

Sample Student

BUS 714 – Greg Christensen

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Week 2 Argument Analysis

In this age of globalism, Britain shocked the world this past summer with its “Brexit” referendum to leave the European Union. Roger Cohen, a British New York Times columnist, and his piece “Britain’s Brexit Leap in the Dark,” explores the confluence of factors that led one of the most prominent democracies in the West to reject the ideals of capitalism. In doing so, Brexit undermines the relatively new model of European economic freedom of movement while leaving the United Kingdom with a bleak economic outlook, and potential break-up of the United Kingdom itself. Cohen presents a gripping and complex issue albeit in an incomplete, epideictic framework. Unfortunately, his article seems intended for a like-minded audience of readers familiar with the contentious nature of EU membership who ultimately support it versus the pro-Brexit and state sovereignty supporters.

Cohen’s epideictic and logical argument successfully convinces readers that Brexit is a disastrously shortsighted economic decision motivated by “nativ[ist] and anti-establishment rage” (para 4). The article would be more effective if it presented potential solutions to ameliorate the detrimental effects of leaving the EU while presenting the immediate problems. This article misses the mark as it begs to be a deliberative proposal argument, contemplating the future of Britain and the EU but is, frustratingly, a one-side

laundry list of complaints. While a deliberative or proposal argument would serve this article well, this is not necessarily required of a purely epideictic argument.

Structurally, Cohen's argument touches upon forensic and deliberative subject matter rooted in the contextual history of post-World War II Europe, as well as touching upon the yet-unknown ramifications of a disintegrating European Union. Cohen is dealing with current events with elements of logos and factual appeals to set up and support his anti-Brexit position within these provided contexts. Cohen continues to establish an even richer context by presenting the recent world events that have strained the British public and driven them to this regrettable choice: the Global Financial Crisis, economic stagnation, the further destabilization of the Middle East in the wake of the failed Arab spring, and its related refugee crisis (para 3). Cohen deftly highlights the recent economic events that have created such a sense of uncertainty that leave Britons feeling vulnerable and economically taken advantage of. An unintended consequence of his reasoning and framing here is that it is almost impossible to agree with his anti-Brexit stance. He articulates the reasons to leave almost too well without balancing his reasons to oppose Brexit. Somehow, they do not land as gravely as the reasons for the UK to leave the EU.

Cohen reasonably illustrates why Britain leaving the EU is the wrong choice by listing the immediate after effects of Brexit, including the GBP reaching a 30-year low and a volatile global market (para 6) while exposing the UK to "face higher unemployment, weaker currency...and the loss of access to a market of a half-billion people" (para 10). At this point, Cohen's epideictic argument should evolve into a more complex, deliberative or proposal argument to help shape future policy but does not.

Cohen's argument would be more effective and even kairotic (Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz 25) had he explored and charted possible courses of action or presented logical next steps (Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz 14). Instead, his article merely laments disappointment, which diminishes the total effect of his piece and gives the article a sense of being unfinished. Cohen's article itself was rather short and have benefited had he spent more time exploring the other long-term ramifications of a post-Brexit world.

Instead of finishing on that rather abrupt and anecdotal note, Cohen should have presented action that could potentially mute the grave consequence of Brexit, creating a far stronger end to the piece. Cohen's argument emphasizes the doom and gloom of the impending economic uncertainty but offers no hope in the form of a proposal argument—logical next steps or reasonable courses of action. After all, the EU is a relatively new construct of modern history and Europe survived for millennia without the EU framework in place. The frustrating and nagging question at the end of this piece is “Now what?” The abrupt ending leaves the reader with a sense of hopelessness and despair rather than a strong call to action of how to better handle this situation and create a more stable future. He should have gone a step further and showed readers his vision for Britain, Europe, and the world, moving forward.

One of the other flawed aspects of this otherwise well written Op Ed piece is that it does not reach all of the audience that ought to. “Britain's Brexit Leap in the Dark” appears in a publication whose readership skews to the well-educated, liberal elites—the very people who brought on these economic woes that led to the Brexit Referendum. This is the same population perceived to be centered in London, a premier world city disconnected from its rural locales and economically depressed cities and towns. Cohen,

as a British columnist based in New York, publishing in the New York Times, is inherently disconnected from the people who supported the Brexit movement and are the very same people he should aim to reach.

Furthermore, by the very medium in which chooses to publish this piece, he cannot possibly reach the wider audience he desperately needs to connect with, engage with, and convince. Ultimately, the British will need to work together on this issue but Cohen is unable to bridge that gap, and, in a sense, is “preaching to the choir.” The usefulness of publishing this editorial in an American newspaper is questionable. Perhaps, Cohen had no interest in even engaging with the pro-Brexit contingency, presumably, his fellow British countrymen. Either way, this unfortunate consequence of appearing in only the New York times, seems like a precious missed opportunity where Britain is open to suggestions on how to handle this delicate transition, and he offered no solutions, much less a sense of hopefulness going forward.

### Works Cited

Cohen, Roger. "Britain's Brexit Leap in the Dark." *The New York Times* 24 June 2016.

*The New York Times*. September 8, 2016.

Lunsford, Andrea A. and John J. Ruskiewicz. *Everything's an Argument*. Bedford and St. Martin's, 2003.