

# BREXIT and the European Elections



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BREXIT could lead to the break-up of the UK, the loss of Gibraltar, and the outbreak of hostilities in Ireland and will certainly leave the UK worse off economically. Is this a price worth paying, and for what? The European Elections provide an opportunity to have your say on what will undoubtedly change the UK and Great Britain for generations to come. However it will need the pro-European Parties to unite and not take votes from each other.

6,081,413 people have signed the petition calling upon the Government to revoke Article 50, and the number is still rising. And unlike an extension to Article 50, which requires all Member States to agree, this is something the British Government could do itself and may have to do if a disastrous "no deal" exit by default is to be avoided.

1,000,000 people marched through London, on the 23rd March 2019, demanding a "peoples vote". And the latest opinion polls suggest that if the 2016 referendum were to be re-run the outcome would be to "remain". And despite 100 Labour MPs and 78% of the Labour Party membership being in favour of putting any deal reached with the Conservatives and the EU to the people for confirmation, with an option of remaining, the Labour Party has still to commit to this.

Although the Government constantly refers to a "good deal", those negotiations have yet to begin. All the "withdrawal agreement" does is agree the amount the UK must pay to honour its commitments, protect EU citizens living in Britain and Brits living in Europe, and avoid a border in Ireland via the so called "back stop". Under the "back stop" if no solution is found to the Irish Border, by the end of the transition period, the whole of the UK remains in the "customs union", having given up its seat at the table, and Northern Ireland alone remains aligned to the single market. This would mean customs checks in the Irish Sea, something Theresa May said no British Prime Minister could ever agree to, and Britain becoming subservient to the EU - possibly indefinitely if no solution to the Irish Border is found.

The future relationship between Britain and the EU and trading arrangements have still to be negotiated with the "Political Declaration" being no more than a "wish list" of aspiration. Whatever happened to Theresa May's statement in the Chequers Agreement that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed"?

The Government continually states that it is carrying out the will of the people in honouring the outcome of the referendum and that 80% of those who voted in the 2017 General Election did so for a party which had honouring the referendum in its manifesto. Therefore another General Election is not the solution and putting it “back to the people” as a single issue may be the only way of breaking the deadlock.

Although the Government promised to honour the outcome, the referendum wasn't actually legally binding. This is just as well, because the courts have ruled the Leave Campaign broke electoral law by overspending, and the result would have been quashed. And quite clearly the outcome that people voted for cannot be delivered - ie more money for the NHS (in fact it will be less) and controlling immigration - as a result of leaving the EU.

Should the European Elections be held it is likely that the major parties will split the vote allowing Nigel Farage's "Brexit Party" to win seats and make the UK and Great Britain look even more ridiculous. Only the Lib Dems, SNP, Plaid Cymru and The Greens offer hope of a second referendum and staying in the European Union.

It is doubtful that anyone voted to be worse off and yet this is what the most optimistic predictions, even those of the Government, suggest. Just recall how hard Britain fought to gain access to the “common market” and that 44% of our exports go to Europe (with only 18% of Europe's exports coming to Britain) and a further 20% of Britain's exports go via trade agreements with Europe.

Cars are assembled in Britain for the European Market and already we are seeing manufacturers relocating to avoid tariffs (import and export duty). Much of our food comes from Europe and could be subject to tariffs of up to 10%.

The majority of trade is always between those countries nearest to each other and trade deals around the world, which are much easier for Europe to negotiate than they would be for the UK, add huge transport costs.

Therefore the NET contribution Britain makes to the EU pales into insignificance compared to the advantages of this free trade agreement. And those that argue that the UK would not have to pay the £39b, so called divorce settlement, were it to leave without a deal, should bear in mind that this is to honour our contractual obligations and what country would enter into an agreement with a country which failed to honour such commitments - not to mention the possibility of sanctions imposed by the EU on top of tariffs

The Irish Border, together with Gibraltar, was always going to present insurmountable problems. It was perhaps "freedom of movement", more so than the “Good Friday Agreement”, which led to the end of hostilities in Ireland, with people crossing the invisible border daily. However one cannot “control one's borders” without a border and the only way to retain an open border in Ireland, and avoid hostilities, is to remain in a Customs Union and Single Market (Free Trade Area). Few would like to see a return to tanks on the streets of Belfast and bombs going off in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Guildford and, of course, the Conservative Party Conference in Brighton. And make no mistake if hostilities broke out again in

Ireland, as they most certainly would if a border was re-inserted, other groups would more than likely join in and the situation could very quickly escalate out of control.

Just like in Ireland, people in Gibraltar and Spain, cross the border daily going to and from work and to do their shopping etc. And very little mention has been made of Gibraltar.

"Taking back control of our borders" was a "key issue" in the referendum and yet the majority of immigrants do not come from Europe and those that do come here to work and contribute more in income tax than they take out in benefits. They fill low skilled jobs in agriculture and hospitality and low paid jobs in health and social care.

The leave campaign talked about "taking back control of our laws" when Britain had a right of veto and effectively agreed to all the laws and regulations introduced to the UK by the EU.

Surely there is also a human rights issue here, also, with British people losing their European Citizenship with all the benefits that imparts - in any other circumstance compensation would be paid to people having such rights removed.

Northern Ireland, Scotland and Gibraltar all voted to "remain" and the referendum should never have been set up in such a way that one country could impose its will upon another. With Sinn Fein coming within one seat of winning control of Stormont, and talk of a second independence referendum in Scotland, BREXIT threatens the future of the UK itself. Few people would have voted for the break-up of the United Kingdom, for the loss of Gibraltar, or the outbreak of hostilities in Ireland and yet these a likely consequences of BREXIT.

We are a "parliamentary democracy" not a "direct democracy" and elect MPs to take informed decisions on our behalf in the best interests of the Country and its peoples. However those MPs also feel bound by the result of the 2016 Referendum.

Surely there cannot be a more convincing argument for putting it "back to the people" to see if this is what they want and the price they are prepared to pay?