



## EMERGING CHALLENGES (LAWFARE) March 2019

### **The asocial relationship across the pond**

A couple of weeks ago Donald Trump Junior Jr. (John) slammed UK's Prime Minister Theresa May for not heeding his father's advice "*to sue the EU and not go into negotiations*". Along the same lines as John's was John Bolton, US National Security Adviser, as the Brexit issue is heating up in London and across the UK. HM government roundly ignored the advice.

John's remark coincides with the visit to Washington of Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro to whom Trump has vowed his best efforts to get Brazil to join NATO as well as the Organization for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

James Stavridis – former head of NATO's military staff from 2009 to 2013 – told that a formal membership is technically and juridically inadmissible but did not exclude that Brazil might, like Colombia, acquire the status of global partner in NATO.

The two countries have signed several bilateral agreements among which the one granting the United States the right to utilize the airspace base of Alcantara for satellite launches as Bolsonaro – recently elected – said he would approve of the creation of a US military base in Brazil to challenge Russia's influence into Central and South American countries, namely in Venezuela.

Below the froth, the mundane fact is that the 2020 US Presidential race has already kicked off earlier than expected and with great animosity.

A few weeks ago, Trump published the 2020 Budget of a record \$4,7 trillion with a surge in defence expenditure featuring an investment of \$750 bn assorted with cuts on the Environmental Protection Agency as well as Medicare and Medicaid.

Democrat Rep. John Yarmuth, head of the House Budget Committee, stated the budget "*lays out an irresponsible and cynical vision for our country, without any regard for its human cost*". Obviously, there is a tilt from an already scarce butter to fatter guns. PM Theresa May insists instead in Parliament that the Tories did do a lot to protect worker's rights and condition.

The next electoral front is, predictably, national security. Daniel Coats (a stalwart Republican, now Director of National Intelligence), in a January hearing before the Senate, contradicted Mr Trump's strategies with regard to North Korea and Iran.

Coats, along with the CIA, DIA and NSA directors, believes Pyongyang is not likely to quit its ongoing nuclear and missile programmes, in spite of recent indications of doing otherwise provided by the White House, after a meeting in Singapore with Kim Jong-un last June. Eventually the successive summit in Hanoi did not yield any significant result.

It is typical case where PR spinning has no relationship with intelligence findings and with hard political facts either: a nuclear treaty is an incredibly long and complex endeavour, as Obama's JCPOA shows clearly. In the meantime, also the UK maintains that sanctions should be continued.

The US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, and Mr Bolton argue that Iran poses the most serious global terrorist threat, Coats shows that Iran "*is not currently undertaking the key nuclear weapons development activities we judge necessary to produce a nuclear device*". London on the other hand is still abiding by the JCPOA with Tehran, along with all other European partners.

National security matter is of course also the undisputable Russian influence on US presidential elections. By mid-April a redacted version of the Mueller report should be given to Congress but is it unlikely that this measure will avoid a protracted institutional struggle with unpredictable political implications. On the other side of the pond, the PM admits the same interference, adding that it was unsuccessful without substantiating the evaluation. No congratulations for the "complete and total exoneration"

To sum up, the Trump campaigners are drumming up all support from their base, feeling that it could slip away, and in doing so they do not care if they attack Ms May when they want a free trade agreement with the UK (mainly benefitting farmers) or they wreck Asia's balances showing scant results with Beijing and/or Pyöngyang or seek new South American allies for NATO, complicating a meaningful reflection after 70 years of Alliance. It's elections time, evidently.

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