

Brexit and Beyond

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On the 24th June 2016 the results of the referendum confirmed that 17.4 million voters, or 51.9 percent of the votes cast, backed leaving the EU while 16.1 million voters, or 48.1 percent of votes cast, favoured staying.

It is said that a mood of devastation swept through Whitehall and shocked Prime Minister David Cameron resigned leaving the country leaderless at a crucial time. Was this the time that many MP's and Civil Servants vowed to do all in their power to frustrate the will of the people and do all they could to ensure we never leave the European Union.

In the three years since this momentous result will have seen what can only be described as chaos as the British establishment opposed to Brexit lined up to deliver 'project fear' and a deal was negotiated that was defeated by parliament on no less than 3 occasions.

As the plot developed Brexit became more toxic by the day as people all over the country took polarised positions. Those who voted to leave, despite the electorate being given a simple choice of leave or remain, were now being told that the economic, legal and social consequences of leaving would be disastrous for the UK.

As the deadline to leave on the 29th March approached, Parliament began an unprecedented decent, normal business has been cast aside and trust and confidence in our elected politicians has evaporated as we witnessed the demise of brand politics.

The European elections we were not supposed to be involved in, took place on May 23rd at a cost of £156 million or £2.6 million per MEP. The higher cost, however, was to the main political parties who lost out to the Brexit Party and the Liberal Democrat's with the Brexit Party achieving 33% share and the conservatives just 9% of the vote.

As we welcome Boris Johnson, our third Prime Minister since the Brexit vote, we must now honour the democratic vote, leave the European Union on the 31st October and get on with building the future of Great Britain.

However strongly some might disagree with this view and whatever fears they might have for a post Brexit Britain, all must accept that the continuation of the in-fighting is not sustainable. Our reputation on the world stage is already severely damaged and it is widely understood that uncertainty is preventing much needed investment.

We can expect Boris Johnson to hot foot it to Brussels in search a special deal that will command the support of the Commons. Positions, however, are already entrenched and with the holiday period now in progress any deal must be considered unlikely. It seems Parliament will move positively to prevent the default position of no deal so Boris may well be on a collision course that could see an early vote of “No confidence” in his leadership that could result in the collapse of the Government and a General Election.

It is important to note that “No Deal” is a moment in time. There are already in place a multitude of side agreements on many matters, that will come into effect on November 1st. A deal will then be done on future arrangements as it is in the interests of all concerned to negotiate one. The complexity of the Irish border will be challenging but if it becomes a necessity to agree the forward rather than something you might avoid by kicking the ball down the road, it will focus minds.

More prolonged debate and disagreement will do untold damage to the UK economy, which is already slowing, due, primarily, to the marked slow down of China. If we fail to leave on the 31st October Mr Farage and his Brexit Party will gain strength, taking share from Labour and Conservatives who are both divided and weak, heralding, what may prove to be the systemic collapse of the two- party system.

So the stakes are high, the great British public have had enough, we must get back to dealing with key domestic issues such as crime, health care, worldwide tensions and education. The determined efforts of some to prevent Brexit must now be directed to ensuring the inevitable post Brexit turbulence is minimised. It is now the time to pull

together as we have done at difficult times in our history to build trading relationships across Europe and the world and do the deals to secure long-term jobs and growth.

We must build on our strengths, investing in manufacturing, housing and infrastructure and vocational skills. For too long we have stood by and watch the demise of wealth creation industries and increased our reliance on imports. This is our wake up call and we owe it to future generations to heed and act on this now.

If it is to be a “no deal” exit on the 31st October, we must move swiftly in the interests of all the stakeholders including our EU neighbours to put in place pragmatic arrangements on immigration, border control, security and trading. I remain confident that this can be achieved and we can finally move on to rebuild so many relationships which have been so badly damaged by 3 years of a toxic Brexit.