The Brexit drama
and the dawn of a new era

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Glen O’Hara • Isabelle Hertner • Malcolm Harvey
Editorial
After the crossroads, into the unknown

The EU membership referendum held in Britain on 23 June was always expected to be a close run. Indeed, as David Denver and Mark Garnett remind us of in their contribution to this issue, it is fascinating that the result came as such a surprise. Opinion polls had consistently shown the two sides to be close to equal. What did not occur towards the end was a similar push in favour of the status quo as that which appeared prior to the Scottish independence referendum in 2014.

17.41 million Britons voted to Leave the European Union, while 16.14 million supported Remain. As is conventionally the case with referenda, there was no compromise position on the cards. “Brexit means Brexit,” is the mantra formulated by the incoming Prime Minister, Theresa May. Yet the very concept of Brexit is also a rhetorical device, adapted to different audiences with separate hymn sheets on their side. Will Britain be leaving the EU’s single market, wholly or in part? Which parts of 43 years of legislation under EU membership are likely to be reversed? What relationships will we see emerge with other countries across the world, on trade as well as in other policy areas? Will there be repercussions for Britain’s role in the UN? In NATO?

Questions abound, and the uncertainty as to what Brexit entails has come to the fore. That very uncertainty yielded a tactical advantage to the Leave campaign, which rested assuredly on notions of national sovereignty and a brake on unwanted European immigration. What processes are set in train by the Brexit vote? As Nick White points out in his article below, profound reconsidereations will be necessary in the Foreign Office, which will be set to flesh out a new role for Britain on the global scene, detached from the EU’s common positions on trade and partly shared diplomatic representation. Domesticly, the policy areas of agriculture and fisheries will be redrawn from scratch, while all spheres of politics are affected one way or another. Britain will no longer be part of decision-making in Brussels, but it remains to be seen to what extent she will be liberated from the consequences of those decisions. From Norway’s point of view, as stated by the European Minister Elisabeth Aspaker, sustaining the close bilateral relationship is key, but so is the task for Europe as a whole “to assume joint responsibility for our common future”.

These are the kind of overarching reflections on the referendum, its outcome and the path ahead voiced by the first contributions to the current issue of British Politics Review. Following on from these, there are obvious questions to be raised concerning the political stakeholders involved. The Conservatives managed a swift transition in 10 Downing Street as Theresa May became David Cameron’s successor as PM on 13 July. In the Labour Party, however, attempts to unseat Jeremy Corbyn as party leader remain unresolved as this issue goes to print. UKIP, which saw its key message voted through by 17 million Britons, now face its own uncertainties following Nigel Farage’s resignation. And to the SNP, the referendum result has presented itself as an opportunity to revisit the question of independence. But is that opportunity welcome today, is what Malcolm Harvey asks.

It is the first time in its 11-year history that the Review appears in 24 pages. They are easily required to cover at least a few of the nuances, intricacies and speculations concerning the fateful vote of 23 June. More will be pondered on, written and consumed in the years ahead.

Oivind Bratberg & Atle L. Wold (editors)
Europe at a crossroads

By Elisabeth Aspaker

For the first time in history, the EU is set to lose one of its member states. After over 40 years of membership, a majority of British voters want their country to withdraw from the union. European cooperation is entering a new phase. Norway stands ready to seek common ground with both the EU and the UK to ensure that our close, long-standing ties remain strong.

Drama and uncertainty. British voters have made a dramatic decision, with potentially profound consequences. Long and complicated withdrawal negotiations will be set in motion as soon as the UK Government formally notifies the EU of its intention to leave the union. Then, the UK and the EU will have to establish new forms of cooperation.

Many questions remain unanswered. What type of affiliation does the UK want to have with the EU? What arrangements will the other member states offer the UK? How will the UK’s withdrawal affect long-term policymaking and priorities in the EU? Will the constitutional set-up of the UK change as a result of Brexit? So far, the speculations are many and the certainties few. What is clear is that we are at a turning point in European history, where the choices made will have consequences for many years to come.

Norwegian interests. The British referendum will not directly affect Norway’s relationship with the EU. Our agreements and our close cooperation with the EU remain unchanged and continue to serve us well. However, Brexit may have repercussions for Norway, and the Government will do its utmost to protect Norwegian interests.

First, given the substantial resources and political attention required to handle Brexit in the years ahead, we are concerned that it will reduce Europe’s ability to tackle common challenges like economic restructuring, security and migration. Failure to meet citizens’ expectations in these areas could strengthen nationalist and populist forces in several European countries. This is not the time for antagonism and zero-sum games between like-minded partners in Europe. More than ever, we need to stand together in defence of our shared values and interests, to promote prosperity and security. Norway will do its share.

Second, it is in our interests that any future contractual relationship between the EU and the UK preserves a well-functioning internal market, as this ensures a level playing field for Norwegian citizens and companies. We are therefore pleased that the 27 other EU member states have stated so clearly that the UK’s post-Brexit access to the internal market will require acceptance of all four freedoms (goods, services, capital and people). A fragmented, watered-down internal market is not in Norway’s interests as a member of the European Economic Area (EEA).

Third, it will be important for us to negotiate new arrangements with the UK that enable us to maintain trade and cooperation with our British partners. For more than 20 years, we have benefited from being part of the same internal market through the EEA Agreement, which ensures the free movement of goods, services, capital and people. Some 8% of Norway’s mainland exports go to the UK. If oil and gas are included, the figure is around 22%.

Fourth, it is vital to remember that European cooperation is about more than just trade and markets. The UK is a close ally of many European states, including Norway. Whether it is in or outside the EU, the UK has a pivotal role to play in maintaining stability and security in Europe and beyond. It is in the interests of all parties involved to make sure Brexit does not reduce Europe’s ability to take responsibility for its own security. That will require cooperation irrespective of EU membership.

Our common European future. Norwegians would be the first to testify that there are many ways to be European, and that there are many ways to contribute to European unity and solidarity. Each country must choose its own path. The UK is about to carve out a new path for itself, and Norway will remain a strong partner and ally regardless.

No matter how countries are affiliated to the EU, the most important thing is that we assume joint responsibility for our common future. That means investing in and protecting the values that continue to make Europe such an attractive place to live: freedom, human rights, democracy, equality and the rule of law. If we safeguard this common heritage, I am convinced that Europeans, both within and outside the EU, will stand strong and confident, even in the face of multiple internal and external challenges.
A cat among the pigeons: the UK referendum on membership of the EU

Many people – especially but not exclusively in the ‘Remain’ camp – were stunned by the outcome of the EU referendum which took place in the UK on June 23rd 2016 and resulted in a vote to leave the EU by 51.8% to 48.1%. In some ways this shocked reaction is surprising because most opinion polls throughout the campaign had suggested that the contest would be a close-run thing. For example, Figure 1 shows the moving average of support for the two sides in YouGov polls conducted during May and June. After starting behind, ‘Leave’ led through most of June but as polling day approached the two sides were running neck-and-neck.

Here we will look at the pattern of support for the two sides of the argument and try to account for the outcome. First, however, it is worth considering briefly the turnout of voters.

Turnout. Table 1 shows the turnout across the UK as well as for the four nations and the regions of England. At 72.4% the UK turnout was notably higher than it was at the last general election in 2015 (66.2%) or at the previous referendum on Europe in 1975 (64.5%). This was, indeed, the biggest turnout in any national vote since the 1992 general election. Unlike the rest of the country, however, turnout in Scotland dipped sharply (minus almost four points) as compared with 2015. Across English regions, the pattern was similar to that normally found in general elections with the lowest figures being recorded in the northern areas and London while the voters turned out in greatest numbers in the South outside London.

Figure 1: YouGov referendum campaign polls (moving average)

Table 1: Turnout (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>North East</th>
<th>North West</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Ireland</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>69.7</td>
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Across Britain, at counting area level (local authorities) the range of turnouts was, of course, much greater - from 56.3% in Glasgow to 83.6% in Chiltern in the south east of England. Again, however, the pattern of variation was a familiar one. Table 2 shows how turnout correlated with a number of standard census variables. All are statistically significant and indicate that turnout was clearly higher in areas with more owner occupiers, people in professional and managerial jobs (AB) and older people. To a lesser extent, turnout was also positively related to the proportion of local residents described as ‘white British’ and to the proportion with higher education qualification while there was a slight tendency for turnout to be higher in more agricultural areas. On the negative side turnout was clearly lower the more households without a car and renting social housing there are. In line with these indicators of deprivation, the more routine workers (C2DE) and people without any qualifications the lower was turnout. The same applies to young people and students while the coefficient for persons per hectare reflects lower turnouts in big cities.

By David Denver & Mark Garnett

David Denver is a Professor Emeritus at Lancaster University. He specialises in studying elections and also has a research interest in Scottish politics. He is the author of a widely used text on electoral behaviour (Elections and Voters in Britain) and of numerous other pieces on the subject.

Mark Garnett is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Politics Philosophy and Religion at Lancaster University. He is the author of many books and articles covering post-1945 British politics, with particular reference to the relationship between ideas and practice; the Conservative Party; and think tanks.

Across Denver, at counting area level (local authorities) the range of turnouts was, of course, much greater - from 56.3% in Glasgow to 83.6% in Chiltern in the south east of England. Again, however, the pattern of variation was a familiar one. Table 2 shows how turnout correlated with a number of standard census variables. All are statistically significant and indicate that turnout was clearly higher in areas with more owner occupiers, people in professional and managerial jobs (AB) and older people. To a lesser extent, turnout was also positively related to the proportion of local residents described as ‘white British’ and to the proportion with higher education qualification while there was a slight tendency for turnout to be higher in more agricultural areas. On the negative side turnout was clearly lower the more households without a car and renting social housing there are. In line with these indicators of deprivation, the more routine workers (C2DE) and people without any qualifications the lower was turnout. The same applies to young people and students while the coefficient for persons per hectare reflects lower turnouts in big cities.
Overall, the referendum issue clearly engaged the electorate. Perhaps it was the case that every vote counted – there were no safe or hopeless seats as in an election – that encouraged more than the usual amount of people to cast a vote. Nonetheless, this was not enough to overcome the distinctly geographically (and, by implication, socially) skewed pattern of turnout.

Referendum results. Table 3 shows the levels of support for the ‘Leave’ option across the nations of the UK and the regions of England. While the Leave margin was relatively slim overall it was more convincing in England and Wales. Scotland voted decisively to remain in the EU while Northern Ireland also produced a majority in that direction. In England, the regional figures are extraordinary. Every single region gave a majority to the Leave campaign with the exception of London which sticks out like a sore thumb. We shall return to this anomaly below.

For the moment, however, we turn to variations in Leave support across counting areas in Britain. Table 4 shows, first, the relevant correlation coefficients for Great Britain and they are an unusual mixture. On the positive side – where the Leave performance was better - there are two variables that would normally be associated with Labour strength – the proportions of manual workers and of those with no educational qualifications – while others (% owner occupiers and % of older voters) normally predict better Conservative performances. Similarly, four of the variables that are negatively associated with the level of support for Leave would normally correlate positively with Labour support (social renters, young people, those with no car and persons per hectare) but areas with larger numbers of professional and managerial workers and those with higher educational qualifications would normally be more strongly Conservative.

The fact that Scotland’s voting was so different from what happened in the rest of the country may muddy the waters here and so we repeated this analysis for England and Wales only. The effect was to produce coefficients showing the same pattern as before but indicating much stronger relationships (Table 4). Just four variables (% with higher educational qualifications, % students, % professional and managerial and % in agriculture) account for 86% of the variation in Leave vote share across England and Wales but if Scotland is included then the best ten variables account for only 80% of the variation.

The key to understanding the unusual pattern of relationships in Table 4 is to note another aspect of the voting that we have not so far touched upon. This is the strength of the Remain vote in big cities. In addition to London, Remain majorities were recorded in Edinburgh (74.4%), Glasgow (66.6%), Bristol (61.7%), Manchester (60.4%), Cardiff (60.2%), Liverpool (58.2%), Leicester (51.1%) and Leeds (50.3%). Even in those where Leave won (Birmingham, Sheffield and Bradford) the margins were much smaller than in surrounding areas. London and other cities tend to have larger proportions of well-qualified professionals and managers as well as young people but also relatively large numbers of social renters and people without cars and this helps to explain the coefficients in Table 4.

![Table 2: Correlations with referendum turnout (GB)](image)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GB</th>
<th>EW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% owner occupiers</td>
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<td>-0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% social renters</td>
<td>-0.72</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% C2DE</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% aged 65+</td>
<td>-0.56</td>
<td>0.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>% level 4 quals</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>% agriculture</td>
<td>-0.77</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% white British</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>persons per hectare</td>
<td>-0.48</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note: N= 379. Scilly Isles is excluded. All coefficients are statistically significant.

![Table 3: Leave share of votes (%)](image)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GB</th>
<th>EW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
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<td>England</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Scotland</td>
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<td>Wales</td>
<td>52.5</td>
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<td>N. Ireland</td>
<td>44.2</td>
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<td>North East</td>
<td>58.0</td>
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<td>North West</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorks &amp; Humber</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>56.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: GB = Great Britain, EW = England and Wales. Ns are 379 for GB and 347 for EW. Scilly Isles is excluded. *ns* = not significant.

![Table 4: Correlations with Leave share of votes (GB)](image)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GB</th>
<th>EW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% owner occupiers</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% C2DE</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% aged 65+</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% level 4 quals</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% agriculture</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% white British</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>persons per hectare</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: GB = Great Britain, EW = England and Wales. Ns are 379 for GB and 347 for EW. Scilly Isles is excluded. *ns* = not significant.
Perhaps more important in helping to explain the deviation of London and other cities from the national trend is the fact that they have smaller proportions of the populations who are white British. This applies particularly to London in which in 2011 only a minority of residents (44.9%) were in this category compared with 80.5% across England and Wales. The London figure is likely to be a good deal smaller in 2016 and this sets it apart from most of the country. That, and the fact that the city is a major global financial centre, probably means that its residents are less concerned with British identity and British self-government than people elsewhere.

In Scotland, despite some romantic talk of Scots being somehow ‘more European’ than those in other parts of the UK, the odd - but not unexpected – outcome probably has more directly political roots. The Conservatives, Labour, Labour Democrats and especially the dominant SNP were all but united in campaigning strongly for a ‘Remain’ vote. UKIP has made little impact in Scotland since discontented voters there had options not open to those in a similar position in England. In the face of this near unanimity and enthusiasm among politicians it is perhaps surprising that the Leave vote in Scotland almost reached 40%!

In Northern Ireland, the status of the border with the Republic was, of course, a salient issue but the referendum contest boiled down to a case of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) versus the rest. The DUP is the largest party in the province but not big enough to overcome the combined forces of nationalists, Ulster Unionists and those in the middle.

**Who voted Leave?** Thus far we have been analysing how referendum voting was affected by the characteristics of the counting areas within which results were tabulated. From these aggregate data we cannot properly infer anything about the behaviour of individuals. For that we need survey data and Table 5 presents some relevant figures. In terms of age, occupation and education expectations based on the aggregate analysis are amply confirmed. There was a clear occupational class divide with what might still be called the working class voting heavily for Leave and the very large difference according to level of educational attainment tells the same story. People aged over 50 were much more likely to opt for quitting the EU than were those who are younger. For two variables we have had no previous information - sex and party supported. As can be seen, men were slightly more likely to be on the Leave side than women but the figures relating to previous vote are dramatic. Over 60% of Conservative supporters defied their party leadership and the same was true of more than a third of Labour voters.

**Explaining the victory for Leave.** There has already been much discussion about why the referendum turned out as it did. On the day after the vote the BBC website carried an (unattributed) article offering ‘eight reasons Leave won’. These included the suggestions that people did not believe the warnings of economic catastrophe issued by the Remain campaigners; the fact that Leave made immigration ‘the defining issue’; the high turnout of older voters; the campaigning skills of Boris Johnson and Michael Gove on the Leave side and Labour’s failure to connect with the voters (see http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36574526). On the other hand, a letter writer to the Daily Telegraph (28/6/16) had a disarmingly simple suggestion ‘was it – just possibly – because a majority of people wanted to leave the EU?’

It is impossible to cover all the relevant arguments in the space available here. We noted at the outset, however, that the result caused a sensation despite the fact that there was no absence of warning signs. Observers found it hard to believe that support for Leave would be converted into votes on polling day and, after the polls closed, even Nigel Farage acknowledged that his side had probably lost. These suspicions arose from evidence that in most referendums support for the *status quo* option tends to grow as the vote draws near, as had happened in the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence. While there were grounds for expecting the 2016 EU vote to follow that precedent, there were also good reasons for thinking that things might be different on this occasion.
The 2016 EU referendum was marked by an asymmetry of emotional commitment. While Leave supporters tended to be very hostile towards the EU, it would be difficult to trace many of their opponents who felt a passionate attachment to an institution whose workings were mysterious to most voters. There had been a similar asymmetry in 1975, the previous occasion when Britons had been asked for their verdict on what was then the European Economic Community (EEC) yet two thirds of the public rejected the case for withdrawal. In 2016 the supporters of Remain hoped for a repeat performance, in which the passion of Leavers would be doused by arguments, mainly relating to economic prospects, which were directed to the head rather than the heart. Compared to 1975, however, the supporters of the status quo faced a more difficult task.

First, in the earlier contest every national newspaper of any significance had supported the Remain message. In 2016 the numbers of publications ranged on either side was less imbalanced. Furthermore, for many years the newspapers supporting Leave had lost no opportunity to excoriate the EU. While the influence of press propaganda on voters is impossible to gauge with any precision, the protracted campaigns of The Sun, Daily Mail and Daily Express certainly did no harm to the anti-EU cause. The sharp fall in newspaper circulation since 1975 does not undermine this argument, since press commentary is reported lavishly in other media and online versions of the papers are widely read. During the referendum these three newspapers, together with the Daily Telegraph, gave strong backing to the Leave campaign.

Second, in 1975 a formidable coalition of prominent mainstream politicians had persuaded a majority of voters to set aside tribal resentments and support the case for membership of the EEC. Forty-one years later it was impossible to assemble a similar cross-party grouping. For various reasons David Cameron did not carry conviction even among his party's grass-roots supporters; Labour’s Jeremy Corbyn could not even convince himself. With no hope of appealing to the electorate's latent respect for leaders, the Remain campaign had less to recommend it, even if the ubiquitous David Beckham made positive statements. However, in accordance with its overall strategy the Remain campaign gave much greater prominence to the views of economic institutions, such as the Bank of England, the International Monetary Fund and the independent think tank the Institute for Fiscal Studies, all of which gave solemn assurances of the economic damage which 'Brexit' would inflict. Yet if mainstream politicians had lost public respect through the 2009 expenses scandal, economic institutions of all kinds had overdrawn their credibility thanks to their failure to predict the 2007-8 crisis in the financial sector and their previous support for the UK joining the euro.

**Conclusion.** In the immediate aftermath of the referendum result, senior politicians who had fought on both sides hastened to recognise a clear win for the Leave campaign. This was understandable, particularly in the case of David Cameron who had apparently decided to leave office whatever the margin of defeat and had no wish to give the appearance of questioning the voters’ verdict. This was to ignore some uncomfortable anomalies, however, particularly when the result is compared to that of 1975. On that occasion membership of the EEC had been backed to about the same extent by young and old (Butler and Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, Macmillan, 1976, 252). In 2016, pensioners and young people voted in a way which suggested that they inhabited different countries.

If this spectacular inter-generation schism were not enough, the referendum also exposed a geographical gulf. The difference between England and Scotland has serious implications which we cannot discuss here and by plumping for Remain Northern Ireland also put the Union under a degree of strain. Each of the capital cities of the UK (London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast) dissented from the overall majority verdict (by colossal margins in the first two instances). The tendency of major cities to vote Remain - as in the case of younger voters - can hardly be rationalised as arising from a greater willingness to respond to 'Project Fear'; rather, it suggests that voters in urban conurbations just think differently from their counterparts in the rest of the UK.

Whatever the reasons for the referendum result, it cannot be denied that it has set the cat among the pigeons in respect of British politics, destabilising the main UK parties to a remarkable degree. Whether or not the 2016 referendum verdict means that Britain waves ‘Bye-bye to Brussels’, as Leave campaigners promised and many voters hoped, it has sent out so many shock-waves in so many directions that only the foolhardy would venture to predict its ultimate impact.
Where are we now?

By David Runciman

So who is to blame? Please don’t say the voters: 17,410,742 is an awful lot of people to be wrong on a question of this magnitude. They are not simply suckers and/or closet racists – in fact, relatively few of them are – and they are not plain ignorant. You can’t fool that many people, even for a relatively short period of time. And yes it was close, but it wasn’t that close. The margin between the two sides – 3.8 per cent – was roughly the same as the margin by which Obama defeated Romney in the 2012 presidential election (3.9 per cent), and you don’t hear a lot of people complaining about the legitimacy of that, not even Republicans (well, not that many). Plus, turnout in the referendum, at 72.2 per cent, was nearly 18 per cent higher than in the last presidential election. The difference, of course, is that a general election is a constitutional necessity whereas the EU referendum was a political choice. If you don’t like the outcome, don’t say it was the wrong answer to the question. It was the wrong question, put at the wrong time, in the wrong way. And that’s the fault of the politicians.

Cameron must shoulder the lion’s share of the responsibility. It was a reckless gamble, given that the stakes were so high. No one can say how this will play out, but it has already put enormous pressure on the basic functioning of the British state, something that Conservatives are meant to value above all else. As Scotland pushes for independence, Irish nationalists agitate for unification, Wales explores its relationship with England, Labour faces a split that may lead some of the party to an explicit embrace of extra-parliamentary politics, and Farage stirs the pot, the situation is unlikely to resolve itself any time soon. This has the makings of a full-blown constitutional crisis that the Conservative Party, now under a new Prime Minister, may struggle to contain. No Conservative leader, least of all one as essentially pragmatic as Cameron, would open the door to such a possibility lightly.

Prime among Cameron’s reasons for doing just that was the belief he would win. When he went to Brussels earlier this year to brief his fellow European leaders about his plans, he is reported to have told them not to worry because he was a ‘winner’ and knew how to get the result he needed. This wasn’t just bluster. Till last week’s fatal reverse he had a remarkably successful track record: two general elections, two referendums (the 2011 one on the Alternative Vote system as well as the 2014 Scottish one) and before that winning the Tory leadership when the odds seemed stacked against him. What was different this time was that he wasn’t able to take the key players in his party with him. Johnson’s defection was perhaps to be expected – though Cameron does not appear to have prepared for it – but Gove’s was not. Had Cameron known that his decision would split the Tory Party at the very top, including his own inner circle, it might have given him pause. The other difference is that neither of the two previous referendums was really Cameron’s personal initiative: one was a sop to the Lib Dems, the other a concession to the SNP. This meant that his warnings of disaster carried some conviction, since he could plausibly say that none of it had been his idea. This time he had no one to blame but himself, and the voters could tell.

What about Corbyn? I don’t believe that a different leader, fighting a more full-throated campaign, would have made much difference to the final outcome: most Labour voters went for Remain anyway and many of those who didn’t were sufficiently alienated to be resistant to all persuasion. Nevertheless, if Labour had had a different leader there’s a good chance we wouldn’t be in this mess.
Yvette Cooper might have been no better at convincing people in Labour’s heartlands to turn out in support of an unloved and distant institution – she might well have been worse – but she would have been far better at convincing the Tory government to think a bit harder about the risks it was running in holding the referendum, including the risk of defeat at a subsequent general election.

Along with Cameron’s recklessness we need an explanation for Johnson’s and Gove’s. Part of it, unquestionably, came from their sense that Labour was no longer a serious party of government and therefore that their own freedom of action was commensurably broader. The chancers chanced it because they thought they’d get away with it.

In politics, secondary effects matter just as much as primary ones. Corbyn’s election as leader was designed to promote a new kind of politics, along with the values that underpin it. But it also loosened the constraints that held his opponents in check. So a very different kind of politics is what we’ve now got. The other secondary effect that has had profound consequences is the annihilation of the Liberal Democrats at the last general election. Had Cameron been forced into another coalition with the Lib Dems it would have been much harder for him to renege on his manifesto commitment to hold it, as part of the price of remaining in office. The deep public anxiety that drove the Leave vote – especially about uncontrolled immigration – would not have gone away. Nor would the appeal of Ukip. But both would have had to be channelled through less incendiary mechanisms than a binary plebiscite.

Having said that the voters cannot be blamed for the consequences of this referendum, I can hardly blame them for not having foreseen the consequences of failing to keep a few more Lib Dems in post at the last election. Thinking through the secondary effects of the choices we make is incredibly hard. That’s why constitutional arrangements matter too. There are many hypotheticals relating to the referendum result that are very difficult to assess. Would a concession from Merkel allowing an emergency brake on the Euro project finally falls apart, PR will not save it. It isn’t a panacea. But it also isn’t a coincidence that the two places where truly destabilising populist politics have been let off the leash are Britain and the United States. Looking at what we have allowed to happen, Trump must be licking his lips. Under winner-take-all systems, people who are happy to gamble away their nation’s security only have to get lucky once. Let’s hope it is only once.

The primary cause of this referendum result is the first-past-the-post system, albeit through its secondary effects. It empowered Cameron to take a huge gamble despite his tiny minority. It forced the entire Labour movement to line up behind a leader who was not competent to lead them. It wiped out the Lib Dems, who for all their faults have been sorely missed. Proportional representation is usually dressed up as an issue of fairness, but as the AV referendum showed, that line of argument doesn’t have much appeal for ordinary voters, who tend to see fairness in more bread-and-butter terms.

But there is a better argument: it is a matter of basic security against misrule by careless and cavalier politicians. Of course, European countries that have proportional representation face profound challenges and politicians as a class are no more loved there than they are here. In Spain it is proving difficult to form a government at all. And if things really go wrong and

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Brexit has revealed a profoundly divided nation

By Glen O’Hara

Britain’s vote to leave the European Union has given her partners across the continent – and beyond – an unpleasant shock. Many European commentators continued to believe, right up until the 23 June, that the British could not possibly leave the largest single market in the world, or rip up fifty years of foreign and economic policy in one single day. But they did, choosing to send shockwaves through Westminster, Whitehall and far beyond. How did this happen? How did shockwaves through Westminster, even speak a language of politics that they cannot recognise. It was for this reason that the Leave campaign focussed on three intertwined themes...: first, the fact that Britain could not ‘control its own borders’; secondly, that the UK’s budget contributions to the EU could and should be used to prop up the struggling National Health Service; and third, that there was a danger of Turkey joining the EU.”

had himself won an unlikely overall majority in 2015 by urging voters not to risk the economic uncertainty that might come with the election of a less-than-trusted Labour Party in alliance with a Scottish National Party now entrenched in its electoral dominance of Scotland.

This strategy, however, contained within it a fatal flaw: there remains a substantial number of Britons, perhaps in themselves a minority but with the potential to carry the day in alliance with other voters, who are deeply uncomfortable about these developments. Culturally and socially conservative, they may often have voted Labour in the past, especially in the North of England and in the more economic deprived parts of South Wales. The speed of change in their communities, on issues as apparently far apart as gay marriage and adoption, growing economic insecurity under globalisation, and the declining quality of some public services, has been one main driver in the rise of the United Kingdom Independence Party – an insurgent political force that in part amounts to a populist shout of pain and rage about the rapidity and constancy of Britain’s transformation into a world nation.

Chief among these voters’ concerns was and is immigration, the most important issue facing the country according to polling respondents cited in Ipsos-Mori’s long-running Political and Social Trends series. Many voters who feel that they have been left behind by London and the English South East’s high-powered globalisation see immigration as the factor breaking up communities, piling up pressure on public services, and degrading the quality of low-paid and lower-skilled jobs. The reality – that both EU and non-EU migrants add substantially to the tax base, and have enormously assisted Britain’s recovery from the Great Recession – is less than important in communities that feel hollowed-out, forgotten about and ignored by a metropolitan political elite that does not even speak a language of politics that they recognise. It was for this reason that the Leave campaign focussed on three intertwined themes that helped to take them to victory: first, the fact that Britain could not ‘control its own borders’; secondly, that the UK’s budget contributions to the EU could and should be used to prop up the struggling National Health Service; and third, that there was a danger of Turkey joining the EU.

When Prime Minister David Cameron announced that he would campaign for an ‘In’ or ‘Out’ referendum on the EU in 2013, his strategy was a simple one: emulate his Labour predecessor, Harold Wilson, by holding a relatively superficial ‘renegotiation’, that he could then sell to the British people as a useful compromise between the EU’s aspirations to Ever Closer Union and Britons’ more semi-detached sense of Europeanism.

Mr Cameron knew that the British are ambivalent about ‘Europe’, but by no means hostile: they have come to enjoy the cheap flights, easy communications and weekends away in continental capitals that the EU has helped to bring about. They are increasingly cosmopolitan and outward-looking, as confident in their choice of French wines, Italian clothes and Spanish holiday villas as they are at home. And they are risk-averse: most referendums across the developed world are won by the status quo option, while Mr Cameron

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In reply, the Remain campaign made a fatal error. They relied on economic ‘experts’, and official assessments, to make the case that Britain would be poorer if it left the EU. There seems little doubt that this was quite correct: post-Brexit economic forecasts have now substantially lowered Britain’s growth prospects for both 2017 and 2018, and it seems quite possible that there will be a recession of some severity in the near future. The International Monetary Fund, the Treasury, the Trades Union Congress, the Confederation of British Industry, the President of the United States, the Prime Ministers of Canada and Australia: all were continually pressed into use by No. 10 Downing Street to make this case.

That entirely rational and well-evidenced argument was rejected. Voters thought it overblown, especially when Mr Cameron and his Chancellor, George Osborne, divided up the potential loss of growth to warn that each household would be more than £4,000 worse off on Brexit: but, more importantly, as prominent Leave campaigner and Justice Secretary Michael Gove put it during the campaign, the public had ‘had enough of experts’. Economists had not foreseen the banking crisis and the subsequent crash, reasoned many voters: why should they be any better at forecasting the cost of leaving the EU?

Moreover, many voters asked, why should economic growth be the central concern of politics anyway? Vote Leave used as their main slogan ‘Take Control’: a superb antidote to the confused and sloppy messaging from the other side, Britain Stronger in Europe, which focused on macroeconomics and hard-to-quantify ‘losses’ and ‘gains’ rather than the visceral elements that voters can really see and conceptualise as ‘the economy’: apprenticeship places taken by Eastern European migrants, perhaps, the constant pressure public sector austerity has put on social housing or hospital beds, changing High Streets now home to Polish and Portuguese shops, or a lack of school places in urban areas. All of this Britons could see, feel and resent: the case made by Remain, figured out in pounds and pence, felt much more opaque, even spectral.

In this situation, voters in low-income areas (and especially in areas containing large numbers of those with fewer years of education) turned out in very large numbers to ‘take control’, both of national sovereignty as they saw it, but also of public spending and of the number of migrants coming to Britain – a powerful amalgam for voters who perhaps have felt as if they did not have much control over public affairs for many years. Analysis by the polling expert Matt Singh has shown that 2.8 million voters took part in the EU referendum who had not voted for many years: the relatively high turnout, at 72 per cent, thus favoured Leave, rather than (as expected) helping Remain to mobilise hard-to-reach and unengaged young people.

So Britain is very divided over a relatively close vote, which Leave only won by 52% to 48%. Scotland and London, most of Britain’s large liberal cities (for instance Bristol, Cambridge and Oxford), Northern Ireland, the young, professional people and those with higher educational qualifications voted Remain. The English shire counties, ‘Deep England’, eastern England, less well-off areas, the old and South Wales all voted ‘Out’. It is therefore very difficult to see how the negotiations that lie ahead – over whether to stay in the European Single Market, how to manage immigration, how to lessen the economic damage of Brexit – can be managed without further acute political crises. The new Prime Minister, Theresa May, thus has an unenviable task on her hands. She has begun with a show of confidence and determination: the fair wind that voters seem willing to give her may not last through the hard years ahead.
The challenge for post-Brexit foreign policy: maintaining Britain’s multilateral vocation

By Nick Wright

As the initial shock of Britain’s decision to leave the EU subsides, the implications of this decision across the whole range of British policy areas are now the subject of scrutiny and concern in Westminster, Whitehall and beyond. Perhaps the key question for those analysing British foreign policy is how leaving the EU will impact on both the nature and reach of British power and influence internationally, and therefore on its capacity to defend and promote its interests.

In short, what type of power will Britain become following its departure from the EU, assumed by some to be as soon as the end of this decade? Will a post-Brexit foreign policy be ‘liberated’ as it looks to new markets and develops relationships with new partners? Or will the UK find itself increasingly marginalised as its decision to go it alone leaves it politically, economically and diplomatically weakened? And will governments, current and future, be willing to provide the resources necessary to ensure that the UK can continue to punch above its weight?

The Brexit decision has set in train processes at the domestic and Brussels’ levels that will be difficult and challenging to manage and control. Negotiating a ‘good’ Brexit will require extensive human and financial resources, great diplomatic skill, and political vision. The all-encompassing nature of the process, though, will challenge Britain’s foreign policy machinery like never before. The risk, therefore, is that Britain will be so consumed institutionally with the Brexit process that its capacity to engage with the wider world will be reduced. The result could be a post-Brexit foreign policy that reveals a state diminished both in its international ambition and capacity.

Everything has changed, nothing has changed. In one sense, the referendum has changed very little in terms of Britain’s relationships with its European partners. On both sides of the Channel, the imperative to co-operate on a wide range of difficult international issues is as stark as ever. The arc of instability running along the EU’s eastern and southern frontiers remains, manifesting itself in a range of often inter-connected crises including civil wars in the Ukraine and Syria; the rise of ISIS; and large-scale flows of migrants and refugees from the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Geography alone dictates that the UK cannot escape the repercussions of this unprecedented confluence of challenges.

However, while the referendum result may have reflected, in part, exasperation in Britain at the apparent inability of the EU to respond effectively to these, the belief that the UK can simply pull up the drawbridge in order to escape these problems is as far-fetched as it is simplistic. In the decades since 1945, a post-imperial Britain has re-positioned itself as a multilateral power par excellence, reflecting the reality that only through international cooperation - developed through such institutions as the UN, the OSCE, NATO and the EU - can the UK hope to achieve the long-term solutions and regional stability it identifies as its strategic priorities. In this sense, Britain’s foreign policy objectives have not changed. The question, then, is whether being outside the EU reduces its capacity and ability to achieve these.

In the UK’s National Security Strategy, published in November 2015, one point is repeatedly emphasised: the desire to ‘strengthen the rules-based international order and its institutions’ as a means to ensure a secure Britain which enjoys ‘global reach and influence’ (p. 9-10). The document makes clear that 21st Century Britain’s engagement with the wider world will be built on this foundation of multilateralism. Britain’s international interests - and its capacity to exercise influence - require an international system built on accepted rules that ensure some degree of predictability in inter-state relations. The range of international institutions of which it is a member (and many of which it helped establish) are the basis of this. In this sense, the National Security Strategy is the manifesto of a ‘middle-ranking’ power, conscious that the maintenance of its international influence and ability to project power depend on other states seeing sufficient benefits from participating - or continuing to participate - in the international system as currently constructed.

Avoiding a great unravelling. Does Brexit change this? Britain remains a key member of NATO and a permanent member of the UN Security Council; it enjoys the closest of defence and security relationships with the US; and it is striving to build partnerships with China, India and other emerging global powers. Developing a post-Brexit relationship with the EU that remains close but simply detaches the UK from its perceived over-burgeoning regulatory structures would therefore seem to change nothing. After all, Britain continues to share the same political and democratic values as its EU partners, while London will remain a key interlocutor for them.
While this is true, though, it assumes that Brexit can be sufficiently isolated from this broader set of international interactions and inter-locking relationships. The risk for the UK is that leaving the EU is similar to pulling at a loose thread and that the whole multilateral system will be weakened as a consequence. The UK now finds itself seeking to communicate simultaneously two contradictory messages on the one hand, that multilateralism must remain the bedrock of the international system and a means for promoting peace and prosperity whilst containing and managing crisis; on the other, that it wishes to leave the international system’s most developed multilateral institution because it considers it overly constraining and limiting.

Explaining and justifying this position to international partners will be difficult - particularly to those who are themselves seeking to reduce multilateral constraints on their own freedom of action. The challenge, then, is to prevent Brexit becoming the beginning of a greater multilateral unravelling, and to do so at a time when the UK’s attention and capacities will be largely consumed with the Brexit negotiations, rather than bolstering the international system.

Managing the institutional imperative. A great responsibility therefore rests with the UK’s foreign policy machinery, and particularly the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Whilst highly-regarded internationally for the quality of its policy-making and diplomacy, over the last two decades the FCO has faced some of the most challenging financial constraints of any UK government department. In 2014, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee reported that the 2010 Spending Review - which introduced the UK’s current austerity regime - had left the FCO ‘stretched almost to the limit...[and] in danger of trying to do too much at a time when capacity is being limited’. The following year, the same body warned that further cuts could ‘have a disproportionate impact on the ability of the FCO to do what it was established to do’.

At the same time, the FCO must now manage both Brexit and the UK's wider foreign policy requirements in a very different institutional environment. The government of Theresa May has seen the establishment of two new ministries - a Department for International Trade and a Department for Exiting the European Union (DExEU). This new three pillar system is intended to reorganise Whitehall in order to better deliver on the promise that ‘Brexit means Brexit’. The FCO's EU policy expertise looks likely to be the first major casualty, however, with the experts in its European Directorate - previously responsible for coordinating and managing EU policy inputs - transferred to DExEU, and further calls on its finite resources likely. Thus, the engine of UK foreign policy-making and diplomacy faces arguably its greatest challenge when it is least equipped to do so either financially or in terms of human resources.

**Time for a British multilateralism 2.0?** The strategic challenges facing the UK’s foreign policy establishment are thus significant. It already faces a rapidly changing international environment as its soon-to-be-former EU partners look to the future as 27, and make their calculations accordingly. Whatever future relationship the UK negotiates with the EU-27, the Union will remain an important focus of political, economic and diplomatic attention requiring considerable resources as the UK seeks to be heard on issues important to its interests.

At the same time, given the all-consuming nature of the Brexit negotiations, it remains to be seen how far the UK can continue to fulfil its wider international obligations, particularly in terms of security and crisis management. Although still one of the world’s richest nations, its resources are not infinite. Equally, the impact of Brexit on how it is perceived by partners and competitors - particularly in terms of its continuing relevance in the international system - will only start to become clear in the coming years.

The UK has always prided itself on its capacity to punch above its weight internationally, and its multilateral memberships have been important in magnifying its global reach. If this is to continue, Brexit cannot become an excuse to lapse into inward-looking semi-isolation. Rather, the UK must make more effective use of these international structures to maintain its relevance in the international system and protect and promote its interests. Equally, this will send an important signal that it intends neither to retreat from the world, nor loosen its commitment to a rules-based international system.

In the post-Brexit environment, a British ‘multilateralism 2.0’ based on positive engagement and the fulfilment of international commitments will therefore be essential to counter the potential fall-out of withdrawal from the European Union.

"In the decades since 1945, a post-imperial Britain has re-positioned itself as a multilateral power par excellence... In this sense, Britain’s foreign policy objectives have not changed. The question, then, is whether being outside the EU reduces its capacity and ability to achieve these.”
Maybe this time she will stay

By Chris Lord

Theresa May has told us that Brexit means Brexit. This has come as something as a surprise to those who believe Brexit means nothing at all. It is not all that helpful to say that a snark means a snark if it is unclear what a snark means in the first place. As the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kenneth Clarke, has put it, ‘No two people know what Brexit means’.

Yet, as if to confirm the view that politics is all a struggle over the construction of meaning, May has found one way of giving a precise, even literal meaning to ‘Brexit means Brexit’. One thing she appears to mean is that Britain must exit the European Union as Britain. Any Brexit must at least attempt consultation and even agreement between the parts of the United Kingdom.

May’s words and signals have been dear. Her speech on becoming Prime Minister contained the words: ‘Not everyone knows that the full title of my party is the Conservative and Unionist Party and that word ‘unionist’ is very important to me. It means we live in the Union, the precious, precious bond between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland’. Her first two visits were then to Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Parliamentary politics is one reason why it is so important for May to engage with Scotland and Northern Ireland on Brexit. May’s slender parliamentary majority of 17 is riven by multiple disagreements on Brexit. Some Conservatives want a soft Brexit in which the UK remains in the single market, and quite possibly many other policies too. Others want a hard Brexit in which the UK does not even attempt to remain in the single market, still less to make the concessions on other matters such as free movement that may be needed to retain high levels of market access. Some want Brexit now. Others want it to be a process. Still others probably rather hope it will never happen at all.

Worse. Whether they want Brexit to be hard or soft, now or never, Conservative MPs are further divided on a question that could hardly be more fundamental: namely, what kind of a country should the UK be after Brexit? Here, of course, the Conservative majority in the House of Commons has inherited the original sin of the leave campaign. Leavers won the referendum as a coalition of inconsistent opinions. Exactly ‘which country’ and ‘whose country’ would be ‘got back’ by leaving the European Union was never made clear. Many may feel it is wrong that the Conservative Government and its majority in the House of Commons should now have so much power to decide the form of a Brexit that was not decided by the referendum itself. Yet the power to decide is not without problems for the Conservatives.

For all British parties the question of ‘what kind of a country do we want to be after Brexit?’ is now inseparable from the question of ‘what kind of a political party do we want to be?’ But the referendum has left the Conservatives peculially divided between answers to the two questions. Three different camps can be distinguished. First are neo-communitarians who want to leave the European Union to regain control over British identity. Third are those like May herself who do not seem to have strong beliefs about the European Union. But who feel that leaving it is an opportunity to reshape the UK by putting more emphasis on social cohesion. The first and second groups open up a conflict - long latent within the Conservative Party - between contradictory strands within the Thatcher revolution: between its commitment to the globalisation of markets and its reassertion of values of national identity. The third group may be conciliatory and healing in its attitude to British politics and society. But it is potentially incendiary in its implications for the cohesion of the Conservative Party itself. Its suggestion that Brexit should be accompanied by activist policies to support economic performance and social justice (another term used by May in her first speech as Prime Minister) imply that the main purpose of leaving the Union should not be to complete the Thatcher revolution in some way, but to undo at least some elements of it.

Brexit will, moreover, require decisions that will make conflict between the three groups all but unavoidable. The first and second groups, in particular, are likely to fall out over migration. Outside the Union, the UK is most likely only to prosper through a strategy of maximum openness to global markets if the UK is as open as possible to whatever capital and labour flows that are needed to keep its economy at the cutting edge of international competition. Yet, the second group will, of course, expect ‘regaining control of our borders’ to mean ‘regaining control of our borders’.

However, there is one thing that all the conflicting tendencies within May’s majority have in common. They all remember how the European policy of the Major Government was paralysed by a small yet determined group of its own MPs. Then, as now, the number of potential rebels on European policy exceeded the Governments majority in the House of Commons. If anything the problem is worse for May than for Major. Major only had to deal with one group within the parliamentary Conservative Party that could deprive his government of a majority on European questions. May has to deal with many such groups. All are unlikely to be simultaneously satisfied by any one approach to Brexit. Yet each group is a potential veto holder on Brexit decisions if the Government wants to draw a majority for Brexit decisions only from within the Conservative Party itself.

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Hence, it is sensible for May to shape an approach to Brexit that allows her to seek parliamentary support beyond the Conservative Party. Of course the idea that the Scottish Nationalist Party might end up supporting a Conservative approach to Brexit would normally be highly improbable. But there is one approach to Brexit that the SNP might find hard to oppose especially if was explicitly agreed with Edinburgh: namely one in which the UK temporarily sought continuing access to the single market through an agreement similar to the European Economic Area.

Moreover, this may be precisely the kind of decision for which the May Government could end up by having to find a majority. Only some temporary arrangement may buy the time needed for the UK to conclude longer-term trade agreements of its own or even to secure membership of the World Trade Organisation itself. Market and legal certainty may also require that single market rules should only cease to apply once other rules - and arrangements for making rules - are in place. The need for that certainty is particularly important for the financial sector on which the UK depends to fund its large external deficit.

Of course, it is far from certain that the parliamentary support of the SNP for any aspect of Brexit will ever be sought or supplied. There may also be limits to how Brexit can be decided in parliament at all. At some point an election or another referendum may be needed.

However that may only reinforce the case for reaching out to Scotland on Brexit. Brexit may well turn out to be both cause and effect of fundamental changes in the British political system. Ever since the territorial settlement of the present United Kingdom in 1922, its political system has remained largely the same. One left-right cleavage has dominated, at least in general elections to the Westminster Parliament. Likewise a pattern of two-party politics – indeed, the same two parties – have largely dominated. Hence, most British governments have competed within the constraints of fixed cleavages amongst the voters and stable alignments in parliament. In contrast, the contradictions within the Brexit camp and the possible implosion of the Labour Party may allow May to take decisions in ways calculated to encourage new electoral alignments.

Take the example of Scotland. Insisting that everything should be done to avoid Brexit splitting the United Kingdom has two advantages for May. First it allows her to shore up the support of an important element of Here Northern Ireland provides the best example. Northern Ireland could even turn out to be one of a number of problems on which ‘project Brexit’ unravels. At the least, Northern Ireland will require high risks or an element of creative ambiguity in how Brexit is pursued. The recreation of a physical boundary between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland could risk much of what has been achieved by the Anglo-Irish agreement (1986) by creating an impression amongst the ‘nationalist’ community in Northern Ireland that it is bottled up forever in the United Kingdom. Yet, a physical boundary between the UK and the Republic of Ireland may be needed to achieve two important objectives of Brexit. To avoid the need for a physical boundary, the UK would need to remain in a customs union with the EU. That, however, would be incompatible with the ‘Brexiters’ hope that leaving the EU would free up the UK to negotiate free trade agreements of its own all round the world. Moreover, without a physical boundary, the UK will only be able to reassert an imperfect control over free movement of persons from the European Union. Administrative checks within the UK itself on illegal entry by EU citizens would have to substitute for ‘at border’ checks.

So, as has often been noted, the futures of two unions – the European Union and the Union of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland – are entangled with one another. May’s strategy for leaving the one without breaking the other may only be possible if she can use that very challenge to discipline and then remodel her own party both in parliament and in its appeal to voters. To paraphrase the Cabaret song, ‘Maybe this time she will stay’. But only if she changes the political game. Otherwise the post-Brexit political game with all its contradictions and unrealisable expectations will surely engulf her.
Brexit: The SNP, Scotland and the EU

By Malcolm Harvey

“It want my country to be internationalist, cooperative, ecological, fair, European,” Alyn Smith, MEP for the Scottish National Party, told the European Parliament, days after the UK as a whole voted to leave the European Union. In voting to remain in the EU by a significant margin, Scotland, he told them, had not let them down. To a standing ovation in the chamber, he pleaded with MEP colleagues “do not let Scotland down now.”

It was a powerful image: a Scottish representative in Brussels arguing that the UK did not speak for Scotland, with representatives of many different member states enthusiastically applauding his contribution. This followed on from First Minister Nicola Sturgeon’s reaction to the referendum vote, stating categorically that removing Scotland from the EU against its clearly stated will would be “democratically unacceptable”, and that everything was “on the table” as options going forward, including a second independence referendum.

Subsequently, in the Scottish Parliament, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon sought and was granted the authority to negotiate with EU representatives on behalf of the parliament. As a result, she met with the President of the EU Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz, and several other representatives from various member states to present Scotland’s position, and to explore options to maintain Scottish membership of the EU. The Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament have, for the first time, declared their intention to pursue a decidedly different foreign policy from Westminster. This is a significant development, and emphasises the profound difference in political outlook that now prevails between England and Scotland.

The SNP has not always been a supporter of the EU project. While in the 1950s, the party saw Europe as an opportunity to expand Scottish exports into larger markets, from the 1960s until the early 1980s, they took a more Eurosceptic position. Their concern was with centralism, both at UK and European level, indicating a further distance between the Scottish electorate and the levers of power. The SNP also held the view that Britain itself would strengthen its own global position through European cooperation. A reinvigorated UK would henceforth be more difficult for Scotland to break away from.

By the late 1980s, that position had changed again. Coinciding with the EU’s advancement of a “Europe of the Regions” and the extension of (limited) responsibility to the Committee of the Regions, the SNP began to see the EU as an opportunity to advance their political objectives beyond the borders of the UK. Utilising these institutional structures and networking with sub-state nationalists across Europe helped to broaden the party’s ideology, consolidating the view that pooled sovereignty at the EU level would help sustain an independent Scotland. The slogan “Independence in Europe” was adopted, and the objective of Scottish membership of the EU folded into the plans for independence.

Since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, the SNP’s focus has been much more on domestic – devolved – policy, with the EU regarded almost as an afterthought in policy considerations. Aware that Euroscepticism was on the rise in the UK (and, indeed, with significant pockets in Scotland, particularly among fishermen) the SNP took a more tepid position on the EU; supportive, but not enthusiastic.

However, as the 2014 independence referendum approached, the EU once again took on an important role in the SNP’s independence strategy.

This role was twofold: practical, and strategic. On the practical side, an independent Scotland within the EU would continue to access the benefits of EU membership that it currently held through the UK, with the addition of a more direct voice in EU decision-making, increased representation in the European Parliament, and a recognised role as a small, independent state within the European project. On the strategic side, the proposed independent membership of the EU allowed the SNP to differentiate Scotland more distinctly from Eurosceptic England, and to engage in statecraft activities in Brussels through the establishment of a Minister for External Affairs. These activities allowed the SNP to demonstrate the potential role an independent Scotland might play in Europe, while at the same time emphasising the constraints placed upon them by the current constitutional framework of devolution.

The challenge for the SNP when it came to the EU was to make a coherent argument as to why they proposed to leave one political union (the UK) but wanted to (re)join another, in the form of the EU. Of course, the SNP did not see this in quite such stark terms. This wasn’t about nationalism and self-determination in direct opposition to integration or union of any description.
Rather, for the SNP at least, nationalism and European integration were complimentary rather than contradictory ideas. They challenged the traditional conception of what an independent state should look like. In pointing to the “multi-levelled” power sharing following from EU membership, the SNP could add substance to the post-sovereignty ideas of re-scaling and interdependence that the party had been promoting.

In many ways, this strategy has not changed with the UK’s vote to leave the EU. That all of Scotland’s 32 local authority areas voted to remain in the EU (albeit, in a couple of cases, by a wafer-thin majority) has strengthened Nicola Sturgeon’s hand in negotiations going forward, both with the incoming UK Prime Minister Theresa May and with the EU itself. The dynamics of the split outcome in the referendum has provided the “material change in circumstances” within the UK that Sturgeon, in the Scottish Parliamentary election campaign suggested may precipitate a second Scottish independence referendum.

However, Brexit is a double-edged sword for the party. Yes, it makes another referendum more justifiable, and more likely to occur. But it does not necessarily follow that a second independence referendum in these circumstances would be any more likely to succeed than the first one. While it is clear from the EU referendum that the Scottish electorate want to remain in the EU, it is far from clear that they would want to do so at the expense of remaining in the UK. Indeed, prior to the Brexit vote, former SNP Minister for Local Government Marco Biagi cautioned against moving too quickly towards a second referendum. He argued that those against independence would simply ask “would you rather be part of Europe or part of Britain?” and concluded that if that was how the campaign was framed, independence would be overwhelmingly defeated. By contrast other, including the aforementioned Alyn Smith MEP, have suggested that any future referendum could address both the question of independence itself and an independent Scotland’s membership of the EU.

The SNP’s post-Brexit strategy is, like the new UK Government’s, still in its infancy. Much of it will be shaped by outside events: the actions of the new Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and Secretary of State for Exiting the EU David Davis; the triggering of Article 50 and the timeframe for negotiations; and how the First Minister’s more informal discussions progress in Brussels. As with much of UK politics at the moment, the shifting sands of the constitutional debate – both internally and externally – make building a long-term strategy nearly impossible. It is far better in the short-term to observe, consider and react than to go all-in on a pair of eights.

Nicola Sturgeon has convened a Standing Council on Europe to provide advice on maintaining Scotland’s place in the EU. The advice gleaned from these experts, together with considered analysis of UK negotiations, internal party debates and informal discussions with other political actors in Scotland will determine what the SNP strategy is going forward. That strategy is also likely to draw upon the lessons learned from the 2014 independence referendum. Membership of the European Union was just one of many issues which remained unresolved during that time – and questions remain over it, as well as more pertinent what currency an independent Scotland would now use and how the common British Isles travel area might operate if some parts of it were no longer part of the EU.

Rather than rushing into a second independence referendum on the back of the diverging EU referendum votes, the UK-wide vote for Brexit provides another opportunity for the SNP to address these issues. Much time will be spent internally developing answers the party hope will convince a majority of Scots that independence is the right choice. Only then will the party move forward with a second independence referendum – a response which would appear to be in line with electorate expectations. However, winning a second referendum, under these changed circumstances would appear to be more difficult.

Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland’s First Minister and Leader of the Scottish National Party, pictured in Bute House, the First Minister’s official residence. Photo: Scottish Government images (flickr).

Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.
Is Labour’s Love Lost? The Labour Party in the aftermath of the UK’s EU referendum

By Isabelle Hertner

The UK’s EU referendum result should have been a catastrophe for the Conservative Party. It was borne from years of infighting over the question of Britain’s membership of the European Union, and it was party leader and Prime Minister David Cameron’s policy of last resort to heal the divisions. Cameron had campaigned vigorously for a ‘remain’ vote. The outcome was thus a monumental personal failure for him, and he had no choice but to resign. Yet, rather than his Conservative Party, it was the Labour Party that somehow emerged more damaged from the referendum. While the Conservatives soon pulled together behind their new leader, Theresa May, ‘Brexit’ signaled the start of a civil war in the Labour Party. On one side stood Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and a substantial portion of the party activist base; on the other side stood a clear majority of Labour MPs and another portion of the party activist base. The vote for Brexit did not cause Labour’s strife, but it was the politics of the referendum that had brought them to a head.

This short article examines Labour’s various problems exposed by Brexit, including questions over its future policy direction, internal divisions, and the lack of effective leadership. It will analyse how Labour got into its current predicament, and consider what the future might hold.

No clear party line. In the aftermath of the EU referendum, it became clear that Labour did not know what kind of Brexit it supported: a ‘soft’ Brexit, meaning that the UK would retain some access to the European Single Market at the likely cost of accepting some free movement of labour; or a ‘hard’ Brexit, which would mean protecting control of UK borders and sacrificing access to the Single Market. It is apparent that Labour does not have a ‘Plan B’ for the UK’s future relationship with the EU. Therefore, it cannot hope to challenge the government in this debate.

But Brexit is not Labour’s only policy predicament. At an even more fundamental level, the party is not clear what it stands for, and where its place should be in British politics. Should it move left or right? It is considered too right-wing in Scotland, where the Scottish National Party (SNP) has become the dominant left-wing party with a strong anti-austerity agenda. Meanwhile, in England, Corbyn’s Labour is too far to the left of the centre ground to challenge the Conservatives. Moreover, Labour risks losing its northern base of support to the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the ‘left-behind’ insurgency that voted for Brexit. Labour’s socially conservative supporters in this part of the country do not identify with the post-material values associated with London-based politicians, including party leader Jeremy Corbyn.

Divided and dysfunctional. It is generally reckoned that parties need to be united before they can be considered electable. Labour, however, is hopelessly divided between the more left wing Jeremy Corbyn and his grassroots supporters (the so-called ‘Corbynistas’) on the one side, and the more moderate Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) on the other. In parts, these divisions are about policy (e.g. the EU, nuclear disarmament, military interventions, the economy) but in parts they are also about Corbyn’s leadership and communication style. Corbyn is the figurehead of a new protest movement called ‘Momentum’, which has over 12,000 paying members. It was set up by Corbyn’s leadership campaign team and revolves around the Labour leader, organizing events on topics such as climate change, peace, and social justice. Momentum supporters are more left-wing and radical than the majority of Labour MPs and want to change the way the party works, turning it more into a grassroots movement. In addition, Labour has doubled in size since Corbyn was elected and many of the new members are Corbynistas, which means that the grassroots and the PLP have very different goals. Crucially, the majority of people who joined Labour in 2015 think that the membership should have more say over policy and that MPs who rebel against Corbyn should be deselected.

An unfit leader. Since September 2015, Labour has been led by a man who appears unfit for the job of the leader of the opposition. Jeremy Corbyn is reputed to be a nice man with strong principles. He is a pacifist, a vegetarian, and a defender of social justice. His leadership style, however, is more in tune with a protest movement rather than a parliamentary party. As a backbench MP (1983-2015) he was a serial rebel. As a leader, he seems disorganized and unable to communicate with his colleagues in parliament. What is more, in his Leader’s Office, Corbyn is surrounded by people who alienate others, such as his executive director of strategy and communications, Seumas Milne. The latter was accused of having sabotaged Labour’s Remain campaign.
Such is the state of Labour's problem that, following a recent confidence vote, which Corbyn lost 172 to 40, a new leadership election is now in the offing. Corbyn is set to win this election against Owen Smith, a (still) relatively unknown MP who was shadow secretary for work and pensions under Corbyn until he resigned after the EU referendum. For the future of the Labour Party, the big question is: will the more moderate MPs, who are fearing de-selection ahead of the next general election, leave Labour and establish a new, centre-left party, or will they accept the leadership election result and wait for a likely defeat in 2020?

How did Labour get there? Labour's problems did not just begin in 2015. There are deeper, more long-term causes such as the party's failure to move on from New Labour. Until today, every Labour politician who does not support Corbyn is labeled a 'Blairite', although Tony Blair stepped down as prime minister and party leader over nine years ago. Post Blair, Labour has struggled to find the right answers to rising levels of social inequality across the UK. New Labour's legacy was discredited by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, and especially by their decision to join the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003. The recently published Chilcot Report on the UK's role in the Iraq War was highly critical of Blair and his colleagues, and played into the hands of Jeremy Corbyn, who had voted against the Iraq invasion.

There are also medium-term causes for Labour's crisis, such as its uncertain response to the 2010 election defeat. At a time when the party needed a safe pair of hands and the country a strong opposition, the relatively young and inexperienced Ed Miliband became party leader and struggled to be taken seriously as the leader of the opposition. Miliband owed his election to the vote of the trade unions, which brings us to the next medium-term cause for Labour's problems: the relationship with its affiliated trade unions. In particular, Unite is important and influential, as it is Britain's biggest union. Its members pay a large sum of money to Labour, and its general secretary Len McCluskey has been one of Ed Miliband's and Jeremy Corbyn's biggest backers. This has further deepened the divisions between the parliamentary party on the one side, and the grassroots and unions on the other.

Meanwhile, the short-term causes for Labour's predicament can be found in Ed Miliband's organisational legacy. Under his leadership, Labour changed the leadership election rules, giving each party member the same weight (One-Member-One-Vote) and allowing paying supporters to cast their vote. This new electoral system has led to the election of Jeremy Corbyn, who lacked the support of his colleagues at Westminster and the European Parliament.

What might be done? There are three possible scenarios. The first, which is unlikely, is that Jeremy Corbyn loses the leadership election against Owen Smith. This would alienate his supporters inside the party and Momentum, and they would probably make Owen Smith's life as party leader very difficult, if not impossible. The second scenario is that Corbyn wins the election but, in the face of harsh criticism from the media and his colleagues in parliament, steps down. Again, this would alienate his supporters who care very strongly about him as the figurehead of the party. Third, Corbyn wins the leadership election and stays on. This would placate his supporters, but alienate most Labour MPs and the voters, who, by and large, do not share Corbyn's views and won't vote for him in 2020. Then the question is: will Labour MPs go and set up a new centre-left party, possibly with the Liberal Democrats?

In this case, they risk repeating the failure of the Social Democratic Party from 1981. Or do they stay with Labour, and risk de-selection in 2020, as their constituency rather wants to be represented by a Corbyn supporter?

Thus, the Labour Party is in a big predicament at a time when it should be a strong and effective party of opposition, and there is no easy way out. The former Labour deputy leader Denis Healey used to have a first rule in politics: when you are in a hole, stop digging. Unfortunately, Labour is still digging in its hole. At the time of writing, there is still no prospect that it will stop.
Smoking ‘kippers: the role of UKIP in the vote for Brexit

By John Todd

As the polls closed on 23 June 2016, Nigel Farage was admitting defeat for the Leave campaign. Only a few hours later, it was becoming clear that the result of the referendum would in fact confound the expectations of the stock and currency markets, bookmakers and opinion pollsters. This article will assess the role of the United Kingdom Independence Party in delivering a vote of 51.9% to 48.1% in favour of a ‘Brexit’ from the European Union. In particular, the article will address UKIP’s role in demanding and obtaining a commitment from David Cameron to hold a referendum, their role in the general election of 2015, their influence over a longer time frame on British political discourse and of course their contribution to the referendum campaign itself.

David Cameron’s hope, as he took over the leadership of the Conservative Party in 2005, was that the party would stop ‘banging on about Europe’. This hope remained sadly unfulfilled as he departed Downing Street. Even in the first few years of his premiership, Eurosceptic backbenchers and UKIP were banging on with some effect about holding a referendum on EU membership. Concerns about losing votes to UKIP’s populist anti-EU, anti-immigration stance were a major consideration for Cameron and other senior Conservatives throughout 2012. Nigel Farage’s rhetoric about ‘Romanian criminal gangs’ and ‘a total open door to the whole of Eastern Europe’ garnered the party much attention and it performed well in two parliamentary by-elections in November 2012, coming second in both. In January 2013 the pressure told and David Cameron committed to holding an in/out referendum on EU membership, should the Conservatives win the next general election. UKIP played an important role in pushing Cameron into committing to a referendum he originally wanted to avoid.

UKIP also played an important role in how the general election of 2015 played out. Despite only achieving a single seat in the House of Commons, UKIP received nearly 4 million votes, mostly in England and Wales. These votes came from both those who had voted Conservative and those who had voted Labour in previous elections. Indeed, UKIP finished second in 120 constituencies in 2015, having finished second in a grand total of zero in 2010. As Matthew Goodwin and others have noted, UKIP did well with socially disaffected, economically disadvantaged voters in the north and east of the country as well as the Midlands. UKIP’s strong performance in the Midlands in particular was a problem for Labour, in that the party attracted more votes from those who had previously supported Labour than those who had previously supported the Conservatives, thereby assisting the Conservatives.

Whilst it would be easy to overplay the UKIP factor in how the general election result came about (the SNP’s crushing of Labour in Scotland was also a major factor, for example), the party nonetheless contributed to the Conservatives unexpectedly achieving a small majority. This majority of course meant that David Cameron was bound to implement his commitment to a referendum. In addition, UKIP successes in the North and North East were a foretaste of the referendum vote, in that large swathes of these traditional Labour heartlands would vote in favour of leaving the EU. This was somewhat unexpected given Labour’s position of supporting the Remain campaign. Indeed, it seems like the general election showed erstwhile English and Welsh Labour voters beginning to shake the habit of voting for and listening to the Labour Party and its leaders.

Before moving to the campaign itself, UKIP’s longer-term influence on the tone and content of British political discourse needs to be analysed. Of course, Euroscepticism in the UK predates UKIP: Eurosceptic ‘othering’ of Europe, the underlining of a difference between an ‘island nation’ and ‘the continent’, the arguing for a sense of British exceptionalism – these did not begin with UKIP. But, what is new is that this othering has been made more tangible by UKIP’s linking of immigration with EU membership. Given the salience of immigration as a political issue in the UK, and concerns like driving down of wages and a more generalised fear of ‘the other’, UKIP has been able to effectively link immigration with EU membership, deploying right-wing populist rhetoric to build their profile and electoral support. UKIP framed the immigration issue as a threat to British national identity and, through reference to criminality and infectious diseases, to individuals. Nigel Farage, with significant help from the right-wing press, managed to construct a ‘regime of truth’ about the dangers of immigration and, by extension, the threatening nature of the EU.
This anti-immigration, populist rhetoric was of course readily observable during the campaign itself. Although UKIP were not a part of the officially-designated Vote Leave campaign (which was headed by Boris Johnston and Michael Gove), they—in particular Nigel Farage—nonetheless had a high profile throughout the campaign. Farage featured regularly in the national print media and on television, where he repeatedly spoke about ‘taking back control’ of immigration and the dangers of EU membership. The now-infamous ‘Breaking Point’ poster, the exploitative use of an image of Syrian refugees fleeing war to make a point about intra-EU migration, was a nadir in the eyes of many. Indeed, even UKIP’s only MP, Douglas Carswell, has described the poster as ‘morally indefensible’.

Ultimately though, as the result demonstrated, the varied voices on the Leave side carried the day. Their campaign worked. Analysis and polling carried out since the referendum shows that older voters and voters with less formal education were more likely to vote leave. These people are also likely to be amongst those who feel they have ended up on the wrong side of how the British society and economy have developed over the last thirty years. Loss of good-quality jobs (particularly in the manufacturing sector), public services under pressure, lack of affordable housing and rising inequality are all legitimate grievances that give rise to frustration, anger and fear for the future. UKIP was able to connect with and speak those holding these grievances in a way that the two main parties in England and Wales could not.

“Loss of good-quality jobs (particularly in the manufacturing sector), public services under pressure, lack of affordable housing and rising inequality are all legitimate grievances that give rise to frustration, anger and fear for the future. UKIP was able to connect with and speak those holding these grievances in a way that the two main parties in England and Wales could not.”

UKIP had an important role, both in employing populist anti-immigration rhetoric themselves and in demonstrating its effectiveness to the official Vote Leave campaign. Johnson and Gove began the campaign talking more about abstract terms about sovereignty and democracy, but focused more and more on immigration as the campaign progressed. UKIP opened up the discursive space for populist, anti-elite outbursts like “People in this country have had enough of experts” from Michael Gove and likening the aims of the EU to those of Hitler from Boris Johnson. In the closing days of the campaign those on the Remain side tried repeatedly to shift the focus back onto the economic implications of leaving, but clearly failed to ‘cut through’ to disillusioned voters like the one cited above.

So, whilst it would be going too far to say it was UKIP ‘wot won it’, they undoubtedly played a major role in campaigning for the referendum to take place and in delivering the vote for Brexit. In terms of what is next for UKIP, at the time of writing they are engaged in the internecine warfare that is characteristic of smaller right-wing parties in the UK. Nigel Farage’s resignation announcement has brought the long-running tensions within UKIP to the surface. If the party wants to present itself as a viable, populist alternative to Labour and replicate the SNP’s Scottish successes in the North and East of England, it will need to resolve the conflict between the various groupings quickly and efficiently or risk a messy split.

Whatever the future holds for the party, it has already had a lasting impact on British politics, with a political discourse that is more fearful and less welcoming to immigrants and an as-yet undetermined future outside the EU. The party has also clearly demonstrated that there are sections of British society with grievances that are strongly held, and that if the main parties cannot or will not deliver for them they will look to those promulgating populist-nationalist and anti-elite sentiments as solutions to these grievances. This will be a major challenge for the Conservatives—and particularly for Labour—over the coming period.
London exceptionalism and the challenge of Brexit

By Stephen Barber

London exemplifies the divisions exposed by the EU referendum and the challenge facing the government led by Theresa May in pursuing a strategy for the UK as a whole. But the economy of London is too important to be sacrificed because of the failures of the British political system. Its interests must be at the heart of negotiations and protected even if that means disappointing Leave voters. This article discusses the exceptionalism of the capital and what significance it holds for economic and political stability. It considers the importance of London in the negotiations. Fundamentally it is a commentary of current events and an attempt to understand what is happening and could happen as a result of the referendum rather than the in-depth academic analysis which, for now, will have to wait.

The referendum on UK membership of the European Union laid bare the divisions which have existed for many years but have perhaps been ignored. In the small hours of that fateful Friday morning as the results were coming in, Iain Duncan Smith let slip as to why. ‘This isn’t like a general election’, he told Radio 4 listeners candidly, ‘every vote counts’. He was of course right. General Elections are won on the battleground of perhaps 80-100 marginal seats; about a third of constituencies never change political hands. A majority of the electorate simply does not get the candidate they voted for and as a result the needs of large segments of society can be and are overlooked. The referendum was different. Every vote had equal worth and the process gave an outlet to discontent and division.

It is now clear that these divisions are multifaceted; they are geographic, political, economic, social, class, age, educational, cultural, even expertise (As Michael Gove put it, ‘I think we’ve had enough of experts’). According to Lord Ashcroft’s polling data, the 18-24 age group were 73% likely to vote Remain while the over 65s were 60% likely to vote Leave. Fifty seven percent of the AB social groups (higher managerial, professional) voted Remain (the only group to do so as a majority), while 64% of C2 (skilled manual) and DE (semi-skilled, unskilled, unemployed) respectively voted Leave. And the same is true of social attitudes. Take the idea of ‘social liberalism’. Sixty eight percent of Remain voters would describe this as a ‘force for good’ while 80% of Leave voters said it was a ‘force for ill’. When it comes to globalisation there is a similar 62% to 69% comparison; while the thorny issue of immigration saw 79% of Remainers believing it a force for good with 80% of Leavers rejecting it as ill. These are divisions in attitude, interests and outlook.

In its wake, the referendum has left the two main political parties split and recriminations between the two sides of the debate rife. But for all the attention on the divide between Scottish Remainers and English Leavers, with implications for the Union, it is perhaps London which most starkly illustrates the fault line which has become clear for all to see.

The electoral map of Britain on 24th June saw London’s strong Remain isolated in a sea of fervent English Leave. Sixty percent of the 3.7 million London voters wanted to Remain with some boroughs notably high including Lambeth (79%), Hackney (78%) and Haringey (76%), Wandsworth (75%). Only at the peripheries - Havering, Bexley, Barking and Dagenham - did the outcome reflect the rest of England by rejecting the EU. More broadly, the fact that London goes against the grain reflects a metropolitan liberalism and open economics which is viewed with suspicion in ordinary English and Welsh (and Scottish) towns. And London is on average more cosmopolitan, wealthier; younger, better educated and more economically productive than the rest of the country. The average age in London is 34 compared to 40 across the UK; 58% of the working population have degrees compared to an average of 38%. London is home to around 9 million people, 13% of the population, but is responsible for almost a quarter of economic output.
The feeling is mutual. London itself feels somewhat separate from the rest of the country; it shares more in common - an outlook - with other world cities such as New York, Sydney, Paris, Berlin, than it does with say Boston in Lincolnshire which voted almost 76% to Leave the EU and distinguished itself as Britain's most Eurosceptic town. Like similar regions of the UK, Boston has experienced EU immigration (reaching around 13% of the local population at the time of the vote) and which grew strongly after the accession of 8 Eastern European countries in 2004.

But the irony is that while the fear of immigration was the strongest card the Leave campaign played, London absorbs more economic migrants than anywhere else. About a third of all EU migrants to the UK live in the city. According to Oxford's Migration Observatory, London has around 3 million foreign born citizens representing some 39% of the population of inner London. What is more London has enjoyed historically low unemployment, record high employment and can boast a productivity that is 42% higher than the UK average; all driven to a significant degree by the dominant financial services industry based around the City. Britain relies on London's economy and the capital represents the economic interests of Britain. London is economically more important than any other part of Britain, including the devolved regions of Scotland and Wales which enjoy much greater political control (perhaps one outcome of any Brexit would be to give devolved assemblies the responsibilities currently exercised at EU level). Just consider that if London gained the independence that some want for Scotland, it would be the sixth biggest economy in Europe. Within the EU it is the financial capital and a leading centre in the world. That is why early indicators are worrying including the July 2016 Lloyds Bank Purchasing Managers Index which found that following the vote London businesses were hit harder than any other region with employment falling for the first time in 38 months.

It is therefore the economic interests of London which should now be paramount in the negotiations about Britain's relationship with the EU. Those interests surely include securing access to the single market. But at the same time the emotive issue of free movement must be addressed politically. Squaring that circle (or 'pie in the sky' as one French Minister put it) is the biggest challenge for Theresa May's new government. London's premiere financial services industry requires access to the single market to survive. This explains why the ‘London Visa’ is one idea being floated by the London Chamber of Commerce. TheCityUK, which speaks for the Square Mile has already prioritised what it calls ‘mechanisms approximating single market passporting’ but highlighted a range of other risks. Already the London Stock Exchange has seen a 60% fall in new issuance since the financial crisis at a time when its US counterparts have seen increased activity.

The referendum is a further blow to this business. And it is business which is vital to the UK economy. Financial services account for 10% of GDP (the highest in the G7) while the Centre for Cities calculated that London as a whole, with its technology industries, legal services and education, contributes 30% of UK tax revenues (the same as the next 37 UK cities combined). It shows that income tax revenue from London over the decade to 2015 increased by 35% (Manchester by contrast increased just 1%) and this means that any slowdown in the London economy has implications for the country as a whole. Whatever the disdain of the rest of Britain to its capital and the people who live and work there, the UK is heavily reliant on its economy.

The phrase that 'Brexit means Brexit', emphatic as it may seem, undoubtedly permits different scenarios about the future relationship between Britain and the EU. There are elements of the Tory party (along with UKIP) who want to sever all links with the EU in favour of some sort of free market, trading, tax haven. Prime Minister May has appointed no less than three Leave campaigners to her Cabinet to oversee the process directly.

And yet she appears to be handling the negotiations herself. Furthermore she seems to have prioritised the Union and has given the pro-EU Scottish government a full part in agreeing the settlement (London also needs such a voice). Meanwhile, the differing attitudes of Boris Johnson, David Davis and Liam Fox are a recipe for huge political tantrums perhaps, just, paving the way for the preservation of the relationship with EU partners.

The divisions laid bare by the referendum need to be addressed politically. They are divisions which are epitomised by London which at times looks like a different country from the towns up and down Britain. Ordinary voters must believe they have a say and a stake in the country and its economy. Theresa May needs to bring home a deal which addresses concerns about free movement. But the conundrum also requires that the interests of London are preserved because without it the whole country will suffer.
BPS seminar announcement

Northern Ireland 10 years after the St. Andrews Agreement of 2006

Friday 30 September 2016 at 1500hrs-1730

British Politics Society, Norway are proud to host an autumn seminar on the politics of Northern Ireland, featuring two exclusively invited speakers.

**Lord Hain of Neath** is a British Labour Party politician, who was the MP for Neath between 1991 and 2015, and served in the Cabinets of both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Among a number of Cabinet posts, he was Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from 2005 to 2007. After standing down as an MP at the 2015 general election, he was created a life peer as Baron Hain, of Neath in the County of West Glamorgan. The title of his talk for the BPS seminar will be ”The St. Andrews Agreement: lessons for conflict resolution”.

**Dr. Peter McLoughlin** is a Lecturer at Queen’s University Belfast. His main research interests are on Northern Ireland and other divided societies, and he has contributed widely to academic and public debates on the peace process and on contemporary political processes in Northern Ireland. The title of his talk in Oslo will be ”The State of Northern Ireland today”.

**Venue:** ”Stort møterom”, the University Library (Georg Sverdrups hus), University of Oslo, Blindern. Signs will direct you on the day.

All members and friends of British Politics Society, Norway are heartily welcome. Please register in advance at mail@britishpoliticssociety.no

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**Forthcoming edition of British Politics Review**

Migration – in the form of immigration to Britain – took centre stage in the electoral campaign preceding the EU referendum on 23 June. Today, the scale of incoming workers from European countries has become a political liability. In the next issue of British Politics Review we seek to investigate more closely the form and consequences of immigration to Britain, in its contemporary form as well as in earlier historical phases. How did it become a dominant bone of contention in 2016?

The autumn edition of British Politics Review is due to arrive in November 2016.