a founder member, it would have been ridiculous to suppose that he intended his own country to be withdrawn from Europe"⁵⁰.

At the Zurich speech, Churchill stated: "We must build a kind of United States of Europe", and by using "we" instead of "they", he apparently showed his support and possible participation in the new integration process focused on uniting Europe. This is proved by the following statement: "Britain will have to play her full part as a member of the European family"⁵¹. In the opening speech of the Congress of Europe in The Hague, in May 1948, in front of an audience debating about the model of the future integration, Churchill made clear his support and involvement in the European integration. He maintained: "We cannot aim at anything less than the Union of Europe as a whole, and we look forward with confidence to the day when that Union will be

⁴⁶ *Call for United Western Europe*, in Civil & Military Gazette, 21 September 1946

⁴⁷ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, 2017, p. 110

⁴⁸ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, p. 111

⁴⁹ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, p. 111

⁵⁰ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, 2017, p. 111

⁵¹ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, 2020, p. 8

achieved”⁵². In the very same occasion, however, Churchill foreshadowed what was to be the consistent position of post-war British governments until the beginning of the 1960s. His country “would imagine, encourage and support, but not take part in, a project which was to be led by, and comprise, the countries of continental Europe”⁵³. “In all this urgent work”, Churchill declared in the last sentences of the speech, “France and Germany must take the lead together. Great Britain, the British Commonwealth of Nations, mighty America and, I trust, Soviet Russia must be the friends and sponsors of the new Europe and must champion its right to live and shine”⁵⁴. Friends and sponsors are not, however, members. In this regard, the Italian newspaper *Avanti!* wrote that: “The purpose of the old fox's project was clearly that of establishing a bulwark of sufficient solidity between his country and Russia”⁵⁵.

As far as the United States are concerned, in 1946, President “Truman had expressed his interest and sympathy with this great design”⁵⁶. In this regard, the British-controlled Hamburg Radio and the American-controlled Southern German radio network reported the Zurich speech extensively, as did also the British and American news services in Germany. As stated before, Europe emerged from the Second World War in disastrous conditions, with countries and populations on their knees. Reconstruction appeared therefore to be a long and very complex work. In 1947, however, George Marshall, the US Secretary of State during the Truman presidency, first spoke of the need for a large appropriation for Europe. With this plan, the United States decided to finance the European continent to support the costs of its reconstruction, facilitate its economic development and curb the advance of communism. In June 1947, in a speech at Harvard University, he seemed to be referring to the United States of Europe project and stated: “In considering the requirements for the rehabilitation of Europe, the remedy lies in [...] restoring the confidence of the European people in the economic future of their own countries and of Europe as a whole. [...] Before the United States Government can

⁵² Danzig, J., ‘*We must build a kind of United States of Europe’ said Churchill*, in University Association for Contemporary European Studies, 2020 <https://eu-rop.e.ideasoneurope.eu/2020/03/01/we-must-build-a-kind-of-united-states-of-europe-said-churchill/>

⁵³ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, 2020, p. 8

⁵⁴ Grob-Fitzgibbon, B., *Continental Drift*, 2016, p. 39

⁵⁵ *Anche Winston Churchill fa la corte alla Germania*, in *Avanti!*, 20 September 1946

⁵⁶ The Council of Europe, *Winston Churchill, speech delivered at the University of Zurich*, 1946

proceed much further in its efforts to alleviate the situation and help start the European world on its way to recovery, however, there must be some agreement among the countries of Europe"⁵⁷, Marshall remarked.

Although the United States of Europe was a project that "we must begin now", Churchill accepted Europe's temporary division, alluding directly to the nations behind the Iron Curtain. In this regard, he maintained that "the communized belt of states near Russia's border are clearly unable at this time to join a political grouping of Western nations"⁵⁸. However, "if at first all the States of Europe are not willing or able to join the Union, we must nevertheless proceed to assemble and combine those who will and those who can", insisting on "keeping the door open for all the free and democratic countries of Europe to join what he hoped would ultimately become a union of all of Europe"⁵⁹. In this respect, in an interview with the Manchester Guardian in September 1949, Konrad Adenauer, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, argued: "I would be glad if the British government and British public opinion would accept the fact that England is a European power, that its history is bound up with that of Western Europe, and that it is bound in duty to play her part in European development"⁶⁰. With this statement, he explicitly hinted that he was interested in involving Great Britain in the European integration, so much so that Adenauer's official biographer also argued that the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany preferred the British country as principal partner in European integration to France⁶¹. However, Churchill "consistently believed that Britain could not become an ordinary member of a European federal union. Britain would play a full and effective part in a union of European states, though the conditions of its membership would necessarily be of a different nature than that of the war-torn continental states. On account of its Big Three power status Great Britain would have to become an 'extraordinary' member of the United States of Europe, bringing with it the financial sponsorship and atomic protection of its mighty younger sibling America and the economic hinterland of the Empire and Commonwealth"⁶². The British Prime

⁵⁷ Salmon, T., Nicoll, W., *Building European Union*, 1997, p. 29

⁵⁸ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, 2017, p. 21

⁵⁹ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, p. 21

⁶⁰ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, p. 237

⁶¹ Schwarz, H. P., *'Adenauer and Churchill'*, Churchill Archive Centre, 1994, p. 176

⁶² Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, 2017, pp. 109-110

Minister Winston Churchill, therefore, proposed a “kind of United States of Europe” but not that Britain should be a member of it. Britain’s position would therefore be supportive, not participatory⁶³.

In 1949, in a speech at a rally of the United Europe Movement, which he had himself founded two years earlier, he confirmed his position by stating that: “Britain is an integral part of Europe and we mean to play our part in the revival of its prosperity and greatness. But Britain cannot be thought of as a single state in isolation. It is the founder and center of a worldwide Empire and Commonwealth. We shall never do anything to weaken the ties of blood, sentiment and tradition and common interests that unite us with members of the British family of nations”⁶⁴. In other words, after the Second World War, the line that the British governments would follow was that of supporting continental unity by keeping England out as a guarantee of its imperial mission. The nature of European power disconnected from the continent was also testified by another speaking given by Churchill to the House of Commons a few years later, in 1953, that on Great Britain maintained: “We are bound to further every honest and practical step which the nations of Europe may make to reduce the barriers which divide them and to nourish their common interests and their common welfare. We rejoice at every diminution of the internal tariffs and the martial armaments of Europe. We see nothing but good and hope in a richer, freer, more contented European commonalty. But we have our own dream and our own task. We are with Europe, but not of it. We are linked but not combined”⁶⁵. Therefore, Churchill's words, with regard to the evolution of the European integration process, say a lot about the British feeling of disaffection, proving that the attitude of reticence and ambiguity that has always characterized the relations of the United Kingdom with its continental neighbors is historic.

The vocation of Great Britain was that of a major intercontinental world power. “We belong to no single continent, but to all. Not to one hemisphere, but to both; as well to the New World as to the Old. The British Empire is a leading European power. It is a great

⁶³ Watson, A., *Churchill's Legacy*, p. 104

⁶⁴ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple: A History of the Conservative Party and Europe from Churchill to Cameron*, London: Haus Publishing, 2022, pp. 15-16

⁶⁵ Churchill, W., *The United States of Europe*, in International Churchill Society, 1938 <https://winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-130/the-united-states-of-europe/>

and growing American power. It is the Australasian power. It is one of the greatest Asiatic powers. It is the leading African power. Great Britain itself has for centuries been the proved and accepted champion of European freedom. It is the center and head of the British Commonwealth of Nations"⁶⁶. Strategically, therefore, Britain wanted to position itself as a partner in a European federation, whose unity it explicitly hoped and supported, but did not want to be part of it, in such a way as to guarantee its intercontinental imperial position, especially through the two pivots of its international politics: the Commonwealth and the 'special relationship' with the United States⁶⁷.

In order to better understand the British position towards the process of European integration, the close ties between Great Britain and the United States of America need to be addressed. Their 'special relationship', a term officially coined by Winston Churchill in 1946, refers to the uniqueness of the political, cultural and military relations existing between the two countries. Churchill's friendly attitude towards the US was motivated by the fact that he identified the Americans as equal partners to the British Empire and strategic allies in maintaining Britain's role as a world power. In 1953, in fact, the British Prime Minister told the French General Charles de Gaulle: "Every time we have to decide between Europe and the open sea, it is always the open sea we shall choose"⁶⁸. And in case de Gaulle was confused, Churchill added: "Every time I have to decide between you and (US President Franklin) Roosevelt, I shall always choose Roosevelt"⁶⁹. Therefore, the 'special relationship' between the United Kingdom and the United States underpins the vision of lasting, stable and intense bilateral cooperation. The two countries each represented the preferential partner of the other and the bond was substantiated in a strong collaboration between their respective armed forces, in a commercial and financial exchange and in a constant alignment on international political issues. For all of the years since the end of the Second World War, the United Kingdom has indeed sought to compensate for the decline in global importance by making itself the best

⁶⁶ International Churchill Society, *The United States of Europe*, 1938

<https://winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-130/the-united-states-of-europe/>

⁶⁷ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, 2020, p. 31

⁶⁸ Gowland, D., *Britain and the European Union*, London: Routledge, 2017, p. 71

⁶⁹ Clark, A., *We are with Europe, but not of it*, in *Financial Review*, 2020

<https://www.afr.com/world/europe/we-are-with-europe-but-not-of-it-20200131-p53weg>

friend of the United States. “The ‘special relationship’ has however been a greater reality for the United Kingdom than for the United States”⁷⁰.

“Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity”⁷¹. This was the statement of Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, when presented his plan, authored with Jean Monnet, then head of the French planning agency, for the European Coal and Steel Community, the first and most significant realization of the functionalist model, in 1950⁷². France took the nations by surprise⁷³. However, the ECSC’s project, which “could be described as giving practical effect to Churchill’s call”⁷⁴, was designed to reach European unity based on a partnership between France and Germany. Schuman took Churchill’s plea for France to save Europe to heart. In just four years, he caught up with Churchill and designed “the blueprint for the first direct institutional predecessor of Europe”⁷⁵. The day before the announcement of the plan, Konrad Adenauer, the chancellor of the federal republic of Germany, was informed. Without his consent and without the participation of the federal republic in the project of a European community in the coal and steel sector, the foundations of the Schuman Plan would in fact have been lost. Adenauer’s reaction was significant. In March 1950, in an interview with the International News Service, he himself promoted a close and full union between the two countries of Germany and France. For Adenauer, Western integration of the Federal Republic and reconciliation with France were outstanding objectives of his policy. The conflicts between these two countries, in fact, “dominated European history for centuries and caused so many wars and so much destruction [that] must be eliminated once and for all”⁷⁶. He saw “the absolute centrality of the Franco-German tandem for Europe’s future”, and, on the basis of these ideas, Adenauer was able, as he wrote in his memoirs, to accept Schuman's Plan "with all his heart". The same day he was informed

⁷⁰ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, 2020, p. 290

⁷¹ Duff, A., *Britain and the Puzzle of European Union*, London: Routledge, 2021, p. 5

⁷² Mammarella, G., Cacace, P., *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, 2013, p. 50

⁷³ *Vast steel link planned*, in Daily Herald, 1950

⁷⁴ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, 2022, p. 17

⁷⁵ Klos, F., *Churchill's Last Stand*, 2017, p. 93

⁷⁶ Feldman, L. G., *From Fear to Friendship: Franco-German Relations in 1949 and 2019*, in American-German Institute, 2019, https://aicgs.org/2019/05/from-fear-to-friendship-franco-german-relations-in-1949-and-2019/#_ftn1

by the project, he delivered to Schuman both an official and a personal response with his unreserved endorsement. In the letter, Adenauer stated that he was convinced that the proposal would find a strong response in German public opinion, as for the first time since the catastrophe of 1945 Germany and France would find themselves working on an equal footing, adding that he would be happy if those thoughts, which he had been pursuing since 1925, become reality⁷⁷.

The stated political aims of the European Coal and Steel Community were to “overcome the deep, long-standing conflicts in Franco-German relations, to ensure that war would be not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible, and to take the first step towards the creation of a European federation”⁷⁸. Monnet’s modernization plan aimed to restore to the French economy a technological base and a development capacity that it had lost for years. He wanted to relaunch two main productions: that of energy and that of steel. Both, however, were conditioned by the availability of German coal⁷⁹. For this reason, on May 9, 1950, the Schuman Plan proposed “to place all Franco-German coal and steel production under a common High Authority in an organization open to the participation of the other countries of Europe”⁸⁰. The proposal was sent to all interested governments and Schuman said the French Government hoped for big results⁸¹. In this regard, also the Italian Prime Minister, Alcide de Gasperi, stated that his country was ready to transfer broad powers to a European Community as long as “it is democratically organized and guarantees life and development”⁸².

The ECSC was eventually established in 1951 with the Treaty of Paris and comprised a group of six, namely France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. According to Monnet, “there [was] no future for the people of Europe

⁷⁷ *Bekanntgabe des Schuman-Plans*, in Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
<https://www.kas.de/de/web/geschichte-der-cdu/kalender/kalender-detail/-/content/bekanntgabe-des-schuman-plans>

⁷⁸ Gowland, D., Turner, A., *Reluctant Europeans: Britain and European Integration 1945-1998*, London: Routledge, 1999, p. 40

⁷⁹ Mammarella, G., Cacace, P., *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, 2013, p. 59

⁸⁰ Gowland, D., Turner, A., *Reluctant Europeans*, p. 40

⁸¹ *Vast steel link planned*, in Daily Herald, 1950

⁸² De Gasperi, A., *Discourse at the “Conference of the European Army*, in Historical Archives of the European Union

other than in union”⁸³. Based on this statement, people in the member states, “not everyone everywhere but a solid and sufficient core, regarded the European venture as a means of overcoming the historic rivalries of the past that had led to war, and adapting them to peaceful purposes for which it was worth sacrificing elements of national sovereignty. Whereas others in Britain regarded it as a threat to their sense of identity and national sovereignty”⁸⁴. In other words, Britain did “not wish to let its domestic life or the development of its resources be influenced by any views other than her own, and certainly not by continental views”⁸⁵. In 1951, in fact, Churchill refused to allow Britain in the European Coal and Steel Community “on the pretext that doing so would sacrifice relations between Britain and the United States of America and the Commonwealth”⁸⁶. As we have seen, the former British Prime Minister is considered to be one of the founding fathers of the European Union, since he undoubtedly saw the British as a crucial part of the European future. However, “Churchill was also the source of much of the ambivalence, misunderstanding and confusion over Britain’s role in Europe”⁸⁷. In this respect, in 1948 during a Conservative Meeting at Llandudno, he made clear that Britain held a unique position at the heart of “three majestic circles”, meaning in the “Empire and Commonwealth”, “the English speaking world” and a “United Europe”, describing them as “co-existent” and “linked together”⁸⁸. He went on by stating that his country was the only one that had “a great part in every one of them. We stand, in fact at the very point of junction, and here in this island at the center of the seaways and perhaps of the airways, also we have the opportunity of joining them all together”⁸⁹. The European Coal and Steel Community was a model that followed the pattern of integration, and it would have been not possible to participate in different regional areas

⁸³ Jean Monnet: *the unifying force behind the birth of the European Union* https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/eu-pioneers/jean-monnet_en#:~:text=Jean%20Monnet%2C%20the%20French%20politician,Europe%20other%20Othan%20in%20union

⁸⁴ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, 2022, p. 11

⁸⁵ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, p. 22

⁸⁶ Cottom, H. F., *The European Union - The Liberal Empire?*, Boston: ShieldCrest Publishing, 2020, p. 51

⁸⁷ Cottom, H. F., *The European Union - The Liberal Empire?*, p. 50

⁸⁸ Cottom, H. F., *The European Union - The Liberal Empire?*, p. 52

⁸⁹ Danzig, J., *Winston Churchill: A founder of the European Union*, in University Association for Contemporary European Studies, 2013 <https://europe.ideasoneuropa.eu/2013/11/10/winston-churchill-a-founder-of-the-european-union/>

at the same time. In fact, with the ECSC, it was created a common market with common external borders, which would have put a stop to the simultaneous membership of different regional organizations. Hence, Churchill's idea about European integration diverged strongly from the path chosen by Europe leading to the current European Union. Interestingly, Jean Monnet had initially turned to Britain as "a nucleus around which the European Community might be formed"⁹⁰, as he saw the British country as "the one great power in Europe which was then in a position to take on such responsibility"⁹¹. London, however, did not accept the invitation and rejected the European Coal and Steel Community. The creator of the Schuman Plan never understood "why the British didn't participate in something that was so much in their interest", coming to the conclusion that "it was the price of victory, the illusion that you can keep what you have without changing"⁹².

The European project for integration required the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, in which "the member states transfer some policy decisions to a body of all member states, the decisions of which are binding on all members and have to be followed"⁹³. Speaking of this, Churchill, however, declared that they "could never accept a supranational authority which has the power to tell [them] not to cut any more coal or make any more steel, but to grow tomatoes instead"⁹⁴. Furthermore, there were also doubts whether it was "in the interests of the British coal and steel industries, which at the time accounted for half the coal and a third of the steel produced in Europe, to participate"⁹⁵. In fact, "the Labour government regarded its nationalization of the coal industry in 1946 as one of its greatest achievements and looked forward to nationalizing steel as well", meaning that the idea of subjecting them to "some sort of pan-European supervision was deeply unattractive"⁹⁶.

The path to Great Britain's accession to the European Community was therefore problematic from the beginning. Already in the fifties, in fact, it demonstrated its

⁹⁰ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, 2022, p. 12

⁹¹ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, p. 12

⁹² Castaldo, M., *Il difficile rapporto tra Regno Unito e Unione Europea*, *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali*, Vol. 82, No. 3, 2015, p. 359

⁹³ Dedman, M., *The Origins & Development of the European Union*, 2009, p. 7

⁹⁴ Mammarella, G., Cacace, P., *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, 2013, p. 62

⁹⁵ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, 2022, p. 18

⁹⁶ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, p. 18

opposition to the transfer of some of its national powers to a supranational body. The British aversion to political integration at a supranational level stems from the strong nationalism and independence sentiment that has always characterized the country. Over the centuries, Great Britain has indeed invested time and resources in maintaining and expanding its colonial empire, intervening on the continent only when there was a particularly serious threat for the stability of its role as the European balancer of power, and above all for its role as a world power, to then resume isolationist tendencies again. With its colonial empire, control of trade routes, privileged relations with some other countries, above all with the United States, London was at the center of the international scene. For Britain, in fact, “the idea of a supranational authority, beyond the control of national parliaments, was, and remained, conceptually alien and politically high on impossible to contemplate”⁹⁷.

Britain was also the only European country that has emerged victorious from the Second World War. Therefore, the lack of interest shown by British politicians in continental developments, which seem to be moving towards a path of greater economic integration, is not surprising. In 1945 its reputation in Europe stood at an all-time high. From the beginning to the end of the war, Britain was the only power among the European countries to have fought against Nazi Germany and never to have been occupied or defeated. “It had stood alone in 1940 and 1941 and later, in conjunction with the United States and the Soviet Union, had played a major role in liberating the continent in 1944 and 1945”⁹⁸. The sense of national pride and independence already present in the English soul were strengthened and justified by the war victory, which also created an imperialist sentiment. Therefore, with a long history of great power, in the aftermath of the second conflict of world hegemony, Great Britain was “one of the big three”. Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin decided indeed the victorious conduct of the war by determining the fate of the world⁹⁹.

Thus, for the time being, the movement for a new united and supportive Europe did not interest the British. Their first concern was the recovery of overseas possessions in order to have the resources necessary for the reconstruction of the country, which was

⁹⁷ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, 2020, p. 40

⁹⁸ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, 2022, p. 12

⁹⁹ Castaldo, M., *Il difficile rapporto tra Regno Unito e Unione Europea*, 2015, p. 359

devastated by bombing and which was facing a difficult economic situation. However, a process of decline of the British Empire began soon, leading to a change in Britain's international relations. If on the one hand, in fact, the British economy had emerged from the war in a better shape than those of the occupied or defeated countries of mainland Europe; on the other hand, "their recoveries had been far more rapid, so that by 1961 Britain was looking like a flagging pacemaker as younger and fitter rivals swept past it in the race for prosperity. West Germany was doing particularly well. In 1958 both the overall size of its economy and its volume of exports overtook Britain's and, with the start of the new decade, the gap between the two countries was widening. That the country that had lost the war was now so conspicuously winning the peace made a big impression on British public opinion"¹⁰⁰. In other words, if in the post-war years Her Majesty's government had been able to maintain its detached attitude towards the continent, over time this illusion was breaking down.

It was especially the Suez affair that imposed a change in Great Britain's European policy, since it forced the country to thoroughly review its position in the continent. The crisis following the nationalization of the Canal showed Britain's military inability to stabilize the region, leading the nation to understand that it was no longer a world power, but a regional one¹⁰¹. More specifically, in 1956 the British together with the French reacted to Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal by launching a joint military operation in alliance with the Israelis against Egypt. President Eisenhower, however, expressed publicly in very firm terms the opposition of the United States to the Anglo-French-Israeli military operation, also out of fear that the war might widen. The Soviet Union in fact declared itself ready to intervene in defense of Egypt. At this point, Washington forced the government of Anthony Eden to put an end to the military operations by threatening to remove support from the very weak pound, which was on the verge of an unstoppable fall. Eden was forced to give in to American summons and resigned, highlighting its "inability to attempt any global military action without first securing US acquiescence"¹⁰². With regard to the other two countries, for the first and only time, Israel faced US opposition and bowed; France, instead, had to withdraw. However, the

¹⁰⁰ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, p. 31

¹⁰¹ Mammarella, G., Cacace, P., *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, 2013, p. 114

¹⁰² Gowland, D., *Britain and the European Union*, 2017, p. 62

British decline continued also with the period of "decolonization", which reached its peak in the 1960s, when almost all the countries of the African continent managed to obtain their independence. Following these events, the geopolitical strategy of Great Britain began to change. The British started to concentrate on the European continent and repeatedly meddled in European policies, triggering an Anglo-French confrontation, later exacerbated by the presence of a new French president, Charles De Gaulle¹⁰³.

2.2 A troubled relationship

Jean Monnet's famous remark proved to be correct: "There is one thing you British will never understand: an idea. And there is one thing you are supremely good at grasping: a hard fact. We will have to build Europe without you; but then you will come in and join us"¹⁰⁴. The father of Europe was right, since it was Harold Macmillan who gave a real turning point in the British policy towards Europe. The Prime Minister of Britain recognized the importance of the Schuman Declaration and the economic success of the European Economic Community which, in strong growth, was largely surpassing the stagnant economy of Great Britain, while the protected markets of the Commonwealth were declining. Macmillan, however, feared the controversies that an immediate request for membership of the EEC would have caused, as London did not yet seem ready to accept the limitations of sovereignty that the adhesion in the Community would have entailed. The partnership with the European Community was unpopular within Great Britain, as it was seen as a further "national humiliation" following that of the Suez Canal. In other words, accession would have been the confirmation of the fact that the country was no longer able to be a great power and to have its own independence. Macmillan's first move was therefore the creation in 1957 of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) with European countries not members of the EEC, comprising Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland, along with Britain. With this solution he thought he could assure Great Britain trade with Europe in competition with the European Community and avoid that the Community tariff was applied to trade with the Commonwealth. EFTA's scope was clear: it was confined to industrial free trade and

¹⁰³ Mammarella, G., Cacace, P., *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, 2013, p. 110

¹⁰⁴ Dedman, M., *The Origins & Development of the European Union*, 2009, p. 100

therefore did not give rise to sovereignty concerns¹⁰⁵. However, it did not have the hoped-for success. "It was conceived in opposition to the Community, but it was a geographically uneven area, without any political significance and economically incapable of competing with the Community of Six"¹⁰⁶.

The Suez Canal crisis, the riots taking place in most of the colonies, the relaxation of relations with the Commonwealth countries, the evidence that the Common Market was developing at a faster pace than the free trade area of the EFTA and finally the encouragements from the United States of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, pushed London towards the European path, setting aside the ancestral reservations. On 27 July 1961, in fact, Macmillan stated: "The Cabinet agreed that the British Government should make a formal application to accede to the Treaty of Rome". In this regard, in August 1961, Churchill wrote to his constituency Chairman: "I think that the Government are right to apply to join the European Economic Community"¹⁰⁷. Then, in 1963, in a letter addressed, but not dispatched, to Paul Henri Spaak, the former British Prime Minister wrote: "The future of Europe if Britain were to be excluded is black indeed"¹⁰⁸. In other words, Macmillan decided to apply for membership of the EEC, only when he became convinced of the need to join the European Economic Community at a time when the British economy was losing the primacy and competitiveness. Therefore, his view changed as he realized the British Empire was waning and British influence in the rest of the world declining¹⁰⁹. However, by the time his country joined, "the essential character of the organization, its institutional structure, its working methods, its core policies, and its aspirations had been established. So, too, had the language and imagery in which those aspirations were clothed. There had been no British input. It had been formed by alien ideas and principles and was based on unfamiliar practices, mainly, but not only, French"¹¹⁰. The EEC had in fact been created according to the interests that best suited

¹⁰⁵ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, 2022, pp. 26-27

¹⁰⁶ Olivi, B., *L'Europa difficile. Storia politica della Comunità europea*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000, p. 63

¹⁰⁷ Montague Browne, A., *Long Sunset: Memoirs of Winston Churchill's Last Private Secretary*, 2009, p. 274

¹⁰⁸ Cottom, H. F., *The European Union - The Liberal Empire?*, p. 50

¹⁰⁹ Cottom, H. F., *The European Union - The Liberal Empire?*, p. 50

¹¹⁰ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, 2022, p. 9

to the six founding countries, meaning that the attempts at integration made by Britain have not been easy.

In order to enter the European Community, the British government knew it could count on the approval of the Benelux countries and Italy, eager to balance the weight of France and Germany¹¹¹. However, at the British question, General de Gaulle vetoed France for the first time in 1963. "Britain is insular, maritime, bound up by its trade, its markets, its food supplies, with the most varied and often the most distant countries. Its activity is essentially industrial and commercial, not agricultural. It has, in all its work, very special, very original, habits and traditions. In short, the nature, structure, circumstances peculiar to England are very different from those of other continentals. How can Britain, in the way that it lives, produces, trades, be incorporated into the Common Market as it has been conceived and functions? [...] It is predictable that the cohesion of all its members, which would soon be very large, very diverse, would not last for very long and that, in fact, it would seem like a colossal Atlantic community under American dependence and direction, and that is not at all what France wanted to do and is doing, which is a strictly European construction"¹¹². In other words, de Gaulle believed that England's role in the European Economic Community would have been that of a too strong partner, with its own peculiar and well-differentiated economy, which would have wanted to assert its various interests, above all in the field of agricultural policy. The General thought that British entry into the EC would have revolutionized or nullified community agreements and projects, leading to restrictions, reservations, or exceptions¹¹³. De Gaulle himself, in his text "Memoirs of Hope: Renewal and Endeavor", questioned Great Britain's good faith and argued that the country, too economically tied to the United States and the Commonwealth countries, was not really willing to bear the loss of its economic privileges¹¹⁴. Furthermore, in his opinion, Britain was also the official

¹¹¹ Mammarella, G., Cacace, P., *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, 2013, p. 116

¹¹² Grant, C., *Why is Britain eurosceptic?*, Centre for European Reform Essays, London, 2008, p.1

https://www.cer.eu/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2011/essay_eurosceptic_19dec08-1345.pdf

¹¹³ Papa, E., *Storia dell'unificazione europea*, Milan: Bompiani, 2017, p. 183

¹¹⁴ De Gaulle, C., *Memoirs of Hope: Renewal and Endeavor*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971, p. 220

bearer of United States' interests in Europe¹¹⁵ and, in this regard, in 1949, when British diplomats debated a future in Europe, Hector McNeil, Minister of State, was unequivocal: "I have no doubt at all that the overwhelming majority would seek to combine further with the USA and Commonwealth. Anti-European feeling is a commonplace of British thought. Everyone has relatives in the US and Canada. Most have no one in Europe except the dead of two wars"¹¹⁶.

It has to be highlighted that in 1946, however, General de Gaulle had a very different view. In fact, when Churchill sought his opinion on his Zurich speech, he replied that "if ever France was to be won over to the idea of European union, it would have to be in partnership with Britain, and that their two countries would have to adopt the same approach towards Germany"¹¹⁷. Initially, therefore, de Gaulle too regarded Britain as indispensable. However, he changed his mind because of the formation of the European Community without Britain. "He had no love for the EC as such. It was too supranational for his taste, and the Commission had too big a role"¹¹⁸, implying that the General's wish was to leave decision-making power in the hands of individual member states¹¹⁹.

According to some studies, in 1963, when President de Gaulle vetoed Britain's application to join the European Economic Community, "his rationale was rooted in his desire for French dominance in Europe and by deep-seated resentments [... which were] harked all the way back to Fashoda. The Fashoda Incident was by then long forgotten in Britain. But it was embedded in the mind of de Gaulle"¹²⁰. In 1898, French troops laid claim to an area of Southern Sudan but they were immediately forced by the British's General Kitchener to withdraw and give up control to Britain. The insistence of Britain on the immediate and unconditional French withdrawal from Fashoda was perceived by France as a national humiliation. In the very first page of his memoirs, President de Gaulle wrote that "nothing excited [him] more as a child than the reminders all around [him] of France's glorious history [...]. And nothing saddened [him] more deeply than

¹¹⁵ Papa, E., *Storia dell'unificazione europea*, Milan: Bompiani, 2017, p. 178

¹¹⁶ Adamthwaite, A., *Britain and the World, 1945-9: The View from the Foreign Office*, International Affairs, Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-, Spring, 1985, p. 231

¹¹⁷ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, 2022, p. 12

¹¹⁸ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, pp. 43-44

¹¹⁹ Gilbert, M., *Storia politica dell'integrazione europea*, Bari: Laterza, 2005, p. 85

¹²⁰ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, 2020, p. 20

France's weaknesses and errors which [he] heard about, and read in people's faces, in [his] youth. And first among those was the retreat from Fashoda"¹²¹.

Therefore, the troubled relationship between Britain and the European Community is dominated by "continuous, intense, and, above all, instinctive mistrust of the French by the English and of the English by the French, and that mistrust had long-established roots"¹²². Britain and France have been rivals since at least the Hundred Years' War. There have been periods when relations between the two countries have been friendly, but they have been the exception rather than the rule. As we have seen, Britain, in its attempt to maintain a balance of power on the European continent, has traditionally thrown its weight against the strongest state. And most often it was France. Indeed, "some of the most memorable episodes in British military history have occurred as part of a struggle to prevent the establishment of a French hegemony in Europe - notably in the wars against Louis XIV and Napoleon"¹²³.

In 1967, Great Britain suffered a second French veto. "Britain was still too heavily involved in extra-European commitments to be a satisfactory member of the Community. There was, though, one important difference this time compared to the second: in 1963, the veto came after more than a year of tortuous and detailed negotiations; in 1967, by contrast, formal negotiations had not even started when de Gaulle delivered his unfavourable verdict"¹²⁴. In other words, although the second bid for membership was seen as the moment when the British public opinion swung decisively in favor of an English future within Europe¹²⁵, Great Britain had to wait for the disappearance of the General from the political scene to become a member of the EC on 1 January 1973 with the Conservative government of Edward Heath. Concerning the British participation in the European Economic Community, in fact, the new French president, Georges Pompidou, declared that he had no objection against the entry of Britain into the Community, meaning that the French veto on Great Britain's entry was lifted and negotiations were reopened.

¹²¹ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, p. 20

¹²² Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, p. 20

¹²³ Gowland, D., Turner, A., *Reluctant Europeans*, 1999, p. 141

¹²⁴ Gowland, D., Turner, A., *Reluctant Europeans*, p. 152

¹²⁵ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, 2020, p. 25

Heath, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, “was without doubt the most European-centered of any of the British Premiers since 1945. Unlike all his postwar predecessors, he had no interest in the maintenance of a special relationship with the US, [...] nor did he feel any sentimental attachment to the Commonwealth”¹²⁶. Heath, in fact, “shared the dream of Monnet of building, by means of the EEC, a European edifice that would make war impossible among Europeans and safeguard democracy against fascism as well as communism”¹²⁷. Just as the leaders of France saw that edifice as a vehicle for expanding French influence, he wanted Britain to be part of it as well, seeing the ECC as a means by which British influence in Europe and the world could be increased. “Though a good friend of the United States, he was untouched by the self-delusion and sentimentality with which other British prime ministers tended to view ‘the special relationship’. He believed that Britain’s strongest foreign policy relationship should be with the EEC and its members. In domestic politics he saw EEC membership and the economic opportunities that went with it as an integral part of his program for modernizing Britain”¹²⁸. Heath was therefore a transformative figure on the British scene, especially for his geopolitical vision, which prioritized continental politics rather than the Commonwealth, given Britain's international decline on the second front.

In the 1970s, Great Britain found itself in a much-changed position in the world compared to the post-war period. In 1973, it could not overcome a very serious and social crisis, meaning that British entry into the EEC occurred at an economically difficult time, with an imminent oil crisis and rising food prices placing increasing strain on the British economy¹²⁹. In this regard, Alan Greenspan, former Governor of the Federal Reserve Bank, wrote: “The UK economy seemed to have reached the point where it had to increase government fiscal stimulus just to remain immobile”¹³⁰. Therefore, Heath sought to modernize and regenerate the British economy, by “de-regulating industry, curbing inflation, reforming industrial relations, and re-structuring the machinery of government”¹³¹. According to the British Prime Minister, the entry into the European

¹²⁶ Gowland, D., Turner, A., *Reluctant Europeans*, 1999, pp. 168-169

¹²⁷ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, 2022, pp. 48-49

¹²⁸ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, pp. 48-49

¹²⁹ Grob-Fitzgibbon, B., *Continental Drift*, 2016, p. 6

¹³⁰ Greenspan A., *The era of turbulence*, Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 2007, p. 312

¹³¹ Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, 2022, p. 51

Economic Community was precisely seen as the possibility of relaunching the British country on international markets and regaining dynamism in foreign policy.

Britain's entry into the EC represented a historic stage in the Community life because it put an end to an anomalous relationship between London and the continent, which had conditioned and often held back the Europeans' drive towards integration since the dawn of the second post-war period¹³². However, whilst for the European continent the creation of the European Economic Community was an “absolute blinding triumph of peace over war, of democracy over tyranny”, for Britain it was an “admission of weakness”¹³³. Since its accession, in fact, the participation of Great Britain was always on condition that the activity of the EEC did not contradict its commitments and world interests. When Heath succeeded in joining, in fact, accession was seen by many as a defeat for British exceptionalism rather than a victory for European solidarity, an attitude rooted in Britain's imperial history, which has always perceived its interests as global rather than strictly European.

The European negotiators exploited the advantageous situation, namely the economic and social crisis of Britain, to impose harsh conditions on the country. During the accession negotiations, in fact, the British negotiators in the Heath government had to accept a rather heavy contribution in the Community finances. Britain had to pay 90% of the taxes on food imports and 90% of the duties on other imports to the EU budget¹³⁴. The contributions levied on food imports were higher than those levied on other members. And, a very high percentage, committing 39% of the EU budget, was used to finance the Common Agricultural Policy, one of the most important EU policies, but at the same time a factor that was not much appreciated by the British government, since the agricultural sector made a very limited contribution to its GDP.

Although the Commission's negotiators argued that the situation would improve at the end of the transitional period, London felt excessively penalized by the policies of the community budget, which was destined for the most part to the common agricultural policy and whose benefits were almost entirely received by France. At the 1975 Dublin summit, the British managed to get a “budget correction mechanism” that would have

¹³² Mammarella, G., Cacace, P., *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, 2013, p. 146

¹³³ Grob-Fitzgibbon, B., *Continental Drift*, p. 2

¹³⁴ Greenspan A., *The era of turbulence*, p. 312

provided a refund, up to 3% of funding, if Britain's contribution was disproportionately higher than Britain's share of Community's GNP¹³⁵.

As stated before, Britain joined the EC because "its alternative options had failed, because its own economy was struggling, and because the potential downsides of joining were outweighed by the political and economic downsides of not joining"¹³⁶. Furthermore, although the entry process had been long and painful, Euroscepticism did not abandon the country. In fact, "many Britons began to suspect that it was the decline of the Empire in combination with entry into the EEC that had thwarted Britain's place in the world. By choosing Europe over empire, they held, Britain had lost its way; only by distancing itself from Europe and re-embracing Britain's imperial values could the British people reignite the flame of greatness that had been extinguished"¹³⁷. In other words, "[t]he United Kingdom had signed up for the 'ever closer union' prescribed by the Treaty of Rome, but had never really wanted to live by the legal and policy consequences"¹³⁸.

To face this situation, after renegotiating Britain's terms of participation, Prime Minister Harold Wilson held a referendum on the country's membership in 1975, and the question was: "Do you think the United Kingdom should stay in the European Community (the Common Market)?" The British population as a whole was not against joining the EC, so much so that more than 67% voted in favor of staying. After the outcome of the referendum, the Home Secretary, the pro-European Roy Jenkins, declared optimistically: "It puts the uncertainty behind us. It commits Britain to Europe; it commits us to playing an active, constructive and enthusiastic role in it"¹³⁹. The result, however, was not enough to resolve "the European issue" in the British politics.

Prime Minister since 1979, Margaret Thatcher was one of the most important figures of British Euroscepticism. However, she did not actually take Eurosceptic positions at the beginning of her political career. In fact, in the 1975 referendum, Thatcher participated in Labor Prime Minister Wilson's pro-EEC campaign. At that time, she believed that Great

¹³⁵ Dedman, M., *The Origins & Development of the European Union*, 2009, p. 113

¹³⁶ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, 2020, p. 139

¹³⁷ Grob-Fitzgibbon, B., *Continental Drift*, 2016, p. 6

¹³⁸ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, 2020, p. 263

¹³⁹ Helm, T., *British Euroscepticism: a brief history*, in *The Guardian*, 2016

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/feb/07/british-euroscepticism-a-brief-history>

Britain should have remained within the Common Market, and the votes of the voters of the Conservative party she led proved fundamental to ensure the victory of the "Yes". Elected with a program marked by the most rigorous liberalism and hostile to any form of statism, the "iron lady" immediately expressed deep distrust of the European institutions. The declared aim of her government and her policies was to restore vitality and prestige to Great Britain, in order to halt what Thatcher saw as an otherwise inexorable decline. Right from the start, London found itself with a large negative balance towards Brussels, due to the fact that, while it received reduced revenues from the Common Agricultural Policy, it paid a significant contribution to the budget. She was determined to remain in the European Community to defend the rights of her country, but, convinced that her country was paying too high a price for its participation in the Community, first at the Strasbourg Council of 21 and 22 June 1979, and then at the Dublin Council of 29 and 30 November of the same year, the Prime Minister put on the table the question of the British contribution to the EC budget and immediately asked for the return of a billion pounds, arguing: "There are nations that contribute less to Europe, however obtaining more, like Germany"¹⁴⁰.

By 1983 it had become increasingly clear that a permanent solution to the British budget problem was needed. "The matter was continuing to sour relations between Britain and the rest of the EC, was taking up an inordinate amount of time, and was diverting attention from other important issues"¹⁴¹. In this regard, in June of the same year, Thatcher told the European Council in Stuttgart that she would not agree to a resolution of other issues before achieving a permanent settlement of the budgetary dispute. The "iron lady" continued to demand a reduction in British contributions for 5 years, from 1979 to 1984, when a compromise was proposed at the meeting of the European Council in Fontainebleau to return to Great Britain 66% of the difference between the British contribution to the Community budget and the total investments made from EEC to the UK. In this regard, by managing to obtain recognition of a budget correction, in 1984, Britain received one billion European Currency Unit, and just over one billion in 1985 and 1986. "This was a better result than anyone would have expected at the time of

¹⁴⁰ Mammarella, G., Cacace, P., *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, 2013, p. 189

¹⁴¹ Gowland, D., *Britain and the European Union*, 2017, p. 227

Dublin”¹⁴². The British refund, however, did not represent an ad hoc mechanism designed for a single country, but is based on a general principle which, as such, can also be applied to others. In fact, pursuant to the Fontainebleau decision, any member state sustaining a budgetary burden which is excessive in relation to its relative prosperity may benefit from a correction at the appropriate time”¹⁴³.

Despite Thatcher's cut in contributions, the whole situation made Britain and British citizens themselves even more distrustful of European institutions. The “iron lady” was never an all-out anti-European, but rather was a supporter of Great Britain's entry into the single market and therefore of European economic integration, through a “willing and active cooperation between independent sovereign states”¹⁴⁴. In this respect, in her speech to the College of Europe in Bruges in 1988, she clearly stated her opposition to further political integration of the Community, by stating that “[t]o try to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the center of a European conglomerate would be highly damaging and would jeopardize the objectives we seek to achieve”¹⁴⁵. The British Prime Minister, therefore, firmly opposed the process of political integration of the Community, convinced that such integration would lead to the clear prevalence of top-down relations and the centralization of power in the hands of a single continental entity. In this regard, when Jacques Delors began to insist on the monetary unification of the European Community, Thatcher expressed all her opposition, stating that the Community should have remained a free trade area and that the aim was to improve the results obtained, arguing that monetary union was not compatible with the principles of national sovereignty. In the debate of October 30, 1990, Thatcher, in front of the House of Commons, forcefully affirmed her ‘no’ both to the centralization of powers in Brussels and to the adoption of the single currency. Her ‘no’, repeated three times, will go down in history: “The President of the Commission, Mr Delors, said at a press conference the other day that he wanted the European Parliament to be the democratic body of the Community, he wanted the Commission to be the Executive and

¹⁴² Tugendhat, C., *The Worm in the Apple*, 2022, p. 90

¹⁴³ Presidency Conclusions, *Berlin European Council*, 1999, Article 68, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/ACFB2.html

¹⁴⁴ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, *Speech to the College of Europe* ("The Bruges Speech"), 1988 <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107332>

¹⁴⁵ Papa, E., *Storia dell'unificazione europea*, 2017, p. 219

he wanted the Council of Ministers to be the Senate. No. No. No”¹⁴⁶. Thatcher was therefore only interested in a European market in which to realize British economic interests and her strongly nationalist perspective was absolutely opposed to a loss of sovereignty and an evolution of the European Community into a supranational body with growing powers.

British Euroscepticism increased further in 1990, following the entry of the country into the European Monetary System, which was established in 1978 with the aim of decreasing the fluctuation between national currencies by comparing it with a virtual currency, the European Currency Unit, and creating greater economic stability. The system was voluntary: France, the Netherlands, Italy, Ireland, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg decided to join it, while Great Britain, at least initially, decided not to participate. The “iron lady”, in fact, was firmly against the European Monetary System and immediately opposed the admission. In 1990, with John Major, Thatcher’s successor, Britain joined the system. Once the United Kingdom entered the European Monetary System, however, it was forced to leave only two years later, in 1992, in order to avoid default. The brief and disastrous tenure in the EMS further spread the belief among the English people that further integration would only hurt Britain¹⁴⁷. In that year, there was also a serious devaluation of the pound, and September 16, 1992, known as Black Wednesday, was the day in which the sterling fell out of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism¹⁴⁸.

Having obtained the possibility to avoid adopting some common policies and despite the Euroscepticism of various political exponents, Great Britain under Major joined the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which aimed at transforming the old European Community into the European Union. To meet the country’s needs to maintain national sovereignty while participating in the common market, the EU granted Britain a “preferential membership status” whereby it was exempted from many rights, benefits and obligations of integration. The first opt-out, meaning a pre-established exemption clause which guarantees some Member States the possibility of joining or less to a certain

¹⁴⁶ Gowland, G., *Britain and European Integration 1945-1998: A Documentary History*, London: Routledge, 2014, p. 184

¹⁴⁷ Dedman, M., *The Origins & Development of the European Union*, 2009, pp. 140-142

¹⁴⁸ Baker, D., Schnapper, P., *Britain and the Crisis of the European Union*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 25

decision approved by the European Union and accepted by the other Member States, regarding some policies of the Union¹⁴⁹, concerned the chance to decide whether or not to enter the Economic and Monetary Union. In this regard, the British viewed the project of a common currency, namely the euro, with suspicion, especially after the failed experiment of the European Monetary System and did not want to abandon the pound to rely on a single currency. The British Prime Minister also signed the opt-out on the Social Protocol and later another one on the Schengen area. The Schengen Convention signed in 1990 and in force since 1995 has the aim of eliminating internal border controls and introducing freedom of movement for all citizens of signatory countries. The United Kingdom, however, chose to maintain border controls. During those years, English Euroscepticism found an outlet in the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which was founded in 1993 by members of the Anti-Federalism League opposed to the Maastricht Treaty. Clearly, the primary goal of the party was to leave the European Union and give Britain back its sovereignty.

From 1997 to 2007 it was Tony Blair who held the office of Prime Minister. He considered himself a pro-European and in his first speech as Premier he declared that he would be committed to giving support to the United Kingdom in domestic and foreign policy, in particular to Europe, by stating "[i]f we isolate ourselves from the continent, we would turn our backs on our history, because we are part of Europe and have contributed intimately to its history"¹⁵⁰. He hoped for greater British involvement in the community process and also in the adoption of the single currency. In this regard, he aspired to bring Britain into the euro to be in the decision-making heart ("inner core") of the European Union. However, Blair was unable to deal with the issue firmly; he remained hesitant for a long time and preferred to postpone the decision even during his second term¹⁵¹. The British Prime Minister deviated from the semi-detached position assumed up to then by the United Kingdom authorities, and opted, on the contrary, for an ever-greater involvement of London. Blair invested particular effort in the preparation of the Treaty

¹⁴⁹ EUR-Lex, *Opting out* <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/opting-out.html#:~:text=Certain%20EU%20Member%20States%20have,thus%20avoiding%20an%20overall%20stalemate>

¹⁵⁰ Daddow, O. J., *Euroscepticism and the Culture of the Discipline of History*, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2006, p. 223

¹⁵¹ Castaldo, M., *Il difficile rapporto tra Regno Unito e Unione Europea*, 2015, p. 368

of Lisbon, in relation to which he felt he could exclude the possibility that the European Union might in the future become a federation of states¹⁵².

2.3 Belonging without believing

British Euroscepticism did not show signs of decreasing when David Cameron became Prime Minister in 2010. However, although the relationship between the country and the European Union has been complex, it has always worked, at least until January 2013, when Cameron ran his own electoral campaign and decided to launch the proposal for a consultative referendum regarding the permanence of the United Kingdom in the European Union. At that time, the relationship between Britain and the European Union was based primarily on convenience, which is proved by a speech that Cameron held in 2011, when he maintained: “We will stay in the European Union as long as it is in our interest to do so”. In this regard, if the Conservatives won the next general election, scheduled for May 2015 and after a renegotiation of the country’s relationship with the EU, the Prime Minister will decide to go for a referendum to be held by the end of 2017 on Britain’s membership of the EU¹⁵³.

Once the victory in the 2015 elections was achieved, Cameron reaffirmed his willingness to hold a referendum, but made it conditional on a renegotiation of the conditions of Great Britain's membership to the European Union. He subsequently advised Donald Tusk, the former President of the European Council, of wanting to proceed with the renegotiation of the British position within the EU, presenting to the public opinion of his country and, above all, of the entire European Union, the idea of submitting to a popular referendum the choice of whether or not Great Britain will remain within the EU. According to Cameron, “there were three major challenges: Eurozone’s problems were driving fundamental change in Europe; there was a crisis of competitiveness, as other nations ‘soar ahead’; and there was a gap, which was growing dramatically, between the EU and its citizens”¹⁵⁴. The British Prime Minister argued that the gap was felt particularly acutely in Britain, and if the challenges outlined were not addressed, the danger was that Europe would fail and the British people would drift towards the exit.

¹⁵² Castaldo, M., *Il difficile rapporto tra Regno Unito e Unione Europea*, p. 366

¹⁵³ Gowland, D., *Britain and the European Union*, London: Routledge, 2016, p. 1

¹⁵⁴ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, 2020, pp. 277-8

Cameron wanted “to get it across, once and for all, that the UK was not only traveling at a different speed, but that it had a different destination in mind altogether¹⁵⁵. His “yes” was to trade and cooperation, and his “no” to political union, currency union or immigration union. Without a doubt, however, when Cameron said: “I believe something very deeply. That Britain’s national interest is best in a flexible, adaptable, and open European Union, and that such a European Union is best with Britain in it”¹⁵⁶, he was clearly committing himself to keeping Britain in the EU if he could.

Cameron began negotiations with Europe in February 2016, on four areas: economic governance and the Eurozone, competitiveness, sovereignty, and immigration. With regard to the economic governance, the United Kingdom, being one of the countries which have not adopted the single currency and which enjoyed the opting-out clause, Cameron asked that the interests of those who have not joined the Eurozone be respected. This meant no discrimination of companies with national currency different, no financial liability for taxpayers with currencies other than the euro for operations in the Eurozone, and protection of the integrity of the single market¹⁵⁷. For the area of competitiveness, according to the Prime Minister it was necessary to “bring together all the different proposals, promises and agreements on the single market, trade and deregulation in a clear long-term commitment to increase the competitiveness and productivity of the European Union and drive growth and jobs for all”¹⁵⁸. Concerning sovereignty, the aim was to further strengthen the role of national Parliaments with the possibility of being able to block unwanted legislative proposals. Cameron was also keen to underline the full implementation of the European Union principle of subsidiarity by giving more responsibility to the Member States in the matters in which they were best suited to legislate¹⁵⁹. Finally, as for immigration, in addition to reducing the abuse of free

¹⁵⁵ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, p. 263

¹⁵⁶ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, p. 166

¹⁵⁷ Cameron, D., *A new settlement for United Kingdom in a reformed European Union*, letter from the British Prime Minister to the President of the European Council Donald Tusk, 2015, p. 2 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-reform-pms-letter-to-president-of-the-european-council-donald-tusk#:~:text=In%20a%20letter%20to%20the,%3B%20competitiveness%3B%20sovereignty%3B%20immigration>

¹⁵⁸ Cameron, D., *A new settlement for United Kingdom in a reformed European Union*, 2015, p. 3

¹⁵⁹ Cameron, D., *A new settlement for United Kingdom in a reformed European Union*, p. 4

movement, the Prime Minister was pushing for the adoption of measures to control the high migratory flow from within the European Union to the United Kingdom, which in Cameron's opinion had become unsustainable¹⁶⁰.

The tie between the country and the very idea of the European Union, between the path of integration put in place by the other members of the Union and the concrete steps taken by the British nation, has always been in many ways ambiguous and controversial. Cameron's choice to hold the popular referendum, in reality, rather than aiming at the exit of Great Britain from the EU, wanted to achieve the opposite goal. "The UK should want to stay in the EU, so the EU should want us to stay. Because an EU without the United Kingdom, without one of Europe's major powers, a country which in many respects invented the single market, and which gives real weight to Europe's influence on the world stage, which respects the rules and which it is a reforming force in the economic sphere in the liberal sense, it would be a very different European Union"¹⁶¹.

At this point and after having renegotiated some terms, the choice of "divorce" was in the hands of the British population. "If we left the European Union, it would be a one-way ticket, not a return". Britain's citizens were called to the polls to express their views on the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union, commonly known as Brexit (Britain – exit) by answering the question: "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?". The result confirmed the victory of the Leave albeit with the tiny majority of 51.9% compared to 48.1% of those who voted for Remain. The British vote had a disruptive effect, as it is the first case of a Member State intending to leave the Union. The jealous defense of UK national sovereignty that led to the 1975 referendum manifested itself again in the 2016 referendum, but this time had a different outcome. Polls however showed that knowledge of the European Union in Britain was low and that to a large extent it was a national protest vote. The British were not only confused by what would happen if they left the EU, but it became clear that a large number of people were not even sure what they voted for and that many did not seem to know what the European Union was;

¹⁶⁰ Cameron, D., *A new settlement for United Kingdom in a reformed European Union*, pp. 4-5

¹⁶¹ Cameron, D., *Testo integrale del discorso sull'Europa*, Il sole 24 ore, 2013

<https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2013-01-23/discorso-cameron-103211.shtml?uuid=AbzZdFNH&p=6>

indeed, within hours of the announcement of the referendum result, citizens of the United Kingdom started frantically googling: "What is the EU?"¹⁶².

The In/Out referendum held on 23 June 2016 was the culmination of a long struggle¹⁶³. The outcome ratified the will of the British people to leave the European Union definitively, albeit through a modest majority. The victory of the Leave was accompanied by the exultant words of Nigel Farage, the former leader of the UK Independence Party who spoke of June 23, 2016 as the British "Independence Day"¹⁶⁴. The post-leave, in fact, although painted with catastrophic consequences, was at the same time seen as an opportunity to recover the lost sovereignty, with the aim of bringing the United Kingdom back to its splendid isolation in stark contrast to the spirit of European solidarity and integration.

The Brexit vote was not legally binding, as it was an advisory referendum and, in the UK, only the Parliament can make laws. In the law calling for the referendum, it was not specified that Parliament would have to act in accordance with the result; therefore, in theory, the Prime Minister David Cameron could have decided to put the referendum results back to the Parliament for a vote. In practice, however, in his statements prior to the vote, he said that he would undertake to respect the outcome of the vote¹⁶⁵. Cameron resigned the day following the outcome of the referendum, leading the Conservative Party to organize new elections for the internal leadership.

In his place, Theresa May, formerly Minister of the Interior and exponent of the Conservative Party, took office in Downing Street, becoming the second woman after Margaret Thatcher to become British Prime Minister. She had to deal with the negotiations on leaving the European Union and immediately invoked a return to a role for the United Kingdom that went beyond European borders in line with the internationalist aspiration that historically characterized the nation: "A truly global

¹⁶² Fung, B., *Britons are frantically Googling what the EU is after voting to leave*, in The Independent, 2016 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/britons-are-frantically-googling-what-the-eu-is-after-voting-to-leave-it-a7101856.html>

¹⁶³ Wall, S., *Reluctant European*, 2020, p. 175

¹⁶⁴ Sheftalovich, Z., *Nigel Farage: June 23 should be Britain's 'independence day' holiday*, in Politico, 2016 <https://www.politico.eu/article/nigel-farage-june-23-should-be-britains-independence-day-holiday-leave-eu-brexit/>

¹⁶⁵ Siddique, H., *Is the EU Referendum legally binding?*, in The Guardian, 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/23/eu-referendum-legally-binding-brexit-lisbon-cameron-sovereign-parliament>

Britain [...] that goes beyond the borders of Europe [...] British culture and history are deeply internationalist [...] we are a country that has always looked beyond Europe, to the rest of the world"¹⁶⁶. However, she also maintained that the decision of leaving the European Union "has nothing to do with the rejection of European values, nor is there any intention of harming the European Union and its members. We may be leaving the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe"¹⁶⁷.

As we have seen, one of the things that Britain has traditionally most disliked about the European Union is its supranational nature. As May put it in September 2017, "[i]t is a matter of choice. The profound pooling of sovereignty that is a crucial feature of the European Union permits unprecedentedly deep cooperation, which brings benefits. But it also means that when countries are in the minority, they must sometimes accept decisions they do not want, even affecting domestic matters with no market implications beyond their borders. And when such decisions are taken, they can be very hard to change. So the British electorate made a choice. They chose the power of domestic democratic control over pooling that control"¹⁶⁸.

On March 29, 2017, in accordance with the will of the British people, the Prime Minister notified the European Council of the intention to withdraw through the procedure established by Article 50 TEU, recognized only with the Lisbon Treaty. Although the previous treaties did not regulate the right of withdrawal of a Member State from the Union, giving the process of European integration a permanent character, the sources that could have governed the exit of a country were to be found in international law. There were only two possibilities: the consensual withdrawal, concluded with an agreement unanimously accepted by all member states, and the unilateral withdrawal, which was justified by radically changed circumstances, the so-called *rebus sic stantibus*, codified in Article 62 of the Vienna Convention of 1969. The latter customary rule establishes that a treaty can be terminated if the circumstances existing at the time of

¹⁶⁶ Theresa May, *The government's negotiating objectives for exiting the EU: PM speech*, 2017 <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-governments-negotiating-objectives-for-exiting-the-eu-pm-speech>

¹⁶⁷ Theresa May, *PM's Florence speech: a new era of cooperation and partnership between the UK and the EU*, 2017 <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-florence-speech-a-new-era-of-cooperation-and-partnership-between-the-uk-and-the-eu>

¹⁶⁸ O'Rourke, K., *A Short History of Brexit*, London: Penguin, 2019, p. 18

stipulation have changed, provided that these are essential circumstances without which the contracting parties would not have concluded the treaty. Before the Lisbon Treaty, therefore, Member States were not given an explicit possibility to withdraw from the Union. The institution of the withdrawal clause has always aroused concern because, by recognizing the possibility to terminate membership, there was the risk of threatening the process of European integration and calling into question the very nature of the Union. By carrying forward "the process of creating an ever-closer Union among the peoples of Europe", the direction of the EU has always been univocal. The possibility of withdrawal of a Member State is in fact opposed to the will of the founding fathers to give a permanent and unlimited character to the process of European integration. In other words, as it is stated by Article 53 TEU, the Treaty on the European Union "is concluded for an unlimited period of time".

When the withdrawing state takes the effective decision to put into practice the procedure outlined in Article 50 TEU, it has to notify the European Council. Following the notification, negotiations on withdrawal modalities start in order to specify the status of the withdrawing member during the transition period from EU member to non-member. Concerning the United Kingdom, the procedures started in March 2017, with the expectation of a formal exit in 2019, but the two years of negotiations were not enough. There were numerous postponements in 2019, and as Brexit slipped to October, 31, 2019, Theresa May resigned, giving way to Boris Johnson, promising to deliver Brexit by October, 31 "no ifs, no buts", also declaring himself ready for a no-deal Brexit. The former mayor of London, finding himself in trouble with a minority government, called early elections and adopted the slogan "Get Brexit done", emblematic of his intentions to complete Brexit at any cost.

Brexit happened on January 31, 2020: Great Britain left the European Union. Johnson's opinion, and quite possibly that of the majority of voters, is summed up in these words: "The European Union has evolved over 50 years in a direction that no longer suits this country"¹⁶⁹. As we have seen, the British government was initially interested, with joining a common market, above all in improving its commercial and financial prospects

¹⁶⁹ Boris Johnson, *PM address to the nation: 31 January 2020*, 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-31-january-2020#:~:text=Prime%20Minister%20Boris%20Johnson%20addressed%20the%20nation.&text=>

and in strengthening an economy to be revitalized. Over the years, however, they found themselves increasingly involved in a political enterprise. And, although for the future, an "ever closer union" between the Member States was looming, perplexities and doubts were growing in the United Kingdom. With the victory of the Leave, in fact, it was once again confirmed that for the majority of the British, taking part in the European project was a pragmatic matter of economic and political convenience, and never a love affair; an attitude that had already emerged very clearly in 1973, when Great Britain took the first step towards joining the European institution.

The geographical distance between Great Britain and Europe is very short, but, in May 2016, a few days before the referendum, Boris Johnson, with his words increased the gap, making the continent seem like a distant world, and comparing the European project with Adolf Hitler's attempts to conquer Europe. He stated "[i]t all started with the Roman Empire [...] The truth is that the history of the last couple of thousand years has been largely marked by attempts to various people or institutions to unify Europe to rediscover Europe's lost childhood, golden age of peace and prosperity, lived under the Romans. Napoleon, Hitler, various people tried it and it ended tragically. The European Union is an attempt to do it with different methods"¹⁷⁰. If we look at history from the point of view of the English, what Johnson said takes on a different meaning. In fact, it conveys the idea of a Great Britain with a history distant from the continent, which according to some interpretations has its roots in an event that happened more than two centuries ago: the naval battle of Cape Trafalgar that changed, perhaps forever, Britain's relationship with Europe. As we have seen, in the early 1800s, Napoleon Bonaparte was on his way to becoming the Emperor of France and dreamed of becoming the first to successfully invade England. However, on October 21, 1805, Napoleon's Franco-Spanish fleet of 33 ships was defeated in the waters near Cadiz by the Royal Navy's 27 ships, under Admiral Horatio Nelson. An episode, that of Trafalgar, which together with the defeat at Waterloo in 1815, inflicted on France, put an end to Napoleon's dream of European hegemony.

¹⁷⁰ Ross, T., *Boris Johnson interview: We can be the 'heroes of Europe' by voting to Leave*, in *The Telegraph*, 2016 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/14/boris-johnson-interview-we-can-be-the-heroes-of-europe-by-voting/>

For about a century, the military destinies of England and Europe no longer crossed, thus reinforcing, if needed, the feeling of autonomy and self-sufficiency of the British people. In the following years, European countries had different histories. While Great Britain dominated the sea and built an empire of colonies, Europe experienced a century of turmoil. France went through the restoration of the monarchy, two republics and another Napoleonic dictatorship, and Prussia transformed into a unified Germany under Otto von Bismarck. In the First World War, the continent's complex web of alliances and conflicts came to a head, and the history of Great Britain was intertwined with that of Europe in the "war to end war"¹⁷¹. For Britain, the First World War remains the most dramatic event in three centuries. Even two decades later, during the Second World War, Hitler sowed terror across the continent, but even he failed to invade Great Britain. Therefore, the Battle of Trafalgar was the last time Britain was seriously threatened with invasion, and since then, this has shaped the attitudes of the British people towards their neighbors.

Britain has always struggled to decide whether to face Europe or the rest of the world. However, as stated by Churchill, "[y]ou have to know that when we have to choose between Europe and the open sea, we will always be with the open sea"¹⁷². This is the heart of Brexit. In this regard, "Brexit, which sanctions the divorce between London and Brussels, is only the awareness of a role that the United Kingdom has never wanted to share with the European powers. A country devoted to the sea against a land blockade, an independent state by nature against a multilateral blockade that it has always considered distant, in search of the Atlantic and less and less of the Channel, the United Kingdom has made a difficult, dangerous and certainly not easy choice, aware that basically his strategy has always been this: not to be part of Europe but to prevent someone from taking over the Old Continent. It managed it for 47 years while staying inside the European Union"¹⁷³.

In 2016, therefore, the tradition of the 'no' was renewed. A 'no' reaffirmed by international political attitudes, based on feelings of autonomy and independence,

¹⁷¹ Wells, H. G., *La guerra su tre fronti*, Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1917, p. 14

¹⁷² Gowland, D., *Britain and the European Union*, London: Routledge, 2017, p. 71

¹⁷³ Vita, L., *Ecco perchè Londra ha staccato la spina all'Europa*, in InsideOver, 2020
<https://it.insideover.com/politica/londra-brexit-europa-perche.html>

which are also confirmed in many customs and expressions of everyday life, consolidated in British society and which prove the feeling of "diversity" of Britons. From the English garden, born in the eighteenth century, to right-hand drive, to British humor, to the currency, to the great innovations introduced by the financial markets, and to the memory of an empire made up of lost colonies. All behaviors of which the British are proud in affirming their diversity. Theirs is an island perspective, which is, at the same time, extended to the whole Earth. And "[t]hey stay there, calm: to protect them in their cliffs is the sea, which defends them"¹⁷⁴.

¹⁷⁴ LinkPop, *La storia insegna: l'Inghilterra ha sempre detto no ai "continentali"*, in Linkiesta, 2016 <https://www.linkiesta.it/2016/06/la-storia-insegna-linghilterra-ha-sempre-detto-no-ai-continentali/>

CHAPTER 3

Golden opportunities

3.1 The end of an era

Winston Churchill, who proposed the creation of the United States of Europe, was the British Prime Minister when Queen Elizabeth II started her reign. Interestingly, although the monarch cannot express preferences for anyone, nor vote, he was not only the first, but, reputedly, her favorite. Welcoming Churchill's resignation, Elizabeth II handed him a letter in which she wrote that she would particularly miss the weekly hearings. Also, when he died, Churchill had a state funeral at which the Queen appeared first, breaking the protocol. In the third chapter of this dissertation, we will see that she has been the notary that registered the novelty and the transformations of the British society. For the most times, the monarchy has had a large share of supporters; but now that the Queen has passed away, this seems to have changed. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is understanding whether King Charles III will be able to collect her heavy legacy, which is so large as to push someone to affirm that today the British subjects are more "Elizabethan" than royalists. The Crown also reigns over the group of nations that had been part of the Empire. Like the United Kingdom, Australia, for example, has remained a constitutional monarchy. In this country, however, the slumbering monarchy-republic issue is currently showing signs of stirring. It seems therefore that a modern Australian republic is an idea whose time has come. With regard to Australia, I believe it is also the perfect example to prove that the balance of power is not only a European concept but goes well beyond. In fact, the stability in the Indo-Pacific region depends more than ever on the actions of, and relations between the United States and China, and Australia had the opportunity to play the role of balancer. However, we will see that, if on the one hand, through the Aukus pact, it seems that the country has taken a decision; on the other one, this agreement shows also that Australia's dependence on the United Kingdom is still evident today.

In 1948, Egyptian King Farouk said: "The whole world is in revolt. Soon there will be only five Kings left - the King of England, the King of Spades, the King of Clubs, the King of

Hearts and the King of Diamonds"¹. To put it differently, there would be only five Kings left in the world: those of playing cards and the King of England. He was wrong, because monarchies, all in all, hold up. In Europe alone, besides the United Kingdom, there are Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Monaco and Liechtenstein. But he was also right, because none, except the British one, retain this arcane timelessness.

On February 6, 1952, 115 years after the coronation of Queen Victoria, a woman, Elizabeth II, returned to ascend the throne of the United Kingdom, with a name brought four centuries before her in the Tudor era, by the daughter of Henry VIII. In a speech on her 21st birthday in 1947, some years before her coronation, Queen Elizabeth II stated: "I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong"²; a commitment that she has maintained from the time she ascended the throne to the last days of her life. Elizabeth II proved to be suitable for carrying a country through a season of profound social and economic transformations. Her Majesty the Queen, in fact, has guided Great Britain through turmoil and crisis, adapting the role of the monarch to the trials of the times and history.

"Famous have been the reigns of our queens. Some of the greatest periods in our history have unfolded under their scepter"³. In other words, history taught British people that governed by their queens, they have always been capable of extraordinary feats. According to Winston Churchill, therefore, a period of prosperity was awaiting the United Kingdom. However, if on the one hand, the star of Elizabeth, the queen par excellence, a figure of indisputable iconic strength, has never stopped shining; on the other hand, despite Churchill's optimism, things turned out differently for her country, since it was forced to give up the status of Empire and a consequent downsizing on the international stage. More specifically, when she ascended the throne, the British could still count on an extensive colonial empire, starting with India. Today, however, what

¹ Fernández-Armesto, F., *The King of England*, in Foreign Policy, 2009
<https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/20/the-king-of-england/>

² *A speech by the Queen on her 21st Birthday*, 1947 <https://www.royal.uk/21st-birthday-speech-21-april-1947>

³ Geller, L., *HM Queen Elizabeth II at 91*, International Churchill Society, 1953
<https://winstonchurchill.org/news/churchill-society-news/hm-queen-elizabeth-ii-at-91/>

was once called "the Empire on which the sun never sets" is a distant memory: especially following Brexit, which contributed even more to the isolation of the country. Queen Elizabeth II's reign coincided therefore with the slow decline of the United Kingdom on an international level.

With her life spanning almost a century, for entire generations, Elizabeth represented the incarnation of the English monarchy and was the witness of the history of the last hundred years: from the advent of Hitler when she was a child, to the Second World War lived as a teenager, to the Suez crisis accompanied by the contemporary decline of the Empire, through the economic crisis of the Seventies, the Thatcherism and the advent of the internet age and social media, up to the pandemic and Brexit. In 70 years and 7 months, the Queen found a place alongside more than 50 sovereigns and a dozen dynasties. They changed, she did not. For this reason, we could say that she is a living legend for the country and beyond. She constituted in fact an element of continuity and stability⁴. Elizabeth II met fifteen British Prime Ministers, starting with Winston Churchill, who was the first, and, reputedly, her favorite. He was the man that warned the world about Nazism, Soviet imperialism, and that already in 1946 spoke of an Iron Curtain descending on the Old Continent. They met each other for the first time when she was only a two-year-old, and he described her as "a character [with] an air of authority and reflectiveness [that was] astonishing in an infant"⁵. Elizabeth II has met and advised fourteen other British Prime Ministers, including: the first female Prime Minister in the history of the United Kingdom Margaret Thatcher, the young founder of the "New Labor Party" Tony Blair, the man who led the United Kingdom outside of the European Union Boris Johnson, up to Liz Truss, to whom she entrusted, for the last time, the task of forming a new government. She has also presided over the terms of 15 Australians, starting with Robert Menzies. Together with them, Elizabeth shook hands with all American presidents from Truman onwards, with the exception of Lyndon Johnson, and hosted Charles de Gaulle, Nelson Mandela and the Romanian dictator Nicolae

⁴ Editorial Board, *Queen Elizabeth II symbolized stability throughout her record-long reign*, in The Washington Post, 2022 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/09/08/queen-elizabeth-legacy-stability-britain-monarchy/>

⁵ *Featured Document: Letter from Princess Elizabeth to WSC*, International Churchill Society, 2018 <https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/churchill-archive/featured-document-letter-from-princess-elizabeth-to-wsc/>

Ceausescu on her carriage. She had dinner with four Russian presidents, namely Kosygin, Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin, and crossed Yugoslavia, which was still united, together with Tito.

Elizabeth II has been the notary that registered the novelty and the transformations of the British society. The Crown, even if it wants to, however, does not have the powers to oppose these changes. Although the British monarch is formally the source of the three main institutional powers, as both the Parliament, the Government and the Courts act in his or her name, sovereignty in the system of the United Kingdom no longer belongs to the Crown since 1689, when the Bill of Rights sanctioned the principle of parliamentary sovereignty. In this regard, Elizabeth II, respectful of her role as constitutional monarch, has always remained impartial towards the decisions of the government and Parliament, whose laws must receive the consent of the sovereign. She did not show opinions or inclinations, respecting flawlessly the prerogatives of the constitutional monarch indicated by the Victorian constitutionalist Walter Bagehot, which are that “of being consulted, of encouraging and of warning”⁶. Furthermore, in public, she has always respected the order of silence, even on decisive choices for the national future such as Brexit. The Telegraph said that “from the miners’ strike to the Iraq War, Queen Elizabeth II remained strictly neutral when it came to the goings on of Parliament”⁷. Only occasionally she let her guard drop. She made a rare remark on the issue of Scottish independence in the run-up to the referendum vote in 2014, telling a well-wisher outside a church near Balmoral that she hoped “people will think very carefully about the future”⁸. However, she interpreted perfectly, as the unwritten Constitution suggests, the “dignified” part of the institutions. In this respect, Walter Bagehot differentiated between the “dignified” functions of the Constitution as fulfilled by the head of state and its “efficient” functions as carried out by Her or His Majesty’s government⁹. Therefore, Queen Elizabeth II worn the august mask of royalty in

⁶ Bagehot, W., *The English Constitution*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1867, p. 85

⁷ *The Queen has remained politically impartial for decades - Brexit must not change that*, in The Telegraph, 2019 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/08/09/queen-has-remained-politically-impartial-decades-brexit-musnt/>

⁸ *Queen Elizabeth II dies: obituary of a ‘beloved’ monarch*, in The Week, 2022 <https://www.theweek.co.uk/basic-page/953628/queen-elizabeth-obituary>

⁹ Torrance, D., *The Crown and the Constitution*, House of Commons Library, 2023 <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8885/CBP-8885.pdf>

thousands of ceremonies, which is precisely what the British want from their kings, to the point of prompting the Times to write on the occasion of her eightieth birthday: "Thank you, Her Majesty, for never allowing the mask to slip from your face".

The monarch therefore does not engage in politics, he observes it, exercising only and exclusively the three rights recognized by Walter Bagehot. In other words, the King or Queen reigns but does not govern. The United Kingdom is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy where real power is in the hands of the Prime Minister, who is the leader of the party that wins the election. However, the sovereign is the head of state, of the church, of the Commonwealth and of the armed forces. Every public act and all the laws are passed in his name. The monarch has no direct or absolute power, yet is the best-informed person in the country and among the best updated on the entire planet. With regard to Queen Elizabeth II, every Tuesday, in fact, while Parliament was in session, she received the head of government at Buckingham Palace. She could not support a particular policy, nor veto it, but she could express her opinion. Therefore, if the Prime Ministers have the authority, the Queen had the experience of someone who has read every government's document and met every world leader for more than 70 years. We could therefore say that the governments of a state come and go, they can be outvoted, brought down, but the monarchical institution represents continuity. To put it differently, Elizabeth II's power derived from her knowledge, her moral authority and her immense knowledge baggage that allowed her precisely to "advise, encourage and warn".

While politics and society are transformed, the Crown continues to represent the perpetuity of the nation and the state, above ideologies, parties and, it seems, even time. However, the paradox of the English monarchy is that its modernity lies in not being modern. This does not mean acting as if outside nothing was different from the times of Victoria and not even from the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth herself, now almost as remote. But, recording the changes, making it clear that there is something that cannot and must not change, such as the irrational but vital pact between the Queen and her people, her and them, Elizabeth and the British until a few months ago. She has lived through stormy times and also led the country through conflicts. She was the longest serving monarch in the history of the United Kingdom and the one who forged a unique relationship with her subjects, who consider her a reliable and familiar

presence, unmistakable with her pastel colored dresses with matching hat and handbag. Employing “a series of simple shapes and color blocks”, such as “the pastel rectangle of her customary coat and the bright disk of a matching hat”, her outfits were “almost Warholian in their Pop simplicity. [...] “The outfit would say the Queen even if the Queen was not in the outfit” wrote The New York Times¹⁰. After Elizabeth II, the very principle of monarchy could enter a crisis. There is no head of state in the world who has served for as long, and with equal success. No one has Elizabeth's planetary experience. The challenge of Elizabeth's reign consisted in grappling with the continuous modernity-tradition confrontation and in having to rethink the service of the Crown, first of a population that had to rebuild itself after the miseries and anguish of the war, then of a generation of individuals who was the vanguard in the West of an age of rebellion, protest and desecration. By embodying tradition and reinforcing in adapting it and not distancing it from modernity, Elizabeth II has won the challenge.

Even today, unlike European monarchies, where royals swear by the Constitution upon taking office, in Britain everyone swears by the Crown, even the representatives elected by the people. The Crown represents national unity and institutionalizes its cooperation and consent, allowing everyone to identify with a family on the throne. It is interestingly to highlight that also the public watching the last coronation on television, online and in parks and pubs were invited to swear aloud their allegiance when the successor of Queen Elizabeth II, King Charles III, was crowned¹¹.

The longevity of her reign and the way she interpreted the role of the monarch, in the sign of continuity but also of the transition to a new era, has almost always guaranteed her a high degree of approval among the population. In the United Kingdom, for the most times, the monarchy has had a large share of supporters, and a small share of critics. In recent years, however, the former seems to have decreased significantly: in 2012, 73 percent of the population supported the monarchy, while in 2022 the same percentage dropped to 62 percent, according to a survey published by YouGov after the

¹⁰ Trebay, G., *The Outfits That Say 'The Queen'*, in The New York Times, 2012
<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/03/fashion/queen-elizabeth-ii-sets-a-style-standard.html>

¹¹ Sherwood, H., Savage, M., *Public invited to swear their allegiance as king is crowned*, in The Guardian, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/apr/29/public-invited-to-swear-their-allegiance-as-king-is-crowned>

celebrations for the seventieth anniversary of the Queen's reign¹². In this regard, supporters argue that "the monarchy provides a sense of national identity and stability", but critics insist by saying that "it is an outdated institution that perpetuates elitism and inequality within British society"¹³. However, while the idea of a republic in the United Kingdom is still a long way off, advocating for its abolition is technically a punishable offense by law. The so-called "Treason Felony Act" passed by Parliament in 1848 to protect the crown is still in effect. However, according to the Guardian, it has not been wielded in a criminal case since 1879¹⁴. In this regard, more or less spontaneous protests against the royal family have recently been repressed by the authorities. Those who expressed their republican sentiments on the sidelines of the proclamation for the accession to the throne of King Charles III were arrested, sparking lively protests in a large part of public opinion¹⁵.

Regardless of our political views, however, Queen Elizabeth II has been a constant and a symbol of strength. Will the new King be able to collect this heavy legacy? The latter is, in fact, so large as to push someone to affirm that today the subjects of her Majesty are more "Elizabethan" than royalists¹⁶. In this regard, Graham Smith, the chief executive of campaign group Republic said that: "The queen is the monarchy for most people. After she dies the future of the institution is in serious jeopardy"¹⁷. Elizabeth II had a way of playing her role that slowly adapted to new times, yet her reign was almost "timeless" because of her longevity. Her way of staying in power and her ability to keep her distance left a legacy of a model of monarchy that will not be easy for Charles III to

¹² Ship, C., *Poll: Dramatic decline in support for monarchy in decade since Diamond Jubilee*, in ITV, 2022 <https://www.itv.com/news/2022-06-01/poll-dramatic-decline-in-support-for-monarchy-in-decade-since-diamond-jubilee>

¹³ Bradley, S., *What are the pros and cons of the monarchy?*, in The Week, 2023, <https://www.theweek.co.uk/royal-family/957673/pros-and-cons-of-the-monarchy/>

¹⁴ Siddique, H., *What is the law on the right to protest in the UK?*, in The Guardian, 2022 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/12/what-is-the-law-on-the-right-to-protest-in-the-uk>

¹⁵ Siddique, H., *Republican protesters arrested at King Charles proclamations*, in The Guardian, 2022 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/11/republican-protesters-arrested-king-charles-proclamation-events>

¹⁶ De Leo, F., *Elisabetta II, 70 anni di regno al servizio del suo popolo*, in Affari Internazionali, 2022 <https://www.affarinternazionali.it/scomparsa-regina-elisabetta-70-anni-regno/>

¹⁷ Holden, M., *With Queen Elizabeth's death, republicans sense their chance*, in Reuters, 2022 <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/with-queen-elizabeths-death-republicans-sense-their-chance-2022-09-09/>

replicate. He has therefore inherited a country in constant oscillation between attachment to tradition and the need for renewal, politically divided and grappling with one of the most complex moments in its recent history. In the last six years, in fact, four Prime Ministers have alternated; a fact that is not usual in London and which highlights the strong political instability. In other words, if the watchword for the new sovereign is unity, the first concerns will come from the home front.

The Queen has always been treated with respect and due deference also by the newspapers. Her death went around the world. Loved by the British people and by the media, the monarch belonged to a past generation. However, she has been able to exploit the media wisely, ever since she took office. During the 20th and 21st centuries the way the Royal Palace still connects with the rest of the planet has changed tremendously. Thanks to the continuous evolution of Internet and telecommunications technology, Elizabeth II never gave up the principles of innovation to relate to her subjects. This means that while maintaining a sober and at times austere style, Elizabeth has always tried to adapt the role of the monarchy to the expectations of a constantly evolving and changing society. In this regard, the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953 in Westminster Abbey was the first to be televised and was seen by twenty-seven million people in the United Kingdom and half a billion men and women in the rest of the world. It was the first proclamation of a ruler on live TV in history and was the event that “did more than any other to make television a mainstream medium”¹⁸. In 1957, the Queen's Christmas greetings and speech were broadcast for the first time on television in 1957, presenting a new type of monarch¹⁹. “The fact that some of you can see me today is just yet another example of the speed with which things are changing around us”²⁰, said Elizabeth II in the intervention. In 1970, she also authorized the BBC to film some scenes of the royal family's daily life to launch them on TV. And yet, it is perhaps initiatives like this, together with her longevity, that allowed the Queen to become one of the most popular in the history of the United Kingdom, known throughout the world and by all

¹⁸ *The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II*, in BBC, 1953

<https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/anniversaries/june/coronation-of-queen-elizabeth-ii/>

¹⁹ Kennedy, L., *Queen Elizabeth's First Televised Broadcast Presented a New Type of Monarch*, in History, 2022 <https://www.history.com/news/queen-elizabeth-ii-1957-christmas-broadcast>

²⁰ *Britain's Queen Elizabeth goes global on YouTube*, in Reuters, 2007

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-royals-youtube-idUSL2339445720071223>

generations. Then, although she was a bit late to social media, the Queen was particularly early in adopting email, sending them long before most other sovereigns and public figures around the world in 1976. Peter Kirstein, who helped her send the message from the Malvern location, stated that the username he set for the sovereign was HME2, an acronym for "Her Majesty, Elizabeth II"²¹. In 1997 the official website www.royal.gov.uk was activated and since 2007, the British Royal Family has gradually landed on the main international social networks and social media, starting with YouTube. Twitter would follow in 2009, Facebook the following year, and Instagram in 2013. A big hand arrived however in more recent times with *The Crown*, the TV series launched by Netflix in 2016 that captivated millions of viewers with the behind-the-scenes life of the royal family.

The eyes of the whole world have been focused on the disappearance of Elizabeth II for days. Clearly, the most heartfelt reactions came from the United Kingdom. The then premier Liz Truss, who was appointed by Queen Elizabeth in her last public engagement, was among the first to express herself: "Queen Elizabeth II was the rock on which modern Britain was built. Our country has grown and flourished under her reign. [...] The Queen provided us with the stability and the strength that we needed. Britain is the great country it is today because of her"²². Former Premier Boris Johnson recalled the sovereign by stating: "This is our country's saddest day. In the hearts of every one of us there is an ache at the passing of our Queen, a deep and personal sense of loss – far more intense, perhaps, than we expected. [...] As we think of the void she leaves, we understand the vital role she played, selflessly and calmly embodying the continuity and unity of our country"²³. Words of emotion and affection came also from the Scottish Prime Minister Nicola Sturgeon: "The passing of Queen Elizabeth marks the end of an

²¹ Commonwealth Union, *How the Queen of England beat everyone to the Internet*, 2022 <https://www.commonwealthunion.com/how-the-queen-of-england-beat-everyone-to-the-internet/>

²² *Truss says Queen Elizabeth II was the rock on which modern Britain was built*, in *The Weekend Australian*, 2022 <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/truss-says-queen-elizabeth-was-the-rock-on-which-modern-britain-was-built/video/a2539aba5203b879926f20720d638855>

²³ *Statement on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II*, in *Conservatives*, 2022 <https://www.boris-johnson.org.uk/news/statement-death-her-majesty-queen-elizabeth-ii>

era"²⁴ and from the former Prime Minister Tony Blair: "We have lost not just our monarch but the matriarch of our nation"²⁵.

Also international politicians add to the British mourning, starting with US President Joe Biden, who stated: "In a world of constant change, she was a steadying presence and a source of comfort and pride for generations of Britons, including many who have never known their country without her"²⁶. And again, the French President Emmanuel Macron expressed words of closeness by saying: "I remember her as a friend of France, a kind-hearted queen who has left a lasting impression on her country and her century"²⁷. The Italian reactions were not lacking. President Sergio Mattarella in an official message stated that "a figure of exceptional importance enters history. Her authoritative wisdom and the highest sense of responsibility will be remembered"²⁸. The then outgoing Prime Minister Mario Draghi stated: "The absolute protagonist of the story has disappeared" and underlined how Queen Elizabeth II "represented the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth with balance, wisdom, respect for institutions and democracy"²⁹. Even less institutional figures such as Alberto Angela remember her with beautiful words: "Perhaps the last symbol of the twentieth century goes away with Elizabeth II. A woman who has personally experienced the most important events of the last 70 years, putting herself aside to offer her country a safe guide"³⁰. Also Putin sent a message to King Charles III: "Some of the most important events in modern history have been closely

²⁴ Nicola Sturgeon hails Queen as 'anchor of our nation' ahead of Holyrood tributes, in Independent, 2022 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/nicola-sturgeon-scottish-parliament-first-minister-charles-iii-holyrood-b2165274.html>

²⁵ Muvija, M., Suleiman, F., *Former PM Blair calls Queen Elizabeth Britain's matriarch*, in Reuters, 2022 <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/former-pm-blair-calls-queen-elizabeth-britains-matriarch-2022-09-08/>

²⁶ *Statement of President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden on the Death of Queen Elizabeth II*, in The White House, 2022 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/09/08/statement-of-president-joe-biden-and-first-lady-jill-biden-on-the-death-of-queen-elizabeth-ii/>

²⁷ Macron, E., Twitter, 2022

²⁸ Mattarella, S., *Messaggio di cordoglio del Presidente Mattarella per la scomparsa di Sua Maestà la Regina Elisabetta II*, in Presidenza della Repubblica, 2022 <https://www.quirinale.it/elementi/70841>

²⁹ Stamin, C., *Da Biden a Putin: le reazioni alla morte della regina Elisabetta. Mattarella: "Scompare una figura eccezionale". Il Papa: "Un esempio di devozione al dovere"*, in La Stampa, 2022 https://www.lastampa.it/esteri/2022/09/08/news/morte_della_regina_elisabetta_le_reazioni_draghi_protagonista_assoluta_della_storia-8645474/

³⁰ Angela, A., Twitter, 2022

linked to the queen's name," wrote the Kremlin leader, adding that Her Majesty "rightly enjoyed the love and respect" of the its citizens, "as well as authority on the world stage"³¹.

Queen Elizabeth II has therefore been an extraordinary presence and one of the greatest leaders of our time. She marked and defined an era. She has been able "to find a balance between tradition and respect for institutions, while keeping the monarchy moving with the times"³². And yet, it was precisely her sheer longevity what made the loss to the British country so profound, "creating a sense of uncertainty about what the monarchy, and Britain itself, will look like without her"³³. "Elizabeth II spent 70 years as a low-key but extremely effective unifying force in a nation that is visibly pulling itself apart. Her passing will remove that force, which her heirs cannot assume they will be able to replicate"³⁴. In other words, the model of monarchy that Queen Elizabeth II bequeathed to King Charles III will not be easy to replicate, especially if, as it is possible, he fails to earn the breadth of respect that she enjoyed. This succession is therefore one of the biggest tests that modern Britain will face.

3.2 Australian nation, Australian choice

Preserving the internal unity of the United Kingdom is essential to maintain it also within the Commonwealth. As we have seen, Charles III is also the head of state in countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and 11 other nations scattered between North America and Oceania. Although the role of the King is representative and ceremonial, he is responsible for appointing the governor general. And yet, the foreign policy guidelines given by the various local executives are closely followed from London.

³¹ *Putin Says Queen Earned 'Authority on World Stage'*, in The Moscow Times, 2022 <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/09/08/putin-says-queen-earned-authority-on-world-stage-a78749>

³² Van Leeuwen, H., *Elizabethan era comes to an end, as Queen dies aged 96*, in Financial Review, 2022 <https://www.afr.com/world/europe/elizabethan-era-comes-to-an-end-as-queen-dies-aged-96-20211025-p59326>

³³ Van Leeuwen, H., *Elizabethan era comes to an end, as Queen dies aged 96*, 2022

³⁴ Kettle, M., *The loss of the Queen will test a divided Britain*, in The Guardian, 2022 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/09/queen-test-divided-britain-constitution>

Since the very beginning, Queen Elizabeth II attributed great importance to the association that brings together the former English colonies. Interestingly, in fact, during her coronation, she wore a dress with the symbols of the Commonwealth countries embroidered, demonstrating how important she considered them. The Commonwealth realms were for the British monarchy, and for Elizabeth II in particular, a way to recognize the independence demands of the colonies and at the same time try to contain the centrifugal forces that decreed the end of the British colonial empire. For Charles III, therefore, the challenge is not the simplest. There are very delicate balances at stake, especially in the Pacific area. To take an example, in addition to Australia, in the oceanic region, the crown also reigns over the Solomon Islands, whose government recently expressed orientations close to Beijing. All of this in an area that for years has become the nerve center of the challenge between the United States and China.

Australia has been a colony of the British Empire for more than a century, gaining independence from the United Kingdom in 1901. Even nowadays, however, it pertains to the Commonwealth, the group of nations that had been part of the Empire³⁵. All countries that belong to the association are sovereign nations with their own laws and governments, and although independent they have maintained more or less formal ties with the English crown. "Australia was founded as a colony of Great Britain and so it has borrowed or adapted many British traditions"³⁶. Like the United Kingdom and most countries in the Commonwealth, Australia has in fact remained a constitutional monarchy. This means that still today the Australian head of state is the King or the Queen of the United Kingdom. The monarch does not have absolute power and must follow the Constitution; however, both the responsibilities for representing the country at home and abroad and safeguarding Australia's constitutional order are in his hands. The King, who is currently Charles III, has no role in the day-to-day running of the Australian country. In other words, he has a representative there, namely the governor-general, who is appointed by the monarch on the advice of the Prime Minister of

³⁵ Australian Government, *The Commonwealth of Nations*

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/international-organisations/commonwealth-of-nations>

³⁶ Compagnoni, M., *What is the role of the British Monarchy in Australia?*, in SBS, 2022 <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/podcast-episode/what-is-the-role-of-the-british-monarchy-in-australia/jenkniek5>

Australia. Since the sovereign delegates his power to the governor-general, the latter carries out tasks on his behalf. He is in charge of giving Royal Assent to laws passed by the Parliament of Australia, appointing and dismissing the Prime Minister, calling elections and performing other duties at the government's request³⁷. It has to be highlighted that, in these decisions, "neither the Australian government nor the Australian people have any say or role, since the entire process is instead determined by British tradition, law and family"³⁸.

The death of Queen Elizabeth II, the consequent end of her 70-year reign and the accession to the throne of King Charles III have renewed calls for Australia to become a republic, a theme that has been present in national politics for several years. In fact, although she was "personally beloved and internationally respected, republican sentiments continued to grow across the Commonwealth"³⁹. In this regard, republicans maintain that, instead of the British King or Queen, the country should have an Australian as head of state. To put it differently, they should be able to choose who represents them and who performs the constitutional roles. An independent country, in fact, deserves to elect its own head of state. Australia is a constitutional democratic monarchy, and, according to the Australian Republic Movement, to continue to "allow such an important role to be handed down, generation by generation within a single family is simply undemocratic"⁴⁰. The head of state should therefore "live in Australia, be a proud Australian, be able to unify the nation in times of celebration or crisis, something the King or Queen of the United Kingdom could never do or be"⁴¹. The head of state can still veto Australian laws and his representative in Australia, namely the governor-general, can decide whether or not the country can have elections. In other words, it is important that Australian's future choices are in Australian hands and not in

³⁷ *What powers does the Governor-General have?*, in Parliamentary Education Office <https://peo.gov.au/understand-our-parliament/your-questions-on-notice/questions/in-what-instance-in-the-past-has-the-governor-general-used-his-powers/>

³⁸ Kelly, P., *Is Charles the last king of Australia?*, in The Weekend Australian, 2023 <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/inquirer/republic-within-the-realm-of-possibility-is-charles-the-last-king-of-australia/news-story/f83608d8417a36145877d898fdc7a45f>

³⁹ *The Queen's popularity is her greatest asset – so what will the firm do once she's gone?*, in Independent, 2022 <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/royal-family/queen-popularity-poll-platinum-jubilee-b2089409.html>

⁴⁰ Australian Republic Movement, <https://republic.org.au/faq>

⁴¹ Australian Republic Movement, <https://republic.org.au/faq>

the ones of a foreign monarch or his representative, as it is also stated by Sandy Biar, the chief executive officer of the Australian Republic Movement⁴². Therefore, according to supporters of republicanism, having a head of state based in London no longer fits the times and they want to “replace the governor-general with a non-executive President rather than continue to have their rule of law vested in a foreign royal family”⁴³.

Since Australia was a British colony, the Constitution has not changed. However, in order for a republic to take place in the Australian country, the Constitution would have to be amended through a victorious referendum, where a majority of electors and a majority of states are required. The procedure sounds simple, but voters of Australia have a long history of rejecting referendums. In this regard, since 1901, of the 44 proposals that have been put forward, although only in 19 occasions voters went to the polls, only eight have been approved. The reason is the necessary high bar to accept the changes to the Constitution. Under its Section 128⁴⁴, in fact, any constitutional amendment must be passed by both Houses of Parliament and the referendum succeeds only if it is approved by a double majority, meaning the national majority of the Australian public together with the majority of votes in four out of six states.

In Australia, the monarchy-republic issue is very important and it has already been addressed in the past. The first and only time the country held a popular vote on the republic question was in 1999, after years of debate initiated in 1995 by Labor’s Paul Keating, former Prime Minister and Treasurer. Some years later, the former leader of the opposition, the Liberal Malcom Turnbull, led the referendum campaign against Tony Abbott, the leader of the Conservative opposition. On November 6, 1999, Australians voted in a historic referendum to decide whether to transform the country into a parliamentary republic. Electors were asked whether they approved: “To alter the

⁴² Shepherd, T., *‘The Elizabethan era has ended’: what is the path forward for Australia’s republicans?*, in The Guardian, 2022 <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/sep/28/the-elizabethan-era-has-ended-what-is-the-path-forward-for-australias-republicans>

⁴³ Fuary-Wagner, I., Mcllory, T., *King or no king, do we even need a head of state?*, in Financial Review, 2022 <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/king-or-no-king-do-we-even-need-a-head-of-state-20220913-p5bhoa>

⁴⁴ *Mode of altering the Constitution*, in Parliament of Australia https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Senate/Powers_practice_n_procedures/Constitution/chapter8

Constitution to establish the Commonwealth of Australia as a republic with the Queen and governor-general being replaced by a President appointed by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Commonwealth Parliament”⁴⁵. The proposal was based on a minimalist model devised in 1998 by Richard McGarvie, the former governor of Victoria. In order to “cut legal ties to Britain”⁴⁶, the head of state would have been appointed and dismissed by a constitutional Council, based on the advice of the Prime Minister. However, at that time, “the republic campaign was torpedoed by the advocates themselves who were split between those advocating the parliamentary appointment model on offer, and those who refused to vote Yes because they wanted a directly-elected president”⁴⁷. In other words, even pro-Republican supporters themselves were divided internally between those who supported that the President should have been directly elected and those who believed that he should have been nominated by the Parliament⁴⁸. What is more is that at the time the question had the support of the Labor Opposition but not that of the Howard government, which was split and had no official position. The proposal had therefore not the support of the then government and not even the one of John Howard, the Prime Minister that was chief among those who opposed the question. In fact, he “brought to bear the enormous power of his incumbency and political skills to defeat the proposal”⁴⁹. The referendum failed with 54.87 per cent voting “no” and 45.13 per cent voting “yes”. Every state voted negatively, with the exception of the Australian Capital Territory, which was the only jurisdiction to record a majority “yes” vote, at 63.27 per cent. From the memoirs of Philip Flood, the Australian high commissioner to the United Kingdom at the time, it has come out that Queen Elizabeth II prepared three statements: the first if a clear vote for change

⁴⁵ *1999 Referendum*, in Australian Electoral Commission, 2011
https://www.aec.gov.au/elections/referendums/1999_referendum_reports_statistics/1999.htm

⁴⁶ Fuary-Wagner, I., Mcllory, T., *King or no king, do we even need a head of state?*, in Financial Review, 2022

⁴⁷ Coorey, P., *This is not 1999 and that’s why the Voice has a chance*, in Financial Review, 2022
<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/this-is-not-1999-and-that-s-why-the-voice-has-a-chance-20230323-p5cuko>

⁴⁸ Gridneff, I., *Australia 'should be a republic once Queen's reign ends'*, in The Telegraph, 2013
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/australia/10095247/Australia-should-be-a-republic-once-Queens-reign-ends.html>

⁴⁹ Coorey, P., *This is not 1999 and that’s why the Voice has a chance*, in Financial Review, 2022

emerged; the second if a majority of voters voted for change; and the third if a staunch majority rejected the amendment to become a republic⁵⁰. After the result, Elizabeth II said: "I respect and accept this outcome. I have always made it clear that the future of the monarchy in Australia is an issue for the Australian people and them alone to decide, by democratic and constitutional means"⁵¹. Most newspapers of the time, with the exception of the *West Australian*, were in favor of replacing the Queen and the governor-general. The *Australian* was the country's most extreme republican supporter. In its frontpage on referendum day it declared: "We believe that by voting yes in today's republic referendum, we shall be saying proudly that Australia is a land filled with people of all races and creeds, from all countries of the globe, and an egalitarian land in which people are entitled to aspire to succeed regardless of race, gender, age, or belief"⁵². After the defeat at the 1999 referendum, however, "it was widely accepted that there would be no point in trying again until the Queen's reign had ended"⁵³, meaning that, especially in recent years, Elizabeth II's charisma had acted as a sort of dam to contain a latent malaise until September 8, 2022, when she died.

A day after the Queen's passing, a 96-gun salute, one for each year of her life, rang out over Canberra, the capital of Australia⁵⁴. During the month, "Parliament was suspended, flags flew at half mast, and mourners laid floral tributes at government buildings across the country"⁵⁵. The longevity of the Elizabeth II's reign and the admiration she inspired cannot be replicated. Anthony Albanese, the Prime Minister of Australia, speaking of her stated: "Her Majesty was a rare and reassuring constant amidst rapid change. Through the noise and turbulence of the years, she embodied and exhibited a timeless decency

⁵⁰ Chessell, J., *Queen rejected Howard language on 1999 republic referendum*, in *Financial Review*, 2015 <https://www.afr.com/politics/queen-rejected-howard-language-on-1999-republic-referendum-20151126-gl89t6>

⁵¹ Chessell, J., *Queen rejected Howard language on 1999 republic referendum*, 2015

⁵² *The Weekend Australian*, 1999, p. 1, in De Kantzow, M., Stubbs, S., *Targeting Media*, p. 52

⁵³ Coorey, P., *Albanese rejects 'premature' republic talk*, in *Financial Review*, 2022 <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/premature-republic-talk-could-cause-more-harm-than-good-pm-20220912-p5bha7>

⁵⁴ Tindale, L., *Queen Elizabeth II dies: ADF gun salute rings out as Canberra remembers Queen*, in *The Canberra Times*, 2022 <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7896761/guns-ring-out-as-canberra-remembers-queen/>

⁵⁵ Gunia, A., *'The Elizabethan Era Is Now Over.' Australia Could Reconsider Its Ties to the British Monarchy*, in *Time*, 2022 <https://time.com/6223068/australia-republic-monarchy-constitution/>

and an enduring calm. Queen Elizabeth II is the only reigning monarch most of us have known and the only one to ever visit Australia”⁵⁶. Some months before her death, in June 2022, to mark her 70 years on the throne, Albanese renamed an island on Canberra's Lake Burley Griffin 'Queen Elizabeth II'. “She has stood with Australia as a true and steadfast friend. We give her name to this place in the heart of our capital, a place where history and progress meet. [...] It is a fitting salute to Her Majesty to celebrate her long life and 70 years of service to Australia and the Commonwealth, including her 16 visits to our shores”⁵⁷, the Australian Prime Minister said on her. In this regard, the Queen first visited Australia in 1954. The pageant had been planned for months, and large crowds attended to see her. Three generations of Australians have memories of standing on tiptoe, in their sharpest school uniform, to catch a glimpse of her majesty. However, visits shortened and people dwindled as time passed and the relationship between Australia and the British monarchy changed, making the need to establish a republic increasingly felt. The 1953 coronation of the young Queen became one of the most breathtaking celebrations of the twentieth century “with a magical quality Hollywood could never match”⁵⁸. She was offering a hopeful future in the post-war world and its defining feature was unity. That world, however, no longer exists. Seven decades have passed and the coronation of King Charles III comes “in a society beset by division, confusion and the anarchical assault on tradition”⁵⁹. Therefore, the question that arises is: Will he be Australia’s last king or merely the forerunner to King William? A YouGov poll published in The Australian newspaper showed that only 52 per cent of Australians have a positive opinion of the new monarch⁶⁰. In this respect, King Charles III launches both a new era of British history and of Australian history.

⁵⁶ *Statement from the Prime Minister: Queen Elizabeth II*, in Anthony Albanese PM, 2022 <https://anthonyalbanese.com.au/media-centre/queen-elizabeth-ii>

⁵⁷ Vincent, P., Hobman, J., *The 'inevitable' question that's likely to tear Australia apart once again now the much-loved and respected Queen has died... will the country vote again to become a republic?*, in Daily Mail Australia, 2022 <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11193815/Queen-Elizabeth-II-dead-Debate-Australia-keeping-monarchy.html>

⁵⁸ Kelly, P., *Is Charles the last king of Australia?*, in The Australian, 2023

⁵⁹ Kelly, P., *Is Charles the last king of Australia?*, 2023

⁶⁰ Clarke, J., Magnay, J., *New poll reveals our favourite royals*, in The Australian, 2023 <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/support-for-king-charles-at-52pc-but-camilla-backed-by-35pc-yougov-polling/news-story/ca026d96efd72c6d5eeaf3253a3cfd82>

Due to the fact that it has more members of Parliament from non-European backgrounds than ever before, the 47th Parliament, settled down on 2022, is Australia's most culturally diverse. Under section 44 of the Constitution, one cannot run for Parliament if holds allegiance to another country⁶¹. This means that those born overseas have to relinquish the foreign citizenship to comply with this section. Ironically, however, under the Australian Constitution, all Senators and Members of the House of Representative must swear allegiance to the King or Queen and his or her heirs and successors before sitting in Parliament⁶². In other words, the first thing they do is promise to serve a foreign monarch. In this respect, Matt Thistlethwaite, the Assistant Minister for Defense and for the Republic, told to the Nine newspaper in July 2022: "It's archaic and ridiculous. It does not represent the Australia we live in and it's further evidence of why we need to begin discussing becoming a republic with our own head of state"⁶³.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the British navy was the strongest in the world and it was felt that British country would have come to Australia's aid if and when it became necessary. When the Queen first visited Australia in 1954, Britain was the most recurrent destination for Australian produced goods, meaning that the United Kingdom was its largest trading partner and also its major source of immigration. Still in the early 80ies, Britons provided more foreign investment in Australia than any other country. In other words, that Australian country, where 70% of the population came to welcome the first monarch to visit Australian's shores, was in virtually every respect a different nation in a different world compared to today. In this regard, one huge question remains unanswered. That question being: Do Australians want King Charles

⁶¹ Section 44, in Parliament of Australia

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Electoral_Matters/Inquiry_into_matters_relating_to_Section_44_of_the_Constitution/Report_1/section?id=committee_s%2Freportjnt%2F024156%2F25954

⁶² Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, Part IV, Section 42

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Senate/Powers_practice_n_procedures/Constitution/chapter1/Part_IV_-_

[_Both_Houses_of_the_Parliament#:~:text=42.,the%20schedule%20to%20this%20Constitution](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Senate/Powers_practice_n_procedures/Constitution/chapter1/Part_IV_-_Both_Houses_of_the_Parliament#:~:text=42.,the%20schedule%20to%20this%20Constitution)

⁶³ Bourke, L., *Swearing allegiance to the Queen 'ridiculous': Republic minister*, in The Sydney Morning Herald, 2022 <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/archaic-and-ridiculous-republic-minister-slams-parliamentary-ritual-says-referendum-is-only-fix-20220728-p5b5ji.html>

or are they mature enough or independent enough to look to appoint one of our own as our head of state?” According to Thistlethwaite, “[w]e are now a much more mature and independent nation and we should reflect in the document upon which our democracy and our laws are based. [...] We are no longer British. We are a nation of close to 25 million people. We make our own decisions. We have our own form of government, our own culture and identity. Australians are ready for the conversation about reflecting on our Constitution [which has not been updated since 1977] and appointing one of our own as our head of state”⁶⁴.

There are also practical objections. Of different opinion, there is Julian Leeser, Shadow Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians, who stated that Thistlethwaite and the government should be more concentrated on the challenges facing Australians “instead of undergraduate stunts railing against our system of government that has served us well”⁶⁵. According to him, in fact, constitutional monarchy is the best form of government for Australia. Peter Dutton, the current leader of the opposition, is of the same opinion and maintained that: “We need the King as much as we did a Queen because we have a stability in our system that has served us well, and I don't believe in disrupting that”⁶⁶. As argued on *The Conversation* by Dennis Altman, a professorial fellow at La Trobe University, becoming a republic would only be a “symbolic” act and “it is hard to see what effectively would change”⁶⁷. Therefore, if on the one hand republicans insist that monarchy is “an outdated institution that perpetuates elitism and inequality”⁶⁸, on the other hand supporters state that it provides a sense of national identity and stability.

⁶⁴ Gunia, A., *'The Elizabethan Era Is Now Over.' Australia Could Reconsider Its Ties to the British Monarchy*, 2022

⁶⁵ Bourke, L., *Swearing allegiance to the Queen 'ridiculous': Republic minister*, 2022

⁶⁶ Brown, A., *Charles to forge own path as King: PM*, in *Augusta Margaret River*, 2022
<https://www.amrtimes.com.au/news/human-interest/queen-most-accomplished-leader-howard-c-8197376>

⁶⁷ Altman, D., *The republic debate is back (again) but we need more than a model to capture Australians' imagination*, in *The Conversation*, 2022 <https://theconversation.com/the-republic-debate-is-back-again-but-we-need-more-than-a-model-to-capture-australians-imagination-175058>

⁶⁸ Bradley, S., *What are the pros and cons of the monarchy?*, in *The Week*, 2023
<https://www.theweek.co.uk/royal-family/957673/pros-and-cons-of-the-monarchy/>

In August 2022, in Canberra, Australian Aboriginal Senator Lidia Thorpe called Queen Elizabeth II, the then Australia's Head of State, a "colonizer". Thorpe had approached the bench in the Parliament hall, where she was supposed to read the oath formula with her right fist raised, saying, in protest against the colonial past of the British Empire and against the violence suffered by Aboriginal peoples: "I, sovereign Lidia Thorpe, do solemnly and sincerely affirm and declare that I will be faithful and I bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the colonizer"⁶⁹. The word "colonizer" is, of course, not part of the oath and her insertion was a sharp public rebuke of Australia's colonial past. Thorpe's words were greeted with various murmurs from colleagues in the courtroom and earned her some reproaches from the president of the Senate, Sue Lines, who invited her to take the oath again, reciting it as it was written. After being sworn in, the Senator tweeted: "Sovereignty never ceded", a slogan used by Aboriginal peoples to indicate that their sovereignty over Australian lands had never been relinquished⁷⁰. In a phone interview, she said that she had not exactly planned that change to the oath. "I did not know what I was going to do. I felt uncomfortable. I felt really upset that I had to go and do something that I did not want to do, to swear allegiance to a colonizer from another country"⁷¹. Thorpe described Australia as a "colonial project", arguing that the national flag does not represent it. In this regard, to Channel 10's *The Project*, she explained that the Australian flag, "represents the colonization of these lands and it has no permission to be here. There's been no consent, there's been no treaty. [...] The flag has connotations of invasion and dispossession and is associated with the mass murder of Aboriginal people. It does not represent me"⁷². Thorpe also said that she ran for Parliament "to question the illegal occupation of the colonial system in the country. [...]"

⁶⁹ Pietsch, B., *Australian senator: Pledge to 'colonizing' Queen Elizabeth II was ad-libbed*, in *The Washington Post*, 2022 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/03/australia-lidia-thorpe-coloniser-queen-elizabeth/>

⁷⁰ Thorpe, L., Twitter, 2022

https://twitter.com/SenatorThorpe/status/1553902401496961024?s=20&t=_2y6rZQ_lems3FurjuPEXw

⁷¹ Pietsch, B., *Australian senator: Pledge to 'colonizing' Queen Elizabeth II was ad-libbed*, in *The Washington Post*, 2022 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/03/australia-lidia-thorpe-coloniser-queen-elizabeth/>

⁷² Knowles, R., *'Ignorant and offensive': Backlash after Waleed Aly's interview with Senator Lidia Thorpe*, in *SBS*, 2022 <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/ignorant-and-offensive-backlash-after-waleed-aly-interview-with-senator-lidia-thorpe/p6rvsimkt>

I am here for my people and I will sacrifice the oath of allegiance to the colonizer to enter the media as I am doing now, to enter Parliament as I do every day”⁷³.

Although the Commonwealth "very much matters" for the future of Australia, as “it ties nations together through a common history”⁷⁴, under the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, a longtime supporter of making his country a republic, the slumbering monarchy-republic issue is showing signs of stirring. In a 2019 dinner hosted by the Australian Republic Movement, he told: “A modern Australian republic is an idea whose time has come”⁷⁵. In May 2022, when his Labor government was elected, he created the office of the Assistant Minister for the Republic. The appointment of Matt Thistlethwaite is seen as a major boost for the republican campaign⁷⁶. There was no shortage of criticism. “I think it is inappropriate to have a minister in government devoted to a system that does not yet exist. It is inappropriate in that he is working in a paradigm that he is devoted to dismantling”⁷⁷ maintained Rachel Bailes, a spokesperson with the Australian Monarchist League.

Although the subject is periodically debated in the country, Australia remains a constitutional monarchy. And, as it was confirmed by Anthony Albanese in an interview with Sky news, “it will continue to be so for at least the next three years”⁷⁸, excluding another possible vote. After Queen Elizabeth's II death, the Australian Prime Minister ruled out any rush on Australia becoming a republic. Although he stated that it was an

⁷³ Grazi, M., *Australia, la senatrice aborigena definisce la regina Elisabetta II una "colonizzatrice"*, in Luce, 2022 <https://luce.lanazione.it/politica/australia-senatrice-aborigena-regina-colonizzatrice/>

⁷⁴ Bongioanni, M., *Cos'è il Commonwealth e perché diversi stati vogliono uscirne*, in LifeGate Daily, 2022 <https://www.lifegate.it/cose-commonwealth>

⁷⁵ Wahlquist C., *The Queen and us: Australia's long relationship with Elizabeth II*, in The Guardian, 2022 <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/sep/10/the-queen-and-us-australias-long-relationship-with-elizabeth-ii>

⁷⁶ Gunia, A., *'The Elizabethan Era Is Now Over.' Australia Could Reconsider Its Ties to the British Monarchy*, 2022

⁷⁷ Fildes, N., *Australia's quest to become a republic*, in Financial Times, 2022 <https://www.ft.com/content/60624963-d2dd-4555-91ca-fcad77bed8ea>

⁷⁸ Huitson, J., *'Very much matters': Prime Minister Albanese weighs in on the Commonwealth going forward following Queen's death*, in SkyNews.com.au, 2022 <https://www.skynews.com.au/australia-news/politics/very-much-matters-prime-minister-albanese-weighs-in-on-the-commonwealth-going-forward-following-queens-death/news-story/b61c6af398ef87b7e38119a178dedf49>

opportunity to "reflect on the system that we have over a period of time"⁷⁹, he called it premature to organize a referendum during his first term also for a sign of respect for the late Elizabeth. In other words, nothing is expected to change any time soon. The reason is that Albanese back firstly a debate on constitutional change, recognizing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in an Indigenous Voice to Parliament⁸⁰, in order to give First Nation Australians the right under the Australian Constitution to be consulted about decisions that affect them and their future⁸¹. To put it another way, "the political reality is that the republic is hostage to the voice"⁸². In fact, if this year the referendum fails, Australian republicans have to let go of the thought of the republic, since Albanese does not want two defeats, especially if the voice is his far better prospect. Mindful of the 1999 defeat, Albanese would decide to promote a republic referendum only if he felt sure the situation had changed significantly⁸³. Also according to Matt Thistlethwaite, the first step is enshrining the voice to Parliament. This referendum has therefore a dual significance: a constitutional change in its own right and the necessary gateway to the republic.

As stated before, each successive visit of the Queen saw the crowds decrease, representing Australia's changing perceptions of the constitutional monarchy system. These conflicting views on the monarchy have reemerged in the public response to Queen Elizabeth II's death, "with many in mourning and many others expressing scrutiny of the royal family and the system they represent"⁸⁴. In June 2022, at the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the Governor-General David Hurley made people raise eyebrows after mentioning her eventual death. In that occasion, he stated that the issue of turning

⁷⁹ Maiden, S., *Anthony Albanese pledges there will be no republic referendum until his second term after Queen's death*, in News.com.au, 2022

<https://www.news.com.au/entertainment/celebrity-life/royals/anthony-albanese-pledges-there-will-be-no-republic-referendum-until-his-second-term-after-queens-death/news-story/74f2a280132e059d05fd355d549c86d7>

⁸⁰ Mellroy, T., *Voice campaign appeals to history in new ad*, in Financial Review, 2022

<https://www.afr.com/link/follow-20180101-p5bkez>

⁸¹ Shepherd, T., *'The Elizabethan era has ended': what is the path forward for Australia's republicans?*, in The Guardian, 2022

⁸² Kelly, P., *Is Charles the last king of Australia?*, 2023

⁸³ Kelly, P., *Is Charles the last king of Australia?*, 2023

⁸⁴ *Understanding Australia's Relationship With the Queen and How She Will be Commemorated*, in Insider, 2022 <https://insiderguides.com.au/understanding-australias-relationship-with-the-queen-and-how-she-will-be-commemorated/>

Australia into a republic would have been “up for discussion” once she passed. “I think at the moment people center on the Queen, and then when she goes, when she dies, then the succession comes in, there's a new discussion in Australia”⁸⁵, Hurley declared. According to republicans, therefore, a change in monarch would have been the best time for another referendum. “The Elizabethan era has now ended and it is time to move into the Australian era. That is an era where we set our nation on a journey to maturity, independence and confidence”⁸⁶ said Matt Thistlethwaite.

The official mourning period is now over, and some Australians are getting busy in organizing a future as a republic. In this regard, Graham Smith, a British republic campaigner, has urged the Australian Republic Movement to “get on with it”, saying “there is no time like the present” for Australia to have its own head of state and move away from the royals⁸⁷. According to Smith, King Charles III is not the monarch of Australia, but “he is the sovereign of this country [the United Kingdom]. He sees himself as the king of this country. And everybody in this country sees him as the king of this country and the idea that he is the king of Australia, or New Zealand or Canada or wherever, it is very much an afterthought”⁸⁸. A growing number of voters appear to agree. A Sydney Morning Herald’s poll of 1,606 Australians found that support for independence from the United Kingdom increased from 35% to 40% in the four months following Queen Elizabeth II’s death⁸⁹.

“Australians see signs of ties to Britain every day and a republic would prompt changes in the laws passed by Parliament that would no longer receive royal assent”⁹⁰, it would lead to organizations and events reconsidering the use of “royal” in their names, in

⁸⁵ Spence, H., *Governor-General David Hurley criticised for ‘bizarre’ Queen comment*, in The Australian, 2022 <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/breaking-news/governorgeneral-david-hurley-criticised-for-bizarre-queen-comment/news-story/8d046928e3892fe08e54d46951b304ef>

⁸⁶ Shepherd, T., *‘The Elizabethan era has ended’: what is the path forward for Australia’s republicans?*, in The Guardian, 2022

⁸⁷ Magnay, J., *UK campaigner urges Australians: ‘Get on with a republic’*, in The Weekend Australian, 2023 <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/world/uk-campaigner-urges-australians-get-on-with-a-republic/news-story/245fb1b68de07fdf7fba6c9fb7353778>

⁸⁸ Magnay, J., *UK campaigner urges Australians: ‘Get on with a republic’*, 2023

⁸⁹ Crowe, D., *Royal drama pushes Australian voters towards republic: poll*, in The Sydney Morning Herald, 2023 <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/royal-drama-pushes-australian-voters-towards-republic-poll-20230125-p5cf95.html>

⁹⁰ Fuary-Wagner, I., McIlroy, T., *King or no king, do we even need a head of state?*, 2022

national honors, in public holidays, and currency. In this regard, the Australian \$5 note will not have the image of King Charles III of the United Kingdom, the country's current head of state⁹¹. According to a survey carried out in October 2022 by the Sydney Morning Herald, 43 per cent of those interviewed said that on the \$5 bill they preferred an Australian person, as is already the case for the \$10, 20, 50 and \$100 bills. Only 34 percent voted to have the image of King Charles III⁹². Jim Chalmers, the treasurer of Australia, "has welcomed the banknote change as striking a good balance for Australia in the post-Elizabethan era"⁹³. The Reserve Bank of Australia has in fact decided to replace the image of Queen Elizabeth II, which is currently on the banknote, with an illustration "that pays homage to the culture and history of the Australian Aboriginal peoples"⁹⁴. The recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples is in fact a central theme in Australian politics and social life.

"Rule by birthright, a literally born-to-rule English sovereign, has no place in a democratic, egalitarian Australia. The notion is as foreign to Australian values as the monarchy itself. Nor should anyone be forced to pledge allegiance to a foreign King or Head of State. Our Head of State should pledge to serve us, and only us, instead. Only an Australian should have the honor of becoming our Head of State"⁹⁵, said Peter FitzSimons, the chair of the Australian Republic Movement. The implications of Australia becoming a republic, however, go beyond the symbolism of the replacement of the British monarch with an Australian head of state. "It would involve separate presidential elections, a possible realignment of power in Canberra, and a shift in the regional

⁹¹ Newkey-Burden, C., *Will Australia become a republic?*, in The Week, 2023

<https://www.theweek.co.uk/news/world-news/959528/will-australia-become-a-republic>

⁹² Crowe, D., *Voters want Australians of note on the next \$5, not King Charles*, in The Sydney Morning Herald, 2022 <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/voters-want-australians-of-note-on-the-next-5-not-king-charles-20221014-p5bpr1.html>

⁹³ Newkey-Burden, C., *Will Australia become a republic?*, 2023

⁹⁴ Beazley, J., *Australia's new \$5 banknote will feature Indigenous history instead of King Charles*, in The Guardian, 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/feb/02/australia-new-5-dollar-banknote-indigenous-history-note-instead-of-king-charles>

⁹⁵ Raphael, A., *Australian Republic Movement ramps up campaign following death of Queen Elizabeth II*, in The Weekend Australian, 2022 <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/breaking-news/australian-republic-movement-ramps-up-campaign-following-death-of-queen-elizabeth-ii/news-story/b103f48d80f06546ace730f3ea84b888>

perception of Australia to a multi-ethnic, Asia-Pacific, state⁹⁶. The switch of Australia into a republic would mean a country that puts aside official and colonial-era links with the old motherland, exiting on its own. It would be an Australia no longer grasped to a long-past era and constrained by the “tyranny of distance” from the United Kingdom. With regard to the foreign policy, especially for countries in its immediate region, Australia would become a more trustworthy diplomatic partner. The country would in fact be seen as progressing towards a more independent position and identity, whereas its cultural and historical ties with the United Kingdom would undoubtedly remain⁹⁷. The appointment of an Australian head of state would however represent the start of a new chapter in the country’s history.

3.3 AUKUS and the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific

Given its unique geographic position and mixed values, Australia, a very peculiar country, has established itself within a rapidly changing reality, namely the Indo-Pacific region, which has shifted from its peripheral position to play now a progressively central role in the international context. This area is becoming a “center of global power because of the great powers operating here”⁹⁸, and its stability depends “more than ever on the actions of, and relations between, two of Australia’s most important partners: the United States and China”⁹⁹. In this regard, Samuel Huntington, in his famous book *The Clash of Civilizations*, has defined Australia as a “torn country”¹⁰⁰, divided between its Western identity and Anglosphere history, which was strengthened over the years by several alliances, and the intent to deepen its relations towards Asia and its civilizations. In other words, Australia seems to have the opportunity to act as a bridge between the Indo-Pacific region and the United States. And yet, with the purpose

⁹⁶ Clark, A., *Voice vote will drive Australia’s next move on republic*, in *Financial Review*, 2023 <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/voice-vote-will-drive-australia-s-next-move-on-republic-20230503-p5d56s>

⁹⁷ *An Australian Republic for the Asian Century*, in *Young Australians in International Affairs*, 2015 <https://www.youngausint.org.au/post/2015/04/30/an-australian-republic-for-the-asian-century>

⁹⁸ Scott, D., *Australia’s embrace of the Indo-Pacific: new term, new region, new strategy?*, in *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2013, p. 427

⁹⁹ Australian Government, *Foreign Policy White Paper*, Canberra, 2017, p. 38

¹⁰⁰ Huntington, S. P., *The Clash of Civilizations?*, in *Foreign Affairs*, Summer, Vol. 72, No. 3, 1993, p. 45

of avoiding the worst-case foreign policy scenario, which would be of choosing only one out of the two relationships, Australian policy-makers should maintain a reasonable equilibrium between the security partnership with Washington and the commercial ties with Beijing¹⁰¹.

Australia attaches great importance to its security and the development of peaceful relations with other states. The country's foreign policy is characterized by a strong commitment to keeping stability in the Indo-Pacific, a region that is favorable to its interests¹⁰², by relying on democratic principles and cooperation among its allies and neighboring countries. In this regard, in order to balance Beijing's heavy influence in the region, Indo-Pacific countries have readjusted their foreign policy priorities and have set up a series of bilateral, trilateral and multilateral initiatives. In the last few years, at the heart of this network of partnerships and agreements, two mechanisms have emerged: the QUAD, namely the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between Australia, the United States, India and Japan; and the AUKUS, the Trilateral Security Pact between Canberra, London and Washington. Therefore, both instruments are important initiatives aimed at "supporting an open, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific that is inclusive and resilient"¹⁰³. The Quad is not a formal alliance, but a diplomatic partnership of four countries that are taking practical action to address shared regional challenges and has no commitment to collective security. Whereas, AUKUS, which was announced in September 2021 by the Prime Ministers of Australia and the United Kingdom and by the President of the United States, is a new tripartite security partnership that is aimed at promoting the stability, the prosperity and the status quo of the Indo-Pacific region, through forms of technological and intersectoral collaboration. In this regard, the three-way strategic alliance will mainly deal with the sharing of technology for naval defense. Washington and London will in fact provide Canberra with the necessary technology to equip Australia with a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, a sophisticated and strategically relevant type of weapon that is currently possessed by only six countries in the world, namely the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, China and

¹⁰¹ Tow, W. T., *Still an Excellent Relationship: Australian-American Relations in Testing Times*, in Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2006, p. 1-9

¹⁰² Australian Government, *Foreign Policy White Paper*, Canberra, 2017, p. 27

¹⁰³ Australian Government, *Quad* <https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/regional-architecture/quad>

India. It has to be highlighted that, as it is stated by the minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong, AUKUS is “about more than submarines. It is also about joint development of capabilities including artificial intelligence, quantum technology and cyber”¹⁰⁴.

The pact, which is defined as "historic" by Biden, is above all to “work hand in glove to preserve security and stability in the Indo-Pacific” in order to “defend [ourselves] against rapidly evolving threats”¹⁰⁵. In this regard, the growing assertiveness of China, the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the destabilizing behavior of Iran and North Korea have been cited by British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak as possible current threats that could contribute to "designing a world defined by danger, disorder, and division”¹⁰⁶. AUKUS partners “share a similar outlook on the key challenges and opportunities confronting the world”¹⁰⁷. To put it differently, "although geographically Russia is the closest threat to Britain, given its last year’s full-scale invasion of the Ukrainian country, “defense figures believe that the growing threat will emerge from China”¹⁰⁸. As far as the United Kingdom is concerned, after leaving the European Union, AUKUS is a golden opportunity to reaffirm its role. The security pact is in fact seen by the British country as an opportunity to play a greater role as a contributor to the international security. In other words, in a post-Brexit world, the United Kingdom is eager to paint the trilateral pact as a success for “Global Britain”¹⁰⁹. In this regard, the country’s 2021 Integrated Review, which sets out the government's national security and international policy, has mentioned the Indo-Pacific about 30 times by stating that, by 2030, the United Kingdom

¹⁰⁴ Wong, P., *Australian interests in a regional balance of power*, in Australian National Press Club Address, 2023 <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/speech/national-press-club-address-australian-interests-regional-balance-power>

¹⁰⁵ Biden, J., *Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom Announcing the Creation of AUKUS*, 2021 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/15/remarks-by-president-biden-prime-minister-morrison-of-australia-and-prime-minister-johnson-of-the-united-kingdom-announcing-the-creation-of-aucus/>

¹⁰⁶ Allegretti, A., *Size of UK’s nuclear submarine fleet could double under Aukus plans*, in The Guardian, 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/13/britain-to-build-nuclear-powered-submarines-for-historic-aucus-pact>

¹⁰⁷ *AUKUS: The Trilateral Security Partnership Between Australia, U.K. and U.S.*, in U.S. Department of Defense, 2023 <https://www.defense.gov/Spotlights/AUKUS/>

¹⁰⁸ Allegretti, A., *Size of UK’s nuclear submarine fleet could double under Aukus plans*, 2023

¹⁰⁹ Tillett, A., *Why AUKUS is Australia’s new ‘great leap forward’*, in Financial Review, 2023 <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/why-aucus-is-australia-s-new-great-leap-forward-20230306-p5cupp>

"will be deeply engaged in the Indo-Pacific as the European partner with the broadest and most integrated presence"¹¹⁰. The same review talked also about the special relationship with the United States, and its close partnership with Australia.

As stated before, the three-way military alliance has therefore the implicit but rather evident objective of balancing and containing China's growing power and influence through the formation of alliances in the Indo-Pacific. The centrality of this region is linked to two main factors. On the one hand, the economic dynamism of the Indo-Pacific countries makes this area the engine of global economic growth; and, on the other, the political, economic and military rise of China have transformed this region into the main theater of strategic competition between the two powers of the United States and China. The latter's aggressive policies towards Taiwan, in particular, and its increasing naval activities in the South China Sea are regarded as attempts to dominate the Indo-Pacific region, an area that has also become the convergence point of strategic priorities of the United States in the last few years. The consequence is that although the Chinese country is not explicitly mentioned in AUKUS, the goal of the United States is clear. And yet, the fear that the region's balance of power could be undermined has made it necessary to speed up the Anglo-American pact. The United States has defended the submarine deal as a necessary response to China's "coercive behavior" and "unilateral attempts to alter the status quo"¹¹¹ in the Indo-Pacific. To put it another way, thanks to the growing perception of China as a threat, the United States, through AUKUS, has taken the initiative to form a balancing coalition against China, which is "the only competitor" capable of challenging the US-led international system with its diplomatic, economic, and military power¹¹².

Beijing's harsh response was not long in coming. The pact has been strongly criticized by China, especially because it will equip Australia with a weapon capable of significantly

¹¹⁰ UK Cabinet Office, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>

¹¹¹ Beyza Sezgin, H., *AUKUS Submarine Deal Can Shift Balance of Power in the Indo-Pacific*, in *Politics Today*, 2023 <https://politicstoday.org/aukus-submarine-deal-can-shift-balance-of-power-in-the-indo-pacific/>

¹¹² Türkcan, M. L., *AUKUS and the Return of Balance of Power Politics*, in *Research Centre*, 2022, p. 2

increasing maritime control and potentially also operating in the South China Sea, a zone which is considered highly at risk due to the numerous territorial disputes between China and other countries, including Taiwan. As far as the diplomatic relations are concerned, Australia has always been part of the so-called Anglosphere under the influence of first, the United Kingdom, and subsequently of the United States. For this reason, the country has sometimes been called “the middle power par excellence”¹¹³. Already in 2006, Kim Beazley, the former Labor opposition leader, maintained that “in the event of a war between the US and China, Australia would have absolutely no alternative but to line up militarily beside the US”¹¹⁴. Australia and the United States share in fact common background concerning their Anglo-Saxon cultures and values. They also have been allies since 1951 thanks to the ANZUS Treaty, a pact that is also known as the Pacific Security Treaty and is focused on security issues with the “purpose of providing mutual aid in the event of aggression and for settling disputes by peaceful means”¹¹⁵. In this regard, the ANZUS alliance is still an essential feature of Australia’s political background and a significant element of US global strategy¹¹⁶. The US-Australia alliance was in fact defined by the US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin as “unbreakable”¹¹⁷, reason why it is no coincidence that both countries intend to maintain this friendly and mutually beneficial relations. In September 2021, shortly before the announcement of AUKUS, the two countries highlighted again their shared interest in continuing “to advance peace, security, and prosperity to ensure an open, inclusive, and resilient Indo-Pacific region”¹¹⁸. Canberra, therefore, which is largely dependent on China for its economic development and on the United States for its security, is

¹¹³ Fels, E., *Shifting Power in Asia-Pacific? The Rise of China, Sino-US Competition and Regional Middle Power Allegiance*, New York: Springer, 2017, p. 365

¹¹⁴ Fels, E., *Shifting Power in Asia-Pacific? The Rise of China, Sino-US Competition and Regional Middle Power Allegiance*, 2017, p. 372

¹¹⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica, *ANZUS Pact* <https://www.britannica.com/event/ANZUS-Pact>

¹¹⁶ Albinski, H., Tow, W., *ANZUS - Alive and Well after Fifty Years*, in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2002, p. 153

¹¹⁷ US Department of Defense, *Statement by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on the 70th Anniversary of the ANZUS Treaty*, 2021

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2760703/statement-by-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-on-the-70th-anniversary-of/>

¹¹⁸ Australian Government, DFAT, *Joint Statement Australia - U.S. Ministerial Consultations (ASUMIN)*, 2021 <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/united-states-of-america/ausmin/joint-statement-australia-us-ministerial-consultations-ausmin-2021>

apparently making a choice between the two superpowers. The AUKUS agreement is in fact a visible sign of the road that Australia wants to take, that is, of further rapprochement with the United States to protect itself from what is perceived as the greatest threat to its security interests, namely China.

Wang Wenbin, who serves as a spokesman for the Chinese Ministry for Foreign Affairs, accused the three nations of "embarking on a path of error and danger"¹¹⁹, as he sees the multi-billion-dollar deal as a symbol of a typical Cold War mentality, which will only spur an arms race, damage regional peace and stability and sabotage the international nuclear non-proliferation system. In this regard, China has urged Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States to address the international community's concerns and fulfil their obligations in regards to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Zhao Lijian, the current deputy head of the Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs, said China "will monitor the situation" and called on the three countries to abandon "outdated concepts and respect the aspirations of the peoples of the region", otherwise "they will harm their own interests"¹²⁰. In response, the US President Joe Biden stated that the pact is not intended to damage but to strengthen peace in the region. Furthermore, nuclear warheads mostly have a deterrent function and the basic idea is not to use them to attack the enemy directly, but to discourage them from attacking. In this regard, Biden stated that the submarines will be "nuclear-powered, and not nuclear-armed"¹²¹. However, China is currently investing heavily to have more nuclear-armed submarines and perfect them¹²², making them more powerful

¹¹⁹ Hawkins A., Kwan, R., *China says Aukus submarines deal embarks on 'path of error and danger'*, in The Guardian, 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/14/china-aukus-submarines-deal-embarks-path-error-danger>

¹²⁰ Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian's Regular Press Conference, 2022 https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/202204/t20220413_10667525.html

¹²¹ Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Albanese of Australia, and Prime Minister Sunak of the United Kingdom on the AUKUS Partnership, 2023 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/03/13/remarks-by-president-biden-prime-minister-albanese-of-australia-and-prime-minister-sunak-of-the-united-kingdom-on-the-aukus-partnership/>

¹²² Torode, G., *China's intensifying nuclear-armed submarine patrols add complexity for U.S., allies*, in Reuters, 2023 <https://www.reuters.com/world/chinas-intensifying-nuclear-armed-submarine-patrols-add-complexity-us-allies-2023-04-04/>

and silent. Also Russia is buying newer and more modern submarines than the ones it already has¹²³.

Nuclear submarines are not a weapon like any other: they are based on very sophisticated technology, are strategically relevant and, at the moment, are owned by only six countries in the world. They use an engine powered by a nuclear reactor, making them much more powerful than submarines running on conventional fuels. The interest that countries have in acquiring nuclear-powered submarines is due to the great strategic advantage offered by this weapon, thanks to a series of characteristics. First of all, they are made to stay hidden. Although some experts believe that it is a feature destined to disappear and that new digital technologies will make the seas increasingly "transparent", at least by current means, it is very difficult to detect their presence¹²⁴. They can also emerge in a relatively agile and fast way thanks to their enormous power, making it more difficult for the enemy to predict their origin and intercept them. Despite their power, nuclear submarines are also silent, a characteristic that facilitates their use to carry out attacks. In this regard, former French Defense Minister Herve Morin said they "make less noise than a shrimp"¹²⁵. However, a serious problem, which also required agreements¹²⁶ to regulate underwater traffic, is the risk of collisions between them¹²⁷.

Nuclear submarines are used by countries that own them primarily for two purposes. The first is to consolidate their military presence in areas that are difficult to reach by other means, or in which it is difficult to carry out prolonged and effective actions: this is what China is trying to do globally, for example. The AUKUS military pact, in particular, could allow Australia to operate and strengthen its presence in the South China Sea and

¹²³ *Russia to complete infrastructure for Poseidon torpedo carriers in 2024*, in Reuters, 2023 <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-complete-infrastructure-poseidon-torpedo-carriers-2024-tass-2023-03-27/>

¹²⁴ Wirtz, J. J., *Nuclear-armed submarines and US defence strategy: the future of the maritime deterrent*, in The Strategist, 2020 <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/nuclear-armed-submarines-and-us-defence-strategy-the-future-of-the-maritime-deterrent/>

¹²⁵ Pappalardo, J., *When Submarines Crash: A Look at Nuclear Submarine Safety*, in Popular Mechanics, 2009 <https://www.popularmechanics.com/military/navy-ships/a3987/4304047/>

¹²⁶ Hardach, S., *France and UK may coordinate submarine routes*, in Reuters, 2009 <https://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUKTRES1G2ES20090217?edition-redirect=uk>

¹²⁷ Pappalardo, J., *When Submarines Crash: A Look at Nuclear Submarine Safety*, in Reuters, 2009 <https://www.popularmechanics.com/military/navy-ships/a3987/4304047/>

could naturally counter China's influence in the region. The second purpose is related to the possibility that nuclear submarines can be equipped with nuclear weapons. As stated before, this does not concern the case of Australia, which will not be able to arm its submarines with nuclear warheads, since it signed the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty¹²⁸, which does not allow countries that did not have nuclear weapons at the time to acquire them. In this regard, Biden maintained that the deal would not jeopardize Australia's commitment to being a nuclear-free country, which "is a proud non-nuclear weapons state and has committed to stay that way"¹²⁹.

From 2023, Australian Navy sailors will join the US Navy and Royal Navy and be deployed to US and UK military bases to learn how to operate the new nuclear-powered vessels. In order to train Australians, US SSN port visits to Australia will already increase this year and from 2026 will also rise those of the United Kingdom. From 2027, British and US submarines' rotations to Australia will be initiated, with the aim of "accelerating the development of the Australian naval personnel, manpower, infrastructure and regulatory system needed to establish a sovereign SSN capability"¹³⁰. Over the next decade, the United States will sell Australia three Virginia-class submarines, with the option of selling two more. At the same time, Canberra and London will start producing the new "SSN-AUKUS" class. In this regard, at the end of 2030, the UK will deliver its first SSN-AUKUS to the Royal Navy and Australia will deliver its first home-built SSN-AUKUS to the Royal Australian Navy in the early 1940s¹³¹. For the Australian country, this is a major upgrade in military capabilities. With this pact, in fact, it becomes only the second, after the United Kingdom, to receive Washington's elite nuclear propulsion technology. "This plan is designed to support Australia's development of the infrastructure, technical capabilities, industry and human capital necessary to produce, maintain, operate, and steward a sovereign fleet of conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines"¹³².

¹²⁸ United Nations, *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*
<https://disarmament.unoda.org/wmd/nuclear/npt/>

¹²⁹ *Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Albanese of Australia, and Prime Minister Sunak of the United Kingdom on the AUKUS Partnership*, 2023 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/03/13/remarks-by-president-biden-prime-minister-albanese-of-australia-and-prime-minister-sunak-of-the-united-kingdom-on-the-aukus-partnership/>

¹³⁰ *Aukus Joint Leaders Statement*, 2023 <https://au.usembassy.gov/aukus-joint-leaders-statement/>

¹³¹ *Aukus Joint Leaders Statement*, 2023

¹³² *Aukus Joint Leaders Statement*, 2023

The pact has been criticized by former Australian Prime Ministers Malcolm Turnbull and Paul Keating, who said that the deal would erode Australia's military sovereignty. Conversely, however, Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles countered that receiving nuclear-powered submarines under the AUKUS pact will "dramatically enhance the country's military sovereignty"¹³³ rather than undermine it. Furthermore, if on the one hand, the agreement is defined by Keating "the worst in all history"¹³⁴, Australian Prime Minister Albanese said that the plan, which will cost Canberra up to 368 billion Australian dollars over 30 years, represents the biggest single investment in Australian's history defense capability. "This will be an Australian sovereign capability, built by Australians, commanded by the Royal Australian Navy and sustained by Australians in Australian shipyards, with construction to begin within this decade"¹³⁵. However, according to Paul Keating, "not only is AUKUS a huge cost. It also obliges [Australians] to follow the US on policy regarding China"¹³⁶. Therefore, in his opinion, this pact is a mistake and he believes that "despite its enormous cost, it does not offer a solution to the challenge of great power competition in the region or to the security of the Australian people and its continent"¹³⁷. On the contrary, "Australia is 'planting a time bomb' for its own peace and that of the region. By protecting the global hegemony of the United States, Australia would bear the cost of the 'expensive mistake' of following its Anglo-Saxon brother"¹³⁸. In this regard, Song Zhongping, a Chinese military expert, told the Global Times that the US "wants to make Australia its frontline military

¹³³ Hurst, D., *Richard Marles insists Aukus submarine deal will not erode Australia's military sovereignty*, in The Guardian, 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/feb/08/richard-marles-insists-aukus-submarine-deal-will-not-erode-australias-military-sovereignty>

¹³⁴ Hurst, D., *Richard Marles insists Aukus submarine deal will not erode Australia's military sovereignty*, 2023

¹³⁵ Tillett, A., *Why AUKUS is Australia's new 'great leap forward'*, in The Guardian, 2023 <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/why-aukus-is-australia-s-new-great-leap-forward-20230306-p5cppl>

¹³⁶ Macphee, I., *Malcolm Fraser would have agreed with Paul Keating on AUKUS*, in Pearls and Irritations, 2023 <https://johnmenadue.com/aukus-the-possible-consequences-of-our-alliance-with-the-united-states-of-america/>

¹³⁷ *AUKUS Statement by PJ Keating*, The National Press Club, 2023 <http://www.paulkeating.net.au/shop/item/aukus-statement-by-pj-keating-the-national-press-club-wednesday-15-march-2023>

¹³⁸ Qi, W., *Australia may 'pay expensive price' as AUKUS nuke sub deal only serves US hegemony: experts*, in Global Times, 2023 <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202303/1287211.shtml>

base in the Indo-Pacific region and let its allies foot the bill, which is a disservice to Australia's sovereignty and independence".

Although the Chinese country is Australia's largest trading partner, and the latter is China's leading supplier of raw materials and other sources¹³⁹, the trilateral security partnership has had a further impact on the trading relationship between the Australian and Chinese countries, which were deteriorating even before the partnership's announcement due to human rights, security, and trade issues. In fact, it worsened especially when the then Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, called for an international inquiry into the origin of the pandemic, siding with the former President of the United States, Donald Trump, who repeatedly blamed China for the COVID-19 outbreak. In reaction to these developments, the Chinese country started a campaign of economic sanctions with the aim of limiting Australian's wine and barley import and imposing also high tariffs. Economic coercion by China seems therefore to have contributed to Australian threat perception, meaning that it may be seen as key to the decision of Canberra to join the US-led security partnership¹⁴⁰. Canberra's growing perception that China is becoming more aggressive has in fact "played a critical role in leading Australia to more forcefully side with the US"¹⁴¹. The relations between the two countries are therefore at their lowest in decades¹⁴², since in its turn, China views the submarine pact as a hostile move threatening its interests and sovereignty in the Indo-Pacific region. In other words, Australia is currently the country that is dealing with the trade embargo imposed by China. And yet, since "Washington considers Australia as one of America's greatest strategic assets"¹⁴³, the US also expressed its willingness to remain by Australia's side to face Chinese economic coercion.

¹³⁹ Lowy Institute, *China-Australia Relations*, 2021 <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/key-issues/china-australia-relations>

¹⁴⁰ Türkcan, M. L., *AUKUS and the Return of Balance of Power Politics*, in Research Centre, 2022, p. 2

¹⁴¹ Türkcan, M. L., *AUKUS and the Return of Balance of Power Politics*, in Research Centre, 2022, p. 2

¹⁴² Hawkins, A., *China says Aukus submarines deal embarks on 'path of error and danger'*, in The Guardian, 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/14/china-aukus-submarines-deal-embarks-path-error-danger>

¹⁴³ Xue, Y., *China's economic sanctions made Australia more confident*, in *The Interpreter*, 2021 <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/china-s-economic-sanctions-made-australia-more-confident>

In Paul Keating's view, however, “none of China's behavior on trade, cyber warfare, foreign interference, exerting its power in disputed waters, President Xi Jinping's pledge to reunify Taiwan or his accelerating military expansion amounts to a threat to Australia”¹⁴⁴. The former Australian Prime Minister strongly expressed his opposition to AUKUS and said that this alliance is set to “bind Australia too closely to the US”, representing “an old colonial mentality”¹⁴⁵. In other words, Australia is turning its back on the twenty-first century, which is the century of Asia, in favor of the Anglosphere. However, since the Atlantic is no longer at the center of the international context, Anglosphere’s role is slowly decreasing. This means that it is the Indo-Pacific region that is increasingly becoming the center stage of international affairs. According to Keating, Albanese’s contemporary Labor government “is shunning security in Asia for security in and within the Anglosphere”¹⁴⁶. The consequence is that, in the next half century, Australia will be locked in Asia as subordinate to the United States, which is an Atlantic power that sees itself more as the primary strategic power in East Asia rather than as the balancing one¹⁴⁷. The AUKUS security pact was addressed in San Diego in 2023 and “there were three people but only one payer”¹⁴⁸. The Australian Prime Minister. Keating is far from being alone in criticizing Australia’s strategic shift. John Menadue, an Australian public commentator, stated that the three-way alliance “has forever changed Australia’s sovereignty. Foreign policy and diplomacy have been pushed aside by military policy”¹⁴⁹. Since the AUKUS plan will cost from \$268bn to \$368bn between now and the mid-2050s, Australia is only providing expensive support to the United States and the United Kingdom defense companies. In this regard, the ambassador of China to Australia, Xiao Qian, stated that it is an “unnecessary consumption of the hardworking

¹⁴⁴ Speers, D., *Paul Keating's AUKUS criticism will sting for Labor's most senior ministers but it won't stop the submarines deal*, in ABC News, 2023 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-16/paul-keating-aukus-criticism-sting-labor-stop-submarines-deal/102098216>

¹⁴⁵ Speers, D., *Paul Keating's AUKUS criticism will sting for Labor's most senior ministers but it won't stop the submarines deal*, 2023

¹⁴⁶ *AUKUS Statement by PJ Keating*, 2023

¹⁴⁷ *AUKUS Statement by PJ Keating*, 2023

¹⁴⁸ Speers, D., *Paul Keating's AUKUS criticism will sting for Labor's most senior ministers but it won't stop the submarines deal*, 2023

¹⁴⁹ Macphee, I., *Malcolm Fraser would have agreed with Paul Keating on AUKUS*, in Pearls and Irritations, 2023 <https://johnmenadue.com/aukus-the-possible-consequences-of-our-alliance-with-the-united-states-of-america/>

Australian taxpayers' money, which could be used for other purposes like infrastructure, like reducing the cost of living, and giving the Australian people a better future". Also other analysts do not see why the country needs the capability to have nuclear-powered submarines lurking for months at a time in the South China Sea and are concerned about the fact that from now on Australia will be more beholden to the US. This is also maintained by Hugh White, a professor of strategic studies at the Australian National University that warns that there is a risk for Australia in binding itself even closer to the United States. "Right at the heart of AUKUS, its underlying motivation and the thing that gives it real substance is the commitment it embodies in Australia supporting the US. That means supporting the United States in conflict with China. But China is not Afghanistan, it's not Iraq, it's a great power, it's our biggest trading partner and it's got nuclear weapons. But AUKUS sends a clear signal we will support the US irrespectively. The reason I'm not a fan of AUKUS is because it's unwise for Australia to be making that commitment"¹⁵⁰.

The Indo-Pacific has therefore emerged as the centrepiece in global economics, diplomacy and security, moving the world axis from the Atlantic to the Pacific. According to many experts, the region, with its huge population and fast-growing prosperity, "holds the key to humanity's future, which promises to be a bright one as long as it remains free and open to all"¹⁵¹. In this rapidly changing reality, in which Australia founded itself, many divergent interests are at stake and different actors are trying to assert their positions. Canberra's government has put lots of effort into elaborating strategies and strengthening the relationships with other partners to maintain stability and regional security in the Indo-Pacific area. The increased assertiveness of Beijing in the region is in fact the concern of both regional and non-regional actors, who have struggled to find a stable way to contain China. In particular, the region has become a priority for the United States that has sought a strategy in order to maintain the Indo-Pacific's status quo, since even though the country still has a military advantage over

¹⁵⁰ Tillett, A., *Why AUKUS is Australia's new 'great leap forward'*, in Financial Review, 2023 <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/why-aukus-is-australia-s-new-great-leap-forward-20230306-p5cppl>

¹⁵¹ WP BrandStudio, *How to secure a free and open Indo-Pacific*, in The Washington Post, 2021 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/brand-studio/wp/2021/03/15/feature/how-to-secure-a-free-and-open-indo-pacific/>

China's capabilities, "the gap has been rapidly closing in Asia, and in certain domains, it may already have been erased"¹⁵². AUKUS, in fact, can be considered as a balancing act led by the United States and joined by the United Kingdom and Australia against China "as part of the overall efforts to deter what Washington perceives as Beijing's attempts to become the dominant nation in the Indo-Pacific"¹⁵³. In other words, the pact "represents a sea change in US strategic thinking towards empowering its allies, redistributing its forces around the Indo-Pacific and better integrating its allies into the supply chains"¹⁵⁴, in order to balance and contain an increasingly aggressive China.

Australia has struggled between its Anglosphere history and the desire to deepen relations with Asian neighboring countries. In fact, although Australia and China have enormous differences on the social and cultural level and conflicting strategic and political objectives, they nonetheless share significant economic and trade relations, sharing crucial interests. Until this moment, the greatest security for Australia has been not taking sides between China and the United States. However, Canberra has recently reviewed and updated its strategies and political agenda to survive in the increasingly competitive Indo-Pacific region. Deciding to take part in the AUKUS pact, it joined forces with its long-established allies, namely the United States and the United Kingdom. Therefore, AUKUS is mostly aimed at strengthening defence cooperation among the Anglo-Saxon brothers and counter China. Canberra is therefore sacrificing its own economic interests for Washington's strategic ones. Both Washington and London will bring together their technology, paving the way for Australia to become the seventh country to operate nuclear-powered submarines. In this way, the Australian middle power can protect its national interests and "preserve peace as China's rise roils the Indo-Pacific"¹⁵⁵. However, "[b]lindly following the US 'Indo-Pacific strategy' and developing a nuclear-powered submarine base would pose a threat to other countries'

¹⁵² Edel, C., *What drove the United States to AUKUS?*, in *The Strategist*, 2021
<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/what-drove-the-united-states-to-aukus/>

¹⁵³ Türkcan, M. L., *AUKUS and the Return of Balance of Power Politics*, 2022, p. 2

¹⁵⁴ Edel, C., *What drove the United States to AUKUS?*, 2021

¹⁵⁵ Tillet, A., *Why AUKUS is Australia's new 'great leap forward'*, 2023

security”, since the AUKUS trilateral partnership is about preserving US “hegemony” in east Asia by trying to contain China¹⁵⁶.

¹⁵⁶ Karp, P., *Paul Keating labels Aukus submarine pact ‘worst deal in all history’ in attack on Albanese government*, in The Guardian, 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/mar/15/paul-keating-labels-aukus-submarine-pact-worst-deal-in-all-history-in-attack-on-albanese-government>

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, we have seen two fundamental concepts of international relations, the one of balance of power and the other of hegemony, which are both intended to outline the order of the international system. The balance of power is the idea that international order exists where there is an equilibrium in the distribution of power; whereas the concept of hegemony is based on the view according to which order springs from a substantial imbalance of power, which leads to the affirmation of a hegemonic state within the international system. In this thesis, I have tried to demonstrate that the balance of power is still crucial nowadays and that this concept goes well beyond the European continent.

Global competition has recently shifted from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific. In this regard, in 2021, the United Kingdom announced in its Integrated Review of Security, Defense, Development and Foreign Policy a renewed interest in this area. As we have seen, Great Britain's interests have always been more global than European, allowing the country to play the role of balancer in Europe already from the eighteenth century. To relaunch its strategic ambitions, London has projected itself permanently into Asian waters, where the United States and China are currently confronting each other. As foreseen by the balance of power concept, countries have readjusted their foreign policy priorities in order to maintain the equilibrium in the Indo-Pacific region, setting up a series of bilateral, trilateral and multilateral initiatives. In this respect, AUKUS, the trilateral security pact according to which Washington and London will supply Canberra with nuclear-powered submarines going to increase the latter's deterrence capacity against China, was announced.

The pact, which aroused varied reactions, has also reopened the discussion on the so-called "Global Britain". With this expression, especially after the Brexit referendum of June 2016, a new foreign policy vision of the United Kingdom was indicated, markedly autonomous from the rest of the European Union and more projected to affect the world scenario. The formula was used for the first time in an official speech by Theresa May following the popular referendum which sanctioned the divorce of the United Kingdom from the European Union. The then British Premier said that Her Majesty's country would play its "full part in promoting peace and prosperity around the world",

with the aim of "protecting [its] national interests, [its] national security and the security of [its] allies thanks to [its] brilliant military and intelligence".¹⁵⁷ The new relationship with the European institution, said May, urged the United Kingdom "to reflect on its role in the wider world", guaranteeing the country "self-confidence and the freedom to look beyond the continent of Europe and to the economic and diplomatic opportunities of the world entire"¹⁵⁸. However, as we have seen in this dissertation, this aspiration has always been present within the variegated British Euroscepticism.

With the ultimate purpose, albeit implicit, of containing the Chinese expansionism in the Indo-Pacific region and maintain an equilibrium, the AUKUS partnership has been defined as "the classic illustration of balance of power politics at work"¹⁵⁹. As we have seen, China also represents the greatest threat to America's hegemonic position and it is the only nation that would have the possibility of joining or taking over the United States as the main player in the international system. Having the opportunity to act as a bridge between China and the United States in the Indo-Pacific area, the role of balancer was filled by Australia and its role as a middle power has been crucial. Today, however, the country is firmly alongside the United States and common partners in trying to stem Beijing's expansion and assertive policy, causing the chill in relations between Australia and, interestingly, its biggest trading partner, China.

"The nations of the 'Anglosphere' are renewing their alliance, this time to counter China's efforts to gain naval dominance in the Pacific"¹⁶⁰ commented the Financial Times. Adhering to the AUKUS pact, Australia has taken a decision and is sacrificing its own economic interests with China for Washington's strategic ones, preferring the defense cooperation among the Anglo-Saxon brothers. For the designers of AUKUS, the submarine pact justifies itself as a classic act of deterrence, intended to dissuade China from deploying its military force against Taiwan or in the South China Sea. In other

¹⁵⁷ Theresa May - her full Brexit speech to Conservative conference, in The Independent, 2016 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-conference-speech-article-50-brexit-eu-a7341926.html>

¹⁵⁸ Theresa May - her full Brexit speech to Conservative conference, 2016

¹⁵⁹ Walt, M. S., *The AUKUS Dominoes Are Just Starting to Fall*, in Foreign Policy, 2021 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/18/aukus-australia-united-states-submarines-china-really-means/>

¹⁶⁰ Rachman, G., *Aukus, the Anglosphere and the return of great power rivalry*, in Financial Times, 2023 <https://www.ft.com/content/e4abd866-54cb-4923-9a66-ebb5b5ed67bf>

words, their purpose is not to wage war, but to prevent it and, in their opinion, AUKUS is a necessary response to China's coercive behavior and unilateral attempt to alter the status quo. It is therefore clear that the desire to keep the system in balance, in Europe and beyond, is still fundamental to avoid the hegemony of a single power.

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