BREXIT

THE POLITICS OF A BAD IDEA

KipperWilliams
after C.D. Friedrich

edited by David Gow and Henning Meyer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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WANDERER ABOVE THE SEA OF FOG

David Gow and Henning Meyer

The United Kingdom will take the most important decision of this millennium so far on 23rd June 2016 when it decides whether to remain in or to leave the European Union. The huge uncertainty surrounding the outcome of this momentous vote not only in the UK but across the whole of Europe is already taking a heavy toll - economically as well as politically. What's more, the poor quality of debate on a topic as complex as EU membership carries the risk that this crucial vote is decided not on the basis of the best available information and analysis but on gut feeling and short-term mood swings. This is no way to decide upon fundamental issues of democracy and sovereignty for years to come.

We have therefore decided to bring together the key arguments developed by some leading thinkers from within and without the UK to show why Brexit is a bad political idea. New in-depth economic analyses of the most likely effects of Brexit are published virtually every single day but there is a surprising lack of comprehensive political analysis with the same level of intensity and depth. This book seeks to close this gap.

Brexit would not just have significant consequences for the UK but also for the rest of the European Union; a divorce of this magnitude would necessarily impact all parties involved. So we are here also giving a voice to people, Britain's European neighbours, whose livelihoods now and in future would be severely affected but who are relegated to the sidelines as passive recipients of the British decision – whatever it is. And these different voices underline that, in so many ways, the future of democracy and sovereignty, of security and prosperity, in Europe is at stake. The political after-shocks of the decision will be felt from Dublin to Durres and Dubrovnik, from Belfast to Berlin and Bratislava.

The Brexit referendum will be a watershed moment in post-war history and the period leading up to 23rd June 2016 has a strange aura of limbo about it. Everything feels on hold until the direction of travel becomes clear. Our over-arching aim of providing political direction in the murky debate is reflected in the artwork on the cover. We asked Kipper Williams, one of Britain's leading political cartoonists, to adapt Caspar David Friedrich's famous painting 'Wanderer above the Sea of Fog' for us. In the original 19th century painting, the wanderer is engaged in a moment of self-reflection as, perched on a craggy hilltop, he ponders his uncertain future represented by the dark and swirling mist beneath his gaze: an apt image for the current state of Britain.

All our authors are clear about one thing: they believe that Brexit is a bad idea. Britain's fellow Europeans may be exasperated at times with the UK but our authors plead, like Helmut Schmidt in 1974 before the referendum the following year, for British voters to show solidarity – and vote to stay in.

The chapters of this book are grouped around two broad poles: the general political argument relating to Britain's position in Europe and the world and those key questions of sovereignty and democracy. We hope that with this volume we help to lift the fog of obfuscation and demonstrate why remaining a member of the European Union is in the elemental interests of Britain, of the other 27 EU member states and of Europe as a whole.

THE PROGRESSIVE AND PATRIOTIC CASE FOR EUROPE

Roger Liddle

The alarm bells are ringing: The June 23rd referendum is on a knife edge. Without much stronger leadership in favour of our EU membership, the Leavers could end up winning the day. They are playing the emotional cards so much better than the Remainers. However spurious the arguments, the Brexiteers make a gut, emotional appeal that Brexit is the chance to 'take back control' of our future. The Leavers have a strong and committed base of support among older voters, the most likely group to go to the polls. Their campaign relies on the endless repetition of half-truths and distortions: yet it comes across as conveying energy, conviction and passion.

The fact that the Leavers' thin arguments are treated as seriously as they are reflects poorly on the quality of the national debate. Of course no one can stop the constant flow of misrepresentation from our largely foreign owned press and, at times, it seems the BBC's great tradition of robust impartiality has been replaced by a timid and passive rule of equal time for unchallenged assertion and counter-assertion. But the main blame rests with a political class that has rubbished the EU for decades and now expects its electorate to vote for staying in. That many Eurosceptics now pro-

nounce themselves firmly against Brexit shows of course a welcome realism, but by definition 'Eurosceptics against Brexit' cannot be the most stirring campaign cry. Remainers are making some progress by pointing out starkly the risks involved in Brexit. But 'Project Fear' has to be balanced by 'Project Hope'. No wonder that younger people, who instinctively favour Remain, and simply see our membership of the European Union as part of the modern world, feel uninspired to go to the polls.

The Remain strategy relies heavily on an assumption that strong support for our continued EU membership from the business and political establishment will see them home: but business, as well as politicians, have badly lost moral authority with the public. 2016 is not 1975. Harold Wilson as Prime Minister turned a 60-40 majority against staying in, a mere six months before the poll, into a 65-35 backing for Britain's membership. He was assisted by a spirited cross party Yes for Europe campaign led by Roy Jenkins, Edward Heath and Jeremy Thorpe. Today the electorate observes a Conservative party at war with itself and a Labour leadership that until very recently has been absent from the field of battle.

There are welcome signs that on the Labour side things are stirring. On April 14th Jeremy Corbyn surprised his many critics - within and without the party - with a speech on Europe in which he argued that Labour "is overwhelmingly for staying in because we believe the European Union has brought: investment, jobs and protection for workers, consumers and the environment, and offers the best chance of meeting the challenges we face in the 21st century. Labour is convinced that a vote to remain is in the best interests of the people of this country". Well done Jeremy Corbyn is the only possible reaction. Those who complain that his support for Europe was qualified by the phrase "warts and all" are not being fair. His formulation of support for Europe, "Remain to Reform", is a less elegant reworking of the early Blair mantra "pro Europe, pro reform in Europe", much as that point will annoy his entourage.

Of course Corbyn's vision of "reform" might be somewhat different to that of more moderate mainstream social democrats. For example, Corbyn makes a lot of TTIP on the grounds that it would facilitate the privatisation of the NHS by US multinationals (that hopefully is not an unfair summary of his position) and allow global corporate power to overturn national rules and social protections. An intelligent counter would be that no such TTIP would ever be agreed by the European Union. The democratic reforms in the EU that Labour governments supported in the Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon Treaties gave much increased powers to the European Parliament, in-

cluding the right to veto trade deals. In my judgement, there is simply no way that a "neoliberal" TTIP will pass the scrutiny of the European Parliament.

But in the context of the big decision on our membership, this is a quibble, not an ideological gulf. The Labour leadership is "on side" for Europe. This is a significant gain for the pro-European cause. It will matter in winning Remain votes among an (admittedly diminishing) section of the electorate that strongly identifies with Labour and will not pay much attention to the recommendations of David Cameron.

There remain, however, some significant problems with the Labour position. The first is a presumption that the Labour case for Europe is fundamentally different in nature to the case presented by Cameron and the "establishment" Remain campaign. Corbyn argues that his support for Britain remaining in the EU is based on a "socialist case". This progressive/socialist case is assumed to be quite different from the neoliberal pro-business arguments in favour of our membership of what in the 1970s Corbyn would have derided as a "capitalist club". This is a strongly held view among many Labour activists who want Labour to present a positive "progressive" case that contrasts with the Remain side's constant reiteration of Project Fear.

The second problem lies in the conclusion that is drawn from this sense of difference: that Labour should avoid 'siding with the Tories' in campaigning for Britain's continued EU membership. The tactical argument for this position is that Labour must not repeat the mistakes it allegedly made in the Scottish referendum. It is a fact that a very high proportion of the Labour voters who voted for independence in the September 2014 referendum deserted for the SNP in the May 2015 general election. But it is not logical to argue that the reason former Labour voters made this switch is because the "Better Together" campaign led by Labour's Alastair Darling sided with the Tories against the Scottish people. Of course this was the SNP charge. But Labour's problems in Scotland stretch back some way before the referendum. The SNP has been in government in Holyrood since 2007 and won a remarkable overall majority under a PR system in the 2011 Scottish parliament election. The referendum triggered a switch from Labour to the SNP that was already there in the making because the SNP had already established themselves as the effective defenders of Scottish interests, a position that Labour had previously occupied since the Thatcher premiership.

Today, in England a large section of what is left of the old working class "core vote" is attracted by UKIP's anti-immigration, anti-EU populism. But to argue that Labour can minimise the risk of defection of its working class supporters to right-wing populists by keeping its mouth shut on Europe is perverse. The referendum is the op-

portunity to demonstrate to working class voters that the economic consequences of leaving the EU will be far more serious for working families and those on benefits than legitimate concerns about the strains of immigration which, in any case, only a more prosperous economy will have the resources to tackle.

My argument is that there is a strong progressive case for Europe about which Labour should speak loudly and clearly. Yet if Labour puts all its emphasis on its differences with the government, Labour's position runs the risk of coming across as sectional, qualified and hesitant. Instead we should be arguing strongly and clearly that the EU we have is in the national interest, much as it needs further reform.

There is also an overwhelming national interest case for the principle of our EU membership, which Labour should demonstrate to the public unites men and women of goodwill across all the mainstream parties. This means making the patriotic argument that EU membership is overwhelming in the national interest and being willing publicly to demonstrate that on this question Labour is in agreement with David Cameron and George Osborne.

The referendum is the biggest decision about Britain's future and role in the world since the end of the Second World War. We are a long long way from the world that Ernie Bevin so brilliantly surveyed from his Foreign Office window. Great Britain is no longer one of the Big Three. It no longer stands at the centre of the three circles of influence that Churchill graphically described – the British Empire and Commonwealth, the Atlantic Alliance with the United States, and Europe. The Empire has long gone and the Commonwealth, though rich in ties of sentiment, language and culture, is neither an economic force nor an effective political alliance. The United States values its relationship with Britain, but, as President Obama made clear in London, its value now mainly lies in the fact that Britain is a leading player in the European Union. Our EU membership is now the focal point of British influence in the world. There is no other table at which a British Prime Minister can sit.

Our membership of the EU has been at the heart of our "national strategy" as a country since the early 1960s. It was our response to Dean Acheson's famous quip in his speech at West Point in December 1962 that Britain was "a country that had lost an Empire and has not yet found a role". Yet for decades this national case for our EU membership has rarely been made with force and conviction by our political leaders.

The Conservative party had great difficulty adjusting to the loss of Empire. It retained a romantic attachment to a 'mother of Parliaments' view of Westminster democracy despite its increasing constitutional archaism and dysfunctionality. It never fully

bought the argument that by 'pooling' some national sovereignty, we added to Britain's strength, influence and power in the modern interdependent world. And it hated the Jacques Delors concept of economic integration with the Euro in a more social Europe.

As for Labour, for decades Europe seemed at odds with the creation of a post-1945 British socialist commonwealth and the post-imperialist view that Britain had a distinctive role of 'moral leadership' in the world. This half-heartedness about Europe showed itself once more in Jeremy Corbyn's depressing but obvious reluctance to engage in the British referendum debate until very late in the day.

The economic argument for our membership is incredibly powerful – and at its root, a strong social and progressive argument too. Economically, Europe is the centre of our trading relationships, accounting for 44% of our trade. The European single market is our home market in which we can trade freely. It is simply not true, as the Leavers argue, that Britain could enjoy the same 'free trade' with Europe if we left the EU. The Leave campaign is built round two central propositions: that we can use the EU contributions we would no longer have to pay to rescue the NHS; and we can, by 'regaining control' of our border, stop EU migration into Britain. But these are essential pre-conditions of our present free access to the EU market. Why should our former EU partners offer us as non-members a better deal than they enjoy themselves as members – access to the single market without any of the commensurate obligations?

This 500 million-strong European market offers British-based businesses a scale of home market in which they can compete in global markets. As a result, Britain has become a magnet for inward investment from all over the world. This is not to be dismissed as a "business" argument, as though of no relevance to working people. It is about jobs and the size of people's pay packets and it is of vital concern to the economies of the UK's more deprived regions and nations. Think of the benefits Nissan brings to the whole of the North East of England.

What's more, the jobs we have as a result of our EU membership are mainly decent jobs: The Leavers argue that any loss of European trade can be made up by Britain striking free trade agreements with the rest of the world. What they fail to point out, unlike a recent 'Open Europe' report that offers a much more honest analysis of what Britain would need to do to make a success of Brexit, is that this would involve domestic job losses as a result of freely admitting goods from low wage countries and lowering the much higher social, environmental and safety standards we have adopted as a result of our EU membership. Free trade within the EU through the single market

means devising innovative hi-tech products and services that meet the needs of one of the richest markets in the world. Free trade with Asia, Africa and Latin America means competing directly with low wage economies. Britain could of course compete but only by choosing the "low road" to competitiveness in the global economy. That means lower wages, weaker standards, and fewer social protections. The rich would continue to prosper. For working people, the prospect is much grimmer.

These are progressive arguments for the EU. The Single Market is a "social market". Many of us would like to see the social provisions of that market strengthened, but they exist today. Similarly, the existence of the single market permits politics, if the necessary will exists, to tackle abuses of corporate power, such as tax avoidance: this is a much more difficult challenge for nation states acting alone.

Essentially our EU membership is the foundation of the 'open society' Britain has become. That society, for all its gross inequalities and flaws, offers Britons the opportunity to lead more fulfilling lives than previous generations enjoyed. Yet it faces major threats, both to its future economic competitiveness and national security. The essence of the question is whether we are stronger or weaker defending our open society through membership of the EU.

Those voting for Brexit – though the essential dishonesty of the Leavers is that they refuse to acknowledge the well springs of their support - want to pull up the drawbridge and reject modernity. Yet, in a world of chaos in the Middle East, with a resurgent Russia and a troubled Africa on Europe's borders, and huge challenges like climate change and migration, doesn't it make more sense to work closely in a relationship of institutionalised cooperation with our nearest neighbours whose interests and values we largely share?

Working with our EU partners can be at times frustrating, as other countries are entitled to defend their national sovereignty and interests as fiercely as we do. But the EU provides a successful framework for working together that for decades has guaranteed peace, democracy and a social market economy. That is why the choice is so fundamental. To vote Leave would give huge impetus to both the possible break-up of the EU as well as the break-up of Britain.

In some respects, the choice in the referendum has historic parallels with the arguments between the appeasers and those who believed in collective security in the 1930s. Like Europe, this was a difficult issue for some in the Labour party: many opposed British rearmament on the basis that it would facilitate another capitalist war. But ultimately, as the threat from the fascist dictators mounted and the unreasonable-

ness of their intentions became clear, the advocates of collective security won the day. In 1940 Labour joined the Churchill coalition and, with Churchill, fought off the Conservatives who wanted to negotiate a peace deal with Hitler.

The philosophical justification for Labour's position was set out with great brilliance by Evan Durbin in his *Politics of Democratic Socialism*. This book argued that democracy was an essential foundation of social progress. Rejecting Soviet Communism, he argued that there could be no progress towards a socialist society without democracy as its foundation. That also meant that Labour had to be prepared to defend democracy if need be by force of arms if dictators of either the right or left threatened its future. Today the stability and strength of the European Union is one of the main guarantors of our civilisation. It has to be defended at all costs. That is why we should join David Cameron in making a national case.

Today's Leavers are not appeasers. But fundamentally they do believe that we would be better off simply looking after our own interests. They are deniers of the realities of economic and political power in the modern world. They refuse to recognise that the great challenges to our civilisation require collective action if they are to be tackled effectively. To avoid the commitments that our membership of the European Union entails, they are prepared to abandon the only meaningful capacity for collective action between likeminded countries that we presently have. They would abandon Britain to a future of economic weakness and political marginalisation. We could easily end up a miserable country – an uneasy mix of a protectionist backwater that most Brexit voters want, without realising its consequences for their living standards and public services, and an offshore haven for tax dodgers and capitalist exploitation in a race to the bottom from which only the few would benefit. If we abandon Europe on June 23rd, there is no way back. We must not let this happen. We must make a patriotic as well as a progressive case.

WHY DO SO MANY BRITONS NOT WANT TO WALK TALL WITHIN EUROPE?

Colin Crouch

The United Kingdom has been the second or third largest member (in terms of both population and economy) for over 40 of the 60 years of the life of the European Union (EU) and its predecessors. The EU is by far the world's largest trade group of nations, establishing standards across a vast range of products and services that are followed by the rest of the world. In a world where most other key regions are dominated by single powers, it enables the pooled sovereignty of its middle-sized and small member states to play a role in international economic relations, which, left to themselves, they could not achieve. Why do so many British people not want their country to play the powerful part in this important organization that is so readily available to it, but which our stand-offish attitude to our neighbours has rarely allowed us to achieve?

The answer has three parts. There are issues about Brussels 'bureaucracy'; an economistic concern with 'trade only'; and a romantic nationalism that sees the UK as a global power in its own right. The first of these raises serious issues, but the other two go to the heart of the long-term puzzle of British (or rather English) Conservatism: the tension between hard-headed, money-obsessed pragmatism, and the roman-

tic myth of the blessed island nation that is the envy of the world. That tension has served Conservatives well, as it enables them to make opposite appeals at different times and to different publics; but they come together most uneasily on the Europe question.

'Brussels' regulation

Yes, EU procedures can be infuriatingly cumbersome. Bringing together as it does countries from very different administrative cultures, the EU necessarily relies on formal procedures rather than the informal nods and winks that often enable short cuts to be made within well understood, shared cultures. However, within a global economy the growth of formal procedures is happening everywhere, not just in the EU. The London Stock Exchange no longer operates on the basis of 'My word is my bond', as it could when it concerned a small group of English gentlemen who all knew each other well. It is increasingly regulated by laws that must be understood, accepted and used by global players. Indeed, the LIBOR and Forex scandals revealed that informality, with all its opportunities for corruption, still looms too large in London's financial markets; more regulation is on the way, with or without the EU.

Further, many of the issues that are subject to EU regulation would be covered by similar national rules if the EU did not exist. Or is it the dream of Europhobes that, were the UK to leave the EU, much regulation could be simply abandoned? Many Conservatives turned against the EU during the 1990s when it produced some social directives. It scarcely does so now, but the legacy of that period remains. Advocates of Brexit are silent about which EU rules they would replace with national legislation and which they would simply dump. Is the plan that, waving the Union Flag and singing 'Rule, Britannia!', we do not notice that we are voting to abolish maternity leave, restrictions on long working hours, and certain rights to worker consultation by employers – to name just a few?

Also, the 'Brussels bureaucracy' argument implies that the UK stands as a helpless outsider, having things done to it by foreigners who gang up against us for unnamed reasons. The BBC routinely reports new EU measures in such terms as: 'British firms/ citizens/etc. are being required by the EU to…', as though these impositions fall solely on the British and not on everyone else. Having been a leading member of the EU for so many years, it is time that we British saw ourselves as among the Brussels 'they' who do all these things, not just as the 'us' to whom they are done. There will be

EU regulations in the framing of which UK governments and corporate lobbies have played a leading part, and which are then imposed on everyone else in Europe. Perhaps some of them do not like it, as we might not like other things. That is part of the quid pro quo of co-operation and compromise.

It is worth remembering that, although for much of the time the UK has stood on the margins of the Union, like the little boy who refuses to play with others unless they always let him win, there have been some very important exceptions. One was the Single Market programme, in the creation of which Margaret Thatcher and her trade minister, Lord Cockfield, played leading roles. But if European (including British) firms and consumers are to be able to trust a single market, they need certain guarantees of minimum standards in products and services, and these guarantees take the form of 'Brussels' regulations.

A second exception was the policy promoting rapid accession of the countries of central eastern Europe to membership of the EU, in which the Blair government played a major part. This has been extremely important in stabilizing that region following the collapse of the Soviet empire, which might otherwise have had a chaotic recent history. Without the EU, what would have become of those countries? But this accession has produced the waves of (intra-EU) migration, which have in turn been the main factor fuelling support for a British withdrawal from Europe.

Even when we have played an important and constructive role, and shared in the EU's major achievements, many of us have not liked the consequences of our own actions, and now may well decide to shove off and leave those consequences to others to pick up. To understand why more people in the UK than elsewhere in Europe seem to feel entitled to behave in this way, we must move on to the two other sources of British Europhobia.

Hard-headed economism

In both those major constructive initiatives within the EU in which the UK played a leading part, our obsession with the purely economic led us to fail to understand what was at stake. The Thatcher government believed that one could have a single market without consequent regulation, because its neoliberal ideology told it that markets and regulation were opposed to each other rather than complementary. Opponents of EU membership like Nigel Farage, the leader of UKIP, or Conservative MP John Redwood, insist that they want free trade with Europe. But that requires accept-

ing the EU's conditions for having completely free trade with it, which includes many of the rules – including the free movement of labour – that fuel the anti-EU case. By leaving the organization one loses the right to share in framing the rules, but not the obligation to follow many of them.

The Blair government cannot be accused of not wanting the migration consequences of enlargement to the east, as it opened the UK's borders to immigrants from CEE countries several years earlier than the great majority of other western member states. This is now generally acknowledged to have been a mistake, as it meant that the UK received a particularly large share of the initial immigration. More recently other member states have overtaken the UK in this, but the initial experience has left wounds in relations between British and central European people that the Europhobic campaign is eagerly widening. More important than the act of timing, however, was the economistic mindset that went behind it. Immigration was seen solely in terms of the desirability of increased labour supply, with little thought to wider social consequences.

That mindset, more broadly the currently dominant ideology of neoliberalism, is currently wreaking havoc, distorting the perspectives of those who are pro-EU, fuelling one wing of its opponents, and restricting the scope of European integration itself. This last is deeply ironic, as British Eurosceptic neoliberals have not noticed how their ideas have come to dominate the EU in recent years. When we strengthen market forces, we also need to strengthen the measures that limit the damage that markets can do – such as regulations to ensure honest trading, and protection of workers' lives from disruption, including that from immigration. If market-making and protection from markets occur at different decision-making levels, what should be a subtle process of complementary actions between the two needs becomes a conflict between levels. This is what happens if the EU's role is limited to market-making, and other policy fields are left to nation states. Both levels need to be engaged in both. The heavily compromised support for EU membership that characterizes the Cameron government's position in the referendum virtually rules out a future British role in the development of EU social citizenship, and therefore seems to commit us to repeating the same errors. Europhobes meanwhile seize on the problems that the imbalance causes while denying the correct definition of the problem.

Romantic nationalism

Narrow money-obsessed economism can be found on both sides of the British divide over Europe, as it is of such fundamental importance to British Conservatism in general. Romantic nationalism sits oddly alongside this ideology, but it does so very importantly in the case for Brexit. Many countries have a nationalism that inhibits their co-operation with others, sometimes dangerously. It merits the term 'romantic' when it promulgates myths about the superiority of a particular people, or invokes a past which, whether mythical or not, cannot return. Although the words 'British Empire' are never used by English Europhobes, the image of it shapes their thinking, and many of their arguments cannot be understood without it. The biggest single question that they are called upon to answer in this referendum campaign is how do they expect the UK to manage in the world if it loses all the economic ties, both to EU member states and to the rest of the world with whom its economic relations have for 40 years been defined through EU membership.

Their answers are straightforward: the EU will come running to offer us advantages and privileges, because they need us more than we need them; and countries across the rest of the world will offer better deals to the UK alone than they do to the EU, because they recognize our superiority. Iain Duncan Smith, the former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and a leading proponent of Brexit, has refuted the idea that the UK receives benefits of scale from association with others by arguing that 'we are the greatest country in the world'. All people, from Iceland to China, are entitled to be proud of their country being the greatest in some important respects. But it is not possible for British people to believe that their country is the greatest in the world when the issue is, as here, one of size – unless semi-consciously they still have the Empire in mind. This is where the Brexit case does not rest on economism, but on a heavy dose of imperial nostalgia and romantic nationalism.

The UK is no longer a world power. Our colonial possessions are reduced to a few small islands. If we continue to wage wars far from home, it is because the USA allows us to be its partner, just as it is willing to lease hydrogen bombs to us. We are a very important middle-sized power, geographically based in Europe, the world region that offers more opportunities than any other to important middle-sized powers to pool their sovereignty and act together.

We thought we had rid ourselves of imperial illusions during the 1960s and 1970s, but under the pressures of globalization and growing international insecurity,

they are returning in the idea, fundamental to Brexit, that the UK can 'go it alone'. This appears as a paradoxical oscillation between wanting to walk tall in the world and isolating ourselves from it. What both positions exclude is co-operation with others. It was remarkable how, at the time of the closing stages of David Cameron's negotiations in Brussels, the 'out' campaign criticized Prince William for making a speech in praise of international co-operation to a meeting of newly qualified diplomats. He did not mention Europe at all; advocating international co-operation was enough to offend.

We see similar behaviour on the political right of the USA, where the experience of imperial decline is still in its early stages and therefore more understandable. One recalls the rejection of co-operation in international organizations by the G.W. Bush administration, the current Republican project for completing the wall along the Mexican border, alongside continuing enthusiasm for bombing various other countries: either domination or isolation; never co-operation.

The Brexit campaign exhibits the paradox very clearly. Its neoliberal wing uses the very anti-isolationist slogan 'Out of Europe and into the world', implying that non-European countries would eagerly offer the UK better terms of trade than they are willing to offer the EU as a whole (including the UK), because somehow our great-power status would glow so much more brightly were we not dragged down by association with the lowly Germans, French, etc. On the other hand, Iain Duncan Smith (again) has proposed that the UK would be safer from Arab terrorism if it left the EU: a yearning for an impossible isolation, as though it is only the EU that forces us to be linked to the rest of the world.

Neoliberals are cross-pressured by romantic nationalism. Many, perhaps most, of them reject it completely, and they are among the advocates of remaining in the EU. There are however pro-Brexit neoliberals. These people do not believe in national sovereignty, at least not in the economic sphere, as they believe that markets and corporations should dominate the global economy. They also know that individual nation states like the UK stand no chance alone of regulating these forces. They are therefore happy to support calls for a 'return' to national sovereignty against the pooled sovereignty that is the only hope for effective regulation of financial and other trading flows.

More sinisterly, an alliance of neoliberals and nationalists has a powerful capacity for self-reinforcement. Neoliberal policies exacerbate the insecurities that feed defensive nationalism; in principle therefore they are deeply opposed to each other. However, if they are in a political alliance of the kind made possible by Brexit, the national-

ist wing is strengthened by the disruption caused by neoliberal policies, while Europe and not the latter is blamed. But neoliberals are playing with fire in this alliance. At present in the UK, unlike in France, free traders are maintaining some kind of leadership of the Brexit campaign at the economic level (except for the labour market). But much of the popular support it attracts could easily turn protectionist. The tiger of xenophobia is not an easy one to ride. If the UK leaves the EU and yet economic insecurity intensifies (as it almost certainly will), and plenty of foreigners remain in the country, whom will the tiger attack next?

A BAD IDEA HARD TO DEFEAT

László Andor

By voting for or against Brexit on 23 June 2016, the UK will decide much more than just its own relationship with the European Union. The EU has to function well and be comfortable for all bigger as well as smaller member states. Therefore, this debate is also about Europe's overall architecture and political economy.

The UK's membership of the EU is already somewhat special. The UK has an opt-out from the single currency, it has a handsome rebate from the EU budget, it is not part of the Schengen zone, and it applies the Working Time Directive with a good deal of flexibility.

But this special status can be read in different ways. Some would say that since in the past it has always been possible to find a *modus vivendi* we should be positive now too. If there is a will, there is a way. Others would say the UK has already exploited its ambivalence for special treatment to the limit so perhaps there should be an end to this à la carte approach. Enough is enough.

Some red lines have already been drawn regarding the free movement of labour in the EU. There is always room for fine-tuning of existing rules and providing resources to those who have to bear greater burdens than others but those who want to introduce general restrictions or create different legal categories out of EU workers on the basis of nationality are challenging the very foundations of the Union.

These isolationist campaigns in the UK about mobile workers from new EU member states were never honest. First, they failed to point out that EU migrants have consistently remained a minority in the last 20 years as compared to non-EU immigrants to the UK. They should have added that the first big waves of emigration from Poland, Romania and other countries would not repeat themselves, but after some point the number of new migrants from these countries would certainly decline. Finally, the manufactured image of the EU migrant was that they would come as a burden on the host society, while the reality is that Poles and others are very active economically, they have higher employment rates than the UK workforce, and they are net contributors to the UK budget.

Contrary to what isolationist UK politicians and some tabloid media editors claim: the UK welfare system is not a magnet, and the UK is not among the EU countries with the highest share of EU migrants within their workforce.

With such gaps between the perception and the reality of EU migration, it cannot realistically be expected that the UK could extract big changes in the EU regulatory framework for the free movement of workers. While in the UK there is a big and emotional debate on immigration, and there are some legitimate concerns about the short-term impact of immigration on specific groups of the workforce and municipalities, labour mobility should not be used as a trigger for exit. A lot has been done and can be done to improve the quality of mobility by reducing, for instance, the risk of "brain drain" or over-qualification among the migrants, and make people more satisfied with it by matching real skills to the jobs on offer.

Instead of setting one country against the other, the EU can demonstrate its added value if its leaders can embed the question of mobility in a broader assessment of building human capital and managing the single market.

After a year-long hysteria around Romanian and Bulgarian migrants, David Cameron was right to widen the discussion and deliver a message that the UK's EU membership is about much more than East Europeans coming to Britain in unprecedented numbers.

Of course, the EU does give other Europeans the freedom to work in the UK, but it also gives the same freedom to move to British workers, pensioners, companies and investors. What's more, and this is crucial, the EU provides the framework within which the UK together with other countries can search for and find effective answers to the growing migration crises but also climate change or foreign policy challenges.

While many on both sides of the English Channel understand these common challenges, there are indeed some fundamental reasons for division that fuel the movements for separation as well. The crux of the matter is that many in Britain never fully signed up to the continental concept of the social market economy, which is also enshrined in EU treaties.

This problem is not new. It goes back to the time when Margaret Thatcher restructured the British economy and the welfare system. While Jacques Delors, EU Commission President at the time, strove to strengthen the social dimension of the single market, Thatcher was keen to weaken trade union power as well as income redistribution. Delors thus won over the British left, but the EU lost support among the British Conservatives.

British euro-scepticism was particularly energized by the creation of the euro as single currency. Even if the UK has an opt-out, and no one would want to force the UK to give up Sterling, the gulf between Britain and the continent has been widened by the launch of the monetary union.

However, today it is not so much the existence of the euro which fuels UK euro-scepticism but its functioning and performance. The fact that Europe, as opposed to the US, was unable to avoid a second recession in 2011-13 contributed to the popularity of UKIP. The recent recovery, however weak and uneven, has visibly weakened anti-EU feelings in England.

On the other hand, the way the Eurozone finance ministers treated Greece in recent months has again raised doubts among many in Britain. People may ask if this really is the community Britain should belong to, and if floating exchange rates are more compatible with democracy than fixed exchange rates systems or monetary unions among countries that are de jure sovereign.

Since in recent years UK economic performance (growth of GDP and fall in unemployment) has been better than in the Eurozone, some draw the conclusion that economic regulation in the EU should converge further towards the UK model. For Downing Street, this was also among the negotiating chips.

Those, however, who connect Eurozone turmoil with the superiority of the British business model are mistaken. It is not because of microeconomic structures but a greater macroeconomic independence and elbow-room that helped the UK grow faster. Comparing the record UK current account deficit to the German surplus gives a better idea about relative competitiveness.

It is not only for Southern European countries, but also for the UK to take inspiration from the well-springs of German competitiveness: the so-called *Mittelstand*, dual vocational training, and the social dialogue. The idea of "cutting red tape" in order to enhance economic performance is certainly too categorical, and too often misleading. At EU level, the campaign to keep legislation within reasonable limits and up to date already serves the purpose of "smart regulation".

The UK can, and should, make a point about the transparency and accountability of EU institutions, and it could easily boost its representation among EU staff. On the other hand, by marginalizing itself, or even exiting the EU, the UK would lose these channels of influence on decision-making in Brussels and Strasbourg.

At the end of the day, if Brexit is not an instrument to influence EU reform but an actual plan, it can be counted among the worst ideas of the century. But beyond arguments, experience is also needed to defeat it. It is for British politicians to explain what the real balance of costs and benefits of the EU is for the UK, and it is for the EU as a whole to ensure that the British, together with all other member states, continue to see membership as a win-win game.

THE THREEFOLD BETRAYAL OF BREXIT

Ulrike Guérot

Sure, we all know that the Brits never loved the EU. It was only in 1975 that they finally endorsed in a referendum their government and parliament's official decision to join from 1 January 1973. They never embraced the idea of a political union; they never had a taste for "ever closer union". They wanted "their" money back (and got the British "rebate"). In addition, their list of opt-outs is long and spans from Schengen to the Euro - the European core project. In short: they were always half pregnant with Europe, before the now pending abortion.

As somebody who believed in the Maastricht Treaty and the supranational project that the EU meant to be in the beginning; as somebody who is convinced that the Euro needs to be embedded in a political project and as somebody who underscores the necessity for tight Franco-German cooperation for that to happen, it would be more than easy to stay cool or relaxed in face of a looming Brexit. The Brits have been annoying Europe all too often, undermining core political goals of the EU, preventing the Eurozone from more integration regarding taxes or the control of financial markets: if they now leave, so the argument goes, the Eurozone could finally do what it

needs to do in order to function without being disturbed by British obstructionism. This argument is indeed more often whispered in continental Europe than many on the British islands think. Why should we care for the UK, why bother, why give in to every silly request, why deliver any more exemptions to the common rule? Are the Brits somehow more "equal" than other Europeans and how can they possibly claim that? Yes, I have often been tempted to go down that route of an argument.

Hence, there are a couple of arguments to be made against that thinking. Firstly, and very unfortunately, France and Germany are at odds. The idea or even option that the Eurozone could move forward into a firm and much more political entity, if only the UK leaves the EU, is less than guaranteed these days, to put it mildly. The multiple crises – austerity policy, Grexit, refugees, youth unemployment, populism, nationalism, Polish question – have left the EU in a state of disarray. A Franco-German closing of ranks – requested many times in recent years, prominently again by French Economy Minister Emmanuel Macron in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in August 2015 – did not materialize, even in years in which the EU was less politically exhausted.

Several concrete proposals have been drafted – from Glienicker Gruppe in 2013 to the one of Eiffel group in early 2014 and onto the report for the French and German economic and finance ministers, written by Henrik Enderlein and Jean Pisani-Ferry in 2015. Or even earlier, in December 2012, the draft of four building blocks for a Genuine Monetary and Economic Union (GMEU) – economic union, budgetary union, monetary union, political union – issued by the four presidents of the EU, which perhaps was the last promising bit of momentum in this respect. The update of that very report from June 2015 shows, however, that the political momentum, the Franco-German energy to promote such Eurozone integrations, seems completely lost. In that respect, the Eurozone would probably not be "liberated" to move ahead even if the UK were to leave the EU - sad though it may be!

Hence, Brexit should not be discussed under the premises or angle of what it may - or not - mean for the Eurozone, but more so within its own dimension; and this dimension is huge. Essentially, Brexit would constitute three betrayals: the betrayal of British youth about its future; secondly, a betrayal of British workers and the middle class; and thirdly, a betrayal of its own liberal culture and origins.

Let's cover one by one. Firstly, and above all, it should be considered what it would mean for and do to British youth, which is, according to disaggregated data of current polls, in its majority for Remain. If a country is to do what its future wants – delivering good politics for the next generation – there can be no debate that the UK

should or, indeed, must stay. Unfortunately, youth voices are generally overheard today. In the UK, Cameron seems more committed to give into UKIP voices, which, in their sociological strata, are those of old white men. The sheer idea that UK universities would drop out of Erasmus, out of Jean-Monnet professorship programs, or that British students would be treated in continental Europe as "foreigners" in a legal sense is absurd. That is the betrayal of British youth.

Secondly, within the exit-camp, there is the component of the City and the beliefs of the City guys, namely that the UK would become a sort of offshore Singapore or Hong Kong. Hence, the idea that the UK could become a sort of floating financial market island, swimming offshore of continental Europe, politically disengaged and unconcerned by what happens in the EU, just making profit of enhanced deregulation, is at best uncultivated thinking and at worst plain cynical. Uncultivated, as it relies on the - wrong - belief that men can be governed without politics, that Aristotle's *zoon politikon* is a fantasy and that money alone makes the world go round. As Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders try to argue out of the midst of the two financial market holy grails - and they're increasingly popular, especially among young people - this thinking is coming to an end.

Cynical, because even if the City did survive as the off-shore Hong Kong for Europe, it would be to the detriment of British workers and the British middle class altogether: they have no stakes and no economic future in such a scenario. If Cameron cares about winning back UKIP voters, he should tell them that Brexit is an economic worst-case scenario, especially for the rural and deindustrialized areas of e.g. North England and the left-behinds of globalisation, as a study of the Centre for European Reform (CER) has shown recently. This is the betrayal of British workers and the middle class, who are exposed to the aims and goals of a City, which could not care less for them. But reversing that argument would mean that Cameron cares for politics and people, and not for markets alone. The fact that one doubts that is perhaps the biggest and saddest story of the current Brexit discussion.

Finally, one can complain about the nitty-grittiness of some arguments put forward by the Vote Leave campaign to argue for the case of a Brexit, e.g. that the EU should not interfere in the UK's fishery policies, as the former mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has put it. Fishery policies are probably not a strategic issue for the UK and this points to a dramatic lack of historical contextualisation of what we are talking about and shows once again how arguments are twisted.

It is furthermore noteworthy that political ego seems to increasingly overshadow any serious exchange of arguments. The Brexit debate has now uncovered a salient political rivalry between David Cameron and Boris Johnson: it's a man's game and we have seen many of them before ruining Europe, especially in France, be it between Jacques Chirac and Giscard d'Estaing (who could not agree a *liste commune* for the EP elections in 1994 or fought about the European Convention/ Constitution, in 2003); or Laurent Fabius and Lionel Jospin (with the former being largely responsible for the French "no" in 2005 to the constitutional treaty in order to buttress his own presidential ambitions in 2007).

Let's also not forget to mention that I feel disgusted listening to British MPs in the early hours on German national radio explaining to me that staying in the EU has become a national security risk because of the humane, welcoming German policy towards migrants (of wars that the UK helped bring about). The terrorists of either Paris or Brussels have not been refugees in a single instance, but (radicalised) youngsters in deprived *banlieues*. Perhaps a job and a life perspective for them would have been money better spent than the billions which are now freed up to be spent on dodgy security measures that end up more likely to kill freedom in Europe than to stop terror.

Yet, the most regrettable of all betrayals, and let's end with this one, is British alienation from its own cultural good. The surrender of the UK to City choices stands in utter opposition to the thoughts of the most prominent British political thinkers – from John Locke via Edmund Burke to Adam Smith – who are the inventors of modern parliamentarianism and the founding fathers of modern liberalism but who never argued against social control of markets.

One of the key arguments of today's Brexit discussions is to reject the social allowances of EU citizens working or living in the UK. Hence, it was the most prominent liberal thinkers of the 17th and 18th century, when the UK was the stronghold of modern liberalism, who, basing themselves on Cicero's *aequum ius* (equal right), framed the concept of equal liberty as the very fundament of modern parliamentarianism and the emergence of political emancipation. The treaties of the Levellers and the so-called Putney Debates of 1647 elaborate on the intrinsic relationship between liberty and equality; and they work on the assumption that, within a political entity, all citizens must be treated equally. Whatever the UK wants to do now, it is still a member of the EU, it signed the Maastricht treaty and thus its Articles I-XII, which guarantee British citizens equal rights with all European citizens. If the UK drops out of that legally binding commitment, it does nothing less than profoundly violate the core idea of Europe

and the best tradition of its own classical thinkers. That would be a real pity, especially in the country of Magna Carta!

The first map of Europe of 1589 paints Europe as an entire female body, where England (sic!) represents the left arm of Miss Europe, painted as a Queen with a crown. This arm is holding the earthly sceptre of power while the right arm is Italy, holding the religious insignia of the Christian Church. That medieval image of Europe, where the allegory is more that every country and people has its place and its space in Europe, is in radical opposition to the two underlying spins of the current Brexit discussion which are: 'What can I *get back from* Europe?' and 'How can I *defend my identity* against Europe?' - both absurd in the first place. As the map shows, England is part of Europe, whether it leaves or not. To keep to the image: a left arm does not survive when cut off. And she, Miss Europe, would be amputated. Not a nice perspective for either of them.

Beyond these three betrayals, the immediate danger of a Brexit is probably of unleashing uncontrolled forces of which nobody can say where they would lead. There is the risk of a domino effect; Swexit is the new word (the Swedes might think about following suit) Hungarexit or Polexit might follow. But where would they literally go, if they left the EU? Hungary would just continue to be in the middle of the European continent. The overarching damage to the European project lies in its symbolic damage: Europe after Brexit is no longer whole and probably no longer free. It would have become optional, not a Europe without ifs and buts. Any golf club in the UK or the private clubs around Mayfair in London can do better than this.

Unleashing the genie of political forces, which most probably can never be put back in the bottle, is in the end a question of physical gravity. It's like the furcation of a tree, choosing one half-trunk creates path-dependence. Once you embark on a different fork in the road, you never go backwards: rare are those who remarry their divorced husbands or spouses. The norm in such cases is an endless legal conflict about money and about who is to blame. That is probably what must be feared most: mudwrestling between the UK and the EU. British triumphalism, if the European continent drowns in an economic downturn, populism and rising nationalism. European triumphalism, if the "UK-can-go-it-alone story" leads nowhere else but a political mess and European (and transatlantic) isolation.

There simply lie ahead things of such a dimension, which the course of history can never repair or make undone: my hope is that the UK will live up to this insight!

To conclude, here is what I really think: my real opinion is that most of the Brexit discussion is an unconscious emotional reaction to a German Europe unfolding during the Euro crisis years. This, however, seems to be a taboo argument that is just not politically correct - and hence cannot be voiced within the Brexit discussion. Denis McShane, former European Minister of the UK, had the courage to mention it once in a German radio interview and later wrote it down: Brexit should be seen in relation to the discussion on (previous) German hegemony during the Euro crisis years. Perhaps this is the moment to mention that, around 2011 or 2012, I was in London, talking to a Downing Street official and, after enjoying wine with him, I heard him say: "You won World War I. Now just do it smarter, through the economy." As he did so, he smiled. *In vino veritas.* All those who were present at the prominent *Königswinter* conference in London in April 2012, a high-ranking British-German gathering, may agree that the real rupture between the UK and Germany or continental Europe took place as early as then. While the German participants accused the Brits of not "flagging Europe" - and never having done so - the Brits accused the Germans of ruining the Eurozone through their policy. And a German state secretary had nothing better to do than to use just five of her fifteen speech minutes to defend or counter the argument. Perhaps because she had no reply.

Brexit would then just be one out of several European reactions to a German Europe where a European Germany has not been an option for years. That the UK – in that sense, through Brexit – consciously or probably rather unconsciously and in a sublimated way tries to choose no Europe over a German Europe: that I can understand. And it makes me very sad – for my own country.

THE BREXIT DEAD END

David Held

Brexit is a dead end for the UK. It's a cul-de-sac, a distraction and damaging in fundamental ways. Brexit will create a much more insecure world and a more isolated and weaker UK. Brexit will set the UK economy back at least a decade. The shock will be of the order of the recent and continuing global financial crisis.

There are three reasons why this is true. The first concerns security and the prospects of global peace as well as peace in Europe itself. We like to repress the fact that Europe has been the most bloodthirsty, aggressive and violent continent in human history. From the late 16th century, Europe exploded onto the world and, in the centuries that followed, it created the biggest empires ever known. Britain was at the centre of the largest of these with colonies reaching across the world. When these empires came under pressure from the late 19th century and began slowly to collapse, Europe turned inward and entered a 'black hole' of violence in the first half of the 20th century. Fascism across large parts of Europe, two world wars and the Holocaust are among the markers of the bloody catastrophe of European history. The Holocaust was the gro-

tesque crown on this war-torn body, but the body itself was riddled with signs of the most heinous violence and degradation.

Was this the Europe of the Renaissance? Was this the Europe of the Enlightenment? Was this the Europe of industrial modernisation? Was this the Europe of the modern state? Indeed, in part. Europe has always had many faces as it strove throughout the 18th and 19th century to create rights and benefits for its citizens while denying these to all outsiders - outsiders within the developing European nation states, and those in the colonies. Yet, all was not lost. Europe after 1945 passed from Hobbes to Kant, and set off along the road to a new Kantian pacific union in which, to this day, the idea, let alone the reality, of violence between European states is almost inconceivable. Having stared in the abyss of the first half of the 20th century, political leaders from across the world gathered at the UN conference in San Francisco to try and set down a new world order. In Europe, similar processes began from the late 1940s to create a union of European states bound together by trade, investment and a common law of human rights standards. For all of its ups and downs, and weaknesses in governance, the Union has held, pooling sovereignty and creating a zone of peace. Why would we put all this in jeopardy now? Why would Britain leave the EU at this moment? Why would we turn our back on a peaceful Europe and risk a return to isolation and a more fragmented Europe? The European Union remains a great peace project and this remains too its abiding significance.

The European peace project created the conditions in which the European economy could flourish. It is only with relatively stable institutions that the conditions are created for economic growth and prosperity. Under relatively open, liberal, and predictable circumstances individuals and companies can take risks and build investments and economic networks across countries. The growth of intra-EU trade over the last decades has been remarkable, making all EU countries stronger. Of course, there were mistakes in economic governance and in the policies the EU put in place; the introduction of the Euro without appropriate governance allowed EU economic interdependence to accelerate without the benefit of stable fiscal and redistributive policies.

Such mistakes can be corrected with time, but Brexit can't. Pulling the UK out of the EU would deprive the UK of its biggest trading partner, create a massive disincentive for companies around the world to invest in the UK, lead to financial and commercial exit as banks and companies seek safer economic havens within the larger market of the EU, and provide a massive boost to unemployment. These processes have, in fact, already begun as the risk of Brexit erodes business confidence. It would be reck-

less to go further in this direction. If there ever were a case of economic Luddism, this would be it.

If the U in the EU stands for a peaceful union, the E stands for economic wellbeing in the largest market in the world. But E stands for something else of equal significance: the environment. Seventy years of break-neck industrialisation in the West, and now in Asia and the South, have led to many serious forms of environmental externalities. The most challenging of all these is itself an existential threat. Climate change threatens human life as we know it. There can be no sustainable peace or sustainable economy without addressing the costs of climate change, and creating policies that address the challenges of mitigation and adaption. It is a very tough, rough road from a high carbon to a low carbon economy but it is a road that can only be travelled by increasing border cooperation among states. The EU has led on these issues over the last 15 years. To weaken the EU now, in the face of an existential threat, would be calamitous for this and future generations. Brexit could weaken the EU's role in addressing climate change by creating new schisms; and it would certainly marginalise the UK in future climate discussions.

Why vote remain? These are the three crucial reasons: EEU – Economy, Environment and Union. The alternative is a nostalgic Britain hankering after a lost empire and lost sovereignty, increasingly stumbling across a darker and more uncertain landscape of world economics and politics.

It remains one of Europe's greatest achievements to have created a strong union of states where there was once devastation and war. The attempt to create common political structures rooted in human rights and rule of law remains one of the most inspiring political projects in a global world fraught by the contradictory pressures of globalisation and nationalism. In an era where global bads pervade – global financial instability, global economic imbalances, the risk of pandemics and epidemics, climate change and so on – coming together in political blocs to deal with common challenges can only be the right way ahead. This way is built on solving common problems, enjoying common governance in the face of common threats and on the commitment to principles and procedures that alone can create peace, unity and freedom in a diverse world; that is, the principles of democracy, social justice and human rights. For all of its weaknesses today and severe challenges this remains a European Union worth having.

THE MISSING BALLOT OPTION

David Lizoain

The Brexit referendum offers compelling proof of the adage that politics makes for strange bedfellows. The Leave campaign has brought together Nigel Farage and George Galloway. The Remain camp has deployed the forces of the establishment to ensure the status quo prevails. The result is that many progressive internationalists now find themselves making common cause with the likes of the Bank of England and the big beasts of the City of London.

This brief essay seeks to explain why this is the case. What is the progressive argument for remaining in the Union at a time when EU politics are at their most dysfunctional and incompetent, combining pre-democratic and post-democratic tics?

It will be argued that the answer can be found by considering Brexit to be the functional equivalent of other independence movements across Europe. Because the Brexit debate can be compared to other instances of separatism, it can also be predicted. A similar battery of claims and counter-claims will be marshalled over the course of the campaign.

The drives to separate that are proliferating across Europe share the common feature of seeking to reassert national sovereignty as a response to the challenges of globalisation. But they operate from the fatal conceit of conflating sovereignty and democracy in an interconnected world. What is meant to be a formula for taking back control ends up being a proposal to renounce influence over shared affairs.

Problems with transnational causes require, by definition, transnational solutions. What is not on the ballot is far more important than the content of the ballot itself. In or out is the wrong question. The real issue is whether European and global politics can be remade on more democratic lines, entailing federal structures and the sharing and ceding of sovereignty. In a globalised world, to be for democracy is to reject an anachronistic conception of sovereignty.

Not that special

The case for Brexit rests on the assumption of British exceptionalism, but there is nothing exceptional about the demands of the Leave campaign. 'Sovereigntist' forces are in the ascendant across Europe, and they are alike in their claims to be unique. The Brexit issue can and should be compared with the referendum in Scotland and the independence debate in Catalonia. Brexit is the functional equivalent to a referendum on English independence.

The parameters of the debate will also unfold in a similar and predictable fashion. The public will not be spared unhelpful metaphors about failed marriages. As in the Catalan and Scottish cases, a nationalist impulse drives the exit option. The Leave campaign will recall the glories of the past, allege a series of external constraints in the present, and promise a brighter future while living apart. Separation will be framed as a mechanism designed to reclaim democratic control and not as an autarchic retreat. Separatists will exaggerate the costs (economic and political) of the status quo, downplay the costs of transition, and assume a maximum of institutional flexibility when it comes to designing new arrangements.

On the other side, their opponents will be doubly handicapped: they cannot win by exclusively appealing to a separate national loyalty (Spanish, British, or European in the Catalan, Scottish, and British cases) nor can they win by framing their own arguments in nationalist terms. To do so would be to concede defeat from the beginning. Opponents of separation will also be limited in their ability to appeal to positive emotions; the heart will be with the separatists while the head remains up for grabs. Those

defending the remain option will therefore assert the benefits of the status quo (both economic and political), emphasize the terrible costs associated with change, and appeal to a strict vision of existing institutions that leaves little room for political innovation or imagination.

Both sides will trumpet competing sets of economic projections and political assumptions about what separation will entail. In an environment of polarisation, this will do more to confuse the public than to edify it. Optimistic scenarios will be pilloried as wishful or even magical thinking, and negative scenarios will be derided as an organised Project Fear.

What sets Brexit apart is that the persuasive power of a benign separation scenario is inversely proportional to the weight of the economic interests at stake. The only certainty about the consequences of separation is that they will be uncertain. So businesses will warn (or threaten, depending on the interpretation) to relocate in the case of a significant disruption to existing arrangements. For big business, the Catalan and Scottish cases could be contained as regional issues limited to the European periphery. A potential rift between the UK and the rest of Europe would not be so easy to minimise; the future of the City of London, and by extension the UK, carries global significance.

Sovereignty vs Democracy

Corporate power, which normally prefers to keep out of the limelight, has been unusually vocal during the run-up to the vote. It fears that a break-up between the UK and the rest of Europe would generate serious additional transaction costs for doing business. Brexit would disrupt the prevalent march towards more integrated markets, as exemplified by the move to deepen globalisation by implementing the TTIP and TPP.

The separatist response inevitably consists of promising business a new series of arrangements that preserve market integration. The rhetorical commitment to unilateralism is quickly downgraded if not altogether abandoned in practice. Untangling existing institutional relationships is not quite as easy as it sounds. Both the process of separation and the creation of an updated set of shared arrangements require negotiation. Even disengagement requires renewed and possibly even more intense engagement.

The push for sovereignty amounts to an illusion, akin to when a baby plays peek-a-boo and believes that by covering its eyes it can make the rest of the world vanish; an adult knows this is not the case. No matter what the UK does, the rest of Europe will still be there. Under a new configuration, the UK runs the risk of ending up like Norway or Switzerland in its relationship with the Union. Norway and Switzerland act as rule-takers, but do not have any say in the decisions of the Union. The UK, by walking away from the shared table, would lose much of its influence over the making of collective rules. The citizens of the UK would have even a less of a say. Separation would not enhance democratic control; sovereignty brings all light but no heat.

In a globalised world, it is natural to sense that external forces have grown more powerful where parliaments were once sovereign and that democracy is being hollowed out. These developments are linked but should not be confused. Globalisation is here to stay, but the terms of engagement are up for grabs. To push for sovereignty amounts to a refusal to engage, with the corollary that it undermines the possibility of improving transnational government. Brexit can be opposed, not out of any love of the status quo, but because it is a step in the wrong direction.

Can transnational politics be democratised?

The further fragmentation of regulatory power would make it even harder to address the challenges of the 21st century, where more and not less engagement is required. The first characteristic of the biggest contemporary challenges is that they have transnational causes, meaning that purely national fixes will be limited in their effectiveness. Globalisation cannot be managed, climate change addressed, tax evasion fought, or Europe's institutions reconfigured via a reassertion of national sovereignty. By definition, transnational problems require transnational solutions.

The second characteristic of the big problems of the day is that those that caused them tend not to suffer the consequences, and those that did not cause them do. This pattern recurs: with the global financial crisis, the bankers were rescued at the cost of social protections. The heaviest costs of the crisis of the Euro have been borne by the poorest members of the periphery. When it comes to climate change, those emitting the most carbon will be those best able to adapt, while those emitting the least will pay the heaviest price. Ninety-eight percent of the millions of deaths projected to result from climate change will take place in developing countries. Globalisation is unbalanced.

Political disunion is the natural ally of a status quo of this unequal globalisation. Financial capital, for instance, is free to move around the world unhindered while the freedom of movement of individuals is increasingly under attack. Transnational corporations are global in their supply chains and global in their arrangements for minimising taxation. These are integrated markets but disintegrated politics makes for an unfair combat. A politics that is not adapted to the scale of existing markets will be limited in its effectiveness.

The antidote to the loss of control globalisation provokes is more democracy and government in place of governance. In concrete terms, that entails the creation of federal structures. This real alternative will not be on the ballot; it requires far more goodwill and imagination than what is presently on offer.

An improved Europe will not come about through acrimonious negotiations and political polarization. It has produced a referendum where both sides agree that the European Union in its present configuration leaves much to be desired – especially when it comes to its decision-making procedures – but where neither side offers a compelling fix. The Remain camp presents no solution to actually existing problems while the Leave camp promises an illusory non-solution of recovering control by disengagement. Voters will be left to choose between the bitter realists and the delusional optimists, between there is no alternative and a false alternative.

Winning the referendum is not just a question of winning a majority of votes when the dust has settled. The argument for Britain to play a role in an improved and democratised Europe needs to be won as well. That option is not on the ballot, but the real fear is that a democratised Europe is not on the cards either.

WHY BREXIT WOULD MAKE THE UK LESS DEMOCRATIC, NOT MORE

Simon Deakin

From the very beginning of the debate over Britain's place in Europe, it has been argued that membership of the EU and its predecessors would entail a loss of 'sovereignty' for the UK. It has also been claimed that the institutions of the EU are 'undemocratic' and 'unaccountable' compared to those of the British state.

To evaluate these claims, we need to consider the relationship between UK domestic law and EU law. This relationship is complex because of the unusual nature of the constitutional arrangements on both sides.

Britain lacks a codified constitution, which puts it in a unique but not particularly desirable position among liberal democracies. The result is that power is routinely exercised within the British state in ways which are neither democratic nor accountable. Membership of the EU is the nearest thing the UK has to a constitution which protects human rights and the rule of law. To support Brexit is to argue for a return to the constitutional *ancien regime* which prevailed in the UK prior to the 1970s.

How can this be when we are constantly told that Britain has a uniquely stable and effective 'unwritten' constitution which can be traced back to the origins of the rule of law in Magna Carta itself? The unwelcome truth is that Magna Carta has no more status than any other legal enactment and, as a medieval document of uncertain meaning, arguably somewhat less.

Take one of the cardinal principles of the rule of law as set out in Magna Carta, namely that justice is not a commodity ('to no one will we sell… justice'). This principle is regularly infringed in Britain today, as a result of changes brought about under recent governments. For example, from 2013, claimants in employment cases must pay fees of several hundred pounds to take their case to a tribunal. In effect they have to buy access to justice.

Britain's uncodified constitution places no constraint on the marketisation of civil justice. Thanks to the doctrine of Parliamentary sovereignty, even a law apparently as fundamental as Magna Carta can be overridden by a legal instrument adopted by a simple legislative majority or by the exercise of ministerial power in the form of delegated legislation.

The Sovereignty Delusion

The doctrine of Parliamentary sovereignty is meant to be a cornerstone of British democracy. Sovereignty means, in this context, that no Parliament is bound by its predecessors. As the House of Lords is unelected and essentially a reviewing chamber, while the monarch's power to veto laws is never exercised, power vests in what a Conservative politician and senior lawyer, Lord Hailsham, referred to in the 1970s as an 'elective dictatorship'.

Defenders of this model claim that it allows for the democratic will to be directly reflected in legislative and governmental action. Another way of looking at it is that political power in Britain is exercised, between general elections, without the checks and balances which are taken for granted in other liberal democracies. If the UK has a constitution at all, it is a pre-modern and unreformed one, which lacks the means to hold the British political class to account on a regular and continuing basis.

Ministers now arguing for Brexit complain that EU law stops them doing what they would like to do. But what this means in practice is that constitutional checks and

balances which are normal in other countries are being brought to bear on the actions of British ministers, through the route of EU law.

Transnational Rules

Let's now examine EU law making in more detail. EU laws are essentially of two types. The first type consists of rules aimed at creating the single European market. These include the rules which require the member states to respect free movement for goods and services, and which standardise the production and circulation of goods and services. If the UK were not in the EU, many of these rules would end up being binding by other means, through membership of the World Trade Organization and via bilateral trade agreements. Brexit would change the rules on movement of labour, but unless the UK wanted to cut itself off entirely from the global economy, rules governing cross-border labour flows would still be needed. It is currently the case that most migrants entering the UK to work come from outside the EU.

Thus, as long as the UK wants to be part of the global trading system, transnational rules on trade and migration, and on product standards, would still affect the British economy. If the UK stays in the EU, British citizens can exercise more influence, not less, over the making of those rules. This is partly because being in the EU means that the UK has a say in making the rules of the single market, which would not be so if it were in the position of Norway or Switzerland.

But EU membership also means that the UK can have a more effective voice in the design of the transnational trading regimes. Thanks to the collective negotiating strength of the EU, the UK has more of an input into WTO rules and trade agreements than would be the case if it negotiated these deals in isolation from its European neighbours.

The second type of EU rules are human rights protections of the kind contained in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, general principles of EU law, and various parts of Treaties, directives and regulations. It may be argued that these rules are precisely the type of laws which British ministers should be constrained by.

EU's Neoliberal Turn

The problem with these EU rules is not they are too strong, but that they are too weak as constraints on national governments. EU law is a patchwork quilt, which is selective in the human rights protections it confers, and it is weighted in favour of economic interests at the expense of social and environmental protections. It is not enough of a bulwark against the erosion of the rule of law, which will be the inevitable consequence of the policies of marketisation currently favoured by British political elites. EU law is becoming more neoliberal over time, largely as a result of rulings of the Court of Justice which have elevated economic freedoms over social rights.

So what is ultimately at stake in the Brexit debate? It is only partially about Britain. A British exit would return the UK to its pre-modern constitution. For the EU, Brexit could favour a rebalancing of EU law in favour of social and environmental rights. But it is more likely that the neoliberal turn in EU law would continue as there are many factors now driving it, separately from British influence. The EU, as much as the UK, is in need of a constitutional settlement which addresses the risks posed by market fundamentalism.

What if the UK votes to stay in? The danger here is that a British 'near miss' will discourage attempts to reverse the EU's recent neoliberal turn. If that happens, the supporters of Brexit will have got much of what they wanted. A vote to remain must be the trigger for the strengthening of democratic institutions in both Britain and the wider EU.

NOT BRITISH BUT EUROPEAN SOVEREIGNTY AT STAKE

Vladimír Špidla

The outcome of the February European Council has given us a false hope that the issue of "Brexit" has been resolved politically by adopting the British reform proposals and that this no longer poses any threat for the EU's future as a whole anymore. The opposite is true. A political solution has been adopted, indeed, by the heads of European governments but the British referendum will take place anyway. Moreover, the very discussion of a real possibility that a significant EU member could leave the community sets up a dangerous precedent and puts the very idea of European integration at risk.

Let us summarize the current situation. There are three types of EU members now. Most (19) use the Euro currency. Denmark and the UK have an opt-out and before any hypothetical decision in future on the introduction of Euro they would first have to negotiate the abolition of this opt-out. The remaining seven countries have already taken the decision to join the European monetary union. They have not, however, joined it yet for various reasons. Besides Sweden, these are mainly the Central and East European (CEE) countries, i.e. the new member states.

It should be emphasised that the reasons for the Euro non-adoption differ greatly. While Poland still fails to meet the convergence criteria, the Czech Republic lacks the level of domestic political support required to make a commitment to an official date for adopting the Euro. Both countries declare, however, that it will not be before 2020 that their citizens pay for goods and services with Euros. It is obvious, therefore, that the Eurozone project is not solely a matter of a technical-parametric economic optimum calculation, but primarily a political issue.

The same logic applies to the Eurozone itself, after all. A single currency in a sub-optimal monetary zone can only be developed and sustained with adequate levels of redistribution. Enlarging the European budget will prove necessary. Maintaining an integrated core will require much more intense political integration. A potential Brexit could become a crucial impulse for this. If we don't want to give up integration as such, we would have to carry out the changes necessary for keeping the EU together at an extraordinarily rapid pace.

Should the UK play the role of the major opponent of a binding "ever closer union" doctrine it would have to seek support and alliances for its requirements. The February agreement between Cameron and his fellow heads of government is an attempt to prevent the British public from being played off against the mainland European one. If, though, the British people decide in the referendum that such an agreement is not enough the UK Prime Minister will have little choice but to find partners for his intentions another way.

Quite logically, he would have to build roads, politically, to the countries that do not have the Euro yet. With the financial crisis having passed off in a very slow and gradual manner, the CEE countries are now in a situation where the desire to build an irreversibly united Europe is probably at its weakest in twenty-five years. Needless to say, the current migration crisis does not help foster any kind of European optimism in these countries, either. It will definitely not be the migration crisis, though, that prompts the disintegration process, but, potentially rather, Brexit.

Two-speed Europe

If the Eurozone states respond to a potential non-Euro countries alliance by formalising the long discussed "two-speed Europe" the Central and East European countries will suddenly end up in a situation where the conditions of their economic relationship with the Eurozone will primarily be shaped by the UK. If Germany's position

is sometimes criticised in Central Europe as over-dominant, the "de-centred" alliance with the UK would mean relinquishing any idea of balancing powers at all. Among the non-Euro countries, i.e. the second-speed states, the UK would clearly be the dominant player.

On both sides of the integrated core, there would be non-integrated nation states. Even though remaining EU members formally they would be de facto excluded from the vital bits of decision-making. The UK and the CEE non-Eurozone countries would maintain intergovernmental relations and, in this sense, they would revert to pre-Maastricht Treaty conditions. They would have to deal with the Eurozone in a similar, i.e. intergovernmental, manner – in a go-it-alone way, competing against each other. National protectionism would thus become an entirely legitimate strategy for these purely formal members to approach what might soon come to be called "New Europe".

The question is, therefore, to what extent the current Brexit discussion legitimizes efforts to re-establish a 'nation-states arena' throughout Europe. The political risks become evident if one realises who would actually be the major loser in such an arrangement. The CEE countries would face, as a result, severe economic hardships, with unemployment, stagnation and political destabilization and radicalization. But most of all, such an arrangement would be an end to the European idea as we all know it today. Geopolitically, Europe's influence on global affairs would decrease markedly. Thus not British but European sovereignty is here at stake.

The EU emerged as a political project responding to the horrors of WWI and WWII. The fundamental principles of its conception are peace and stability within Europe: an inter-state stability which cannot be achieved simply inter-governmentally and a peace which cannot be achieved simply in terms of a balance of power. The EU construct is based on the idea of sovereignty pooling as the only prospect for sustaining peace and stability. The open society that has emerged out of post-war Europe developments has always been a successful effort to overcome nationalism through cooperation.

On top of all this, new issues are emerging in the current political and social situation that make us re-examine and re-think our European foundations. Not only the migration crisis, but also changes in social organization as a result of new technologies, radical manifestations of climate change and corresponding responses in energy policy, as well as the threat of international terrorism: these all make us seek an arrangement in which the European public will be able to maintain its democratic and liberal

character and humanist values. These are the fundaments on which political trust must be based. They are the source of the belief in the European Union as a political project.

If we let the European idea fall away what should countries like Turkey or Ukraine link their association agreements to? To what Europe? How long would the European Commission be able to negotiate foreign affairs before the Eurozone's foreign policy would ultimately become detached from that of the other states? If we are struggling today when defining the "European idea", such an idea would be even harder to conceive in such new settings. In such a union, the individual parts would stand against each other, in mutual competition. If we give up the idea of a common future, we run the risk that we will end up living someone else's future.

It must never be forgotten that WWII was the death of Europe in a way. After the war, Europe's influence was nil and the overall post-war settlement arose out of the will of others. It is almost a miracle that a part of Europe managed to integrate itself in such conditions – and miracles do not happen twice.

BREXIT: SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY

Javier Solana

As Europeans, we are living at a time when security issues have been thrust into the public debate. The dramatic refugee situation, terrorism and conflicts on European soil have provided a rude awakening from the naive and carefree dream of stability we had been living in. And yet our notions about how to guarantee our own security are lacking in both depth and vision. Nowhere is this clearer than in the debate on the United Kingdom's continued membership of the European Union.

Those who support Brexit say that debating the possible risks a departure might pose for Britain's security and international position is nothing but fearmongering. In fact, they fully believe that the country's international relevance and security will remain unharmed once it has freed itself from the EU, and that these will even improve due to its special relationship with the United States, its military power and its historical role in international relations.

Now is not the time to turn inwards

First of all, we must accept that discussing issues of security as part of the Brexit debate is not a strategy for tipping the scales in the EU's favour, but rather a necessity given the current international situation.

The last few years have shown us that conflicts on the continent are not impossible, and uncertainty is mounting in Eastern Europe due to Russia's current foreign policy. Furthermore, we share borders with some of the most volatile and conflicted regions of the world, where the general instability and a lack of state structures have been taken advantage of by terrorist groups that present a real threat to our continent - as they have proven on several recent occasions at the very heart of Europe.

At a global level, we have returned to a mode of great power competition after decades of relative peace and a world order in which Western paradigms were uncontested. One distinguishing feature of this order has been a degree of stability and peace on the European continent without parallel in modern history.

Europe's historical ally, the United States, shares this scenario but - as can be expected - not all of our interests. On a number of occasions, it has been made clear that Washington expects Europeans to take on greater leadership in matters affecting our security, and the fear that a common European defence strategy might endanger the survival of the Atlantic Alliance is now a distant memory.

Of course, if the United Kingdom were to leave the EU, it would still be a member of NATO - and it is noteworthy that precisely its most significant partner in the alliance has stated its preference for a strong and united European Union that can act decisively in matters of security and defence. As Europeans, our ability to ensure our own security rests on our ability to face this task together. For the EU losing a member such as the United Kingdom would mean losing both its strongest military power and a crucial player in multilateral institutions.

The supposed loss of sovereignty

There are also those who believe that leaving the European Union would be beneficial because it would mean regaining sovereignty in matters of security and defence. Here it is important to remember that sharing sovereignty in certain matters is not tan-

tamount to relinquishing all sovereignty and decision-making capacity. Sharing a state's sovereignty is a valuable mechanism for enabling cooperation between countries in any area.

In fact, even if the United Kingdom were to leave the European Union, it would continue to share its sovereignty by belonging to institutions whose aim is precisely to regulate issues in which concerted action is ultimately beneficial for its members. The UK is a member of many such institutions and is a signatory of a wide range of international agreements and conventions that effectively limit its freedom in various ways. In terms of security and defence, for example, both its NATO membership and UN Security Council Resolutions restrict its capacity to act to some degree.

In the world we live in, acting alone is neither possible nor desirable. However, far from being a disadvantage of the globalised world, this makes it possible for countries to have a say in decisions regarding transnational issues that affect their national interests, thus effectively expanding national sovereignty beyond national borders.

If we want greater security, then we need to stop focusing on regaining sovereignty in our security policies and start responding to risks more effectively. If the risks we are facing are not contained within the borders of any nation, then a merely national response cannot be adequate; and a joint response means sharing sovereignty.

Many of the threats that we are currently facing as Europeans are hybrid in nature. They do not respect distinctions between peacetime and wartime, nor can they easily be fitted into categories of internal or external security. These threats militarise civil relations and do not heed national borders. Furthermore, the very objective of many of these hybrid threats is to put an end to the cohesion of the European Union.

The complexity of these challenges makes them impossible to neutralise by following a purely national approach. Our response must be collective, covering both internal and external security, going hand in hand with cooperation in matters of intelligence and border control, and fully incorporating the civilian dimension of security.

Those who wish to see the UK leave believe that security is such an important issue for the EU that it would seek to continue cooperation in this area no matter what. According to this argument, it is evident that the member states and the United Kingdom would seek to share sovereignty and cooperate in security matters, even after a UK departure. However, in that scenario, the UK would no longer be capable of influencing the decisions made by the other European countries. Furthermore, given the

turmoil that the departure of one of its members would cause for other EU states, it is unlikely that their will to cooperate would remain unscathed.

Whatever happens, and if only for geographical reasons, the United Kingdom will continue to have an extremely close relationship with the European mainland and will inevitably be affected by its evolution. And if the current delicate situation in Europe - partly a consequence of the instability in the Middle East and North Africa - teaches us anything, it is that one of the foremost interests of a country is to have stable and secure neighbours. Directly or indirectly, the United Kingdom is one of the main stakeholders when it comes to the security of other European countries.

The EU as a forum for cooperation in security matters

Generally speaking, the EU's common security and defence policy tends to receive more criticism than praise. The most common targets are the undeveloped potential of the possibilities envisioned by the treaties, the lack of clear objectives and the slow overall decision-making process. However, the common denominator in all of these cases is the lack of willpower on the part of the member states. The EU's current security and defence policy is the one that the member states have created, and the issues highlighted above could all be solved if we were to act collectively and decisively.

Moreover, although a critical vision is always necessary, it tends to forget the achievements, of which there have been many. The EU has been responsible for 32 peacekeeping missions on three different continents and is widely recognised for its civilian capabilities and its application of sanctions, both of which are necessary in the context of hybrid wars.

Finally, and taking into account the current scenario of renewed great power competition, the European Union is a highly appropriate forum for resolving issues in which Russia is involved, given our interest in avoiding conflicts with Moscow.

Our place in the world and that of the UK

Ultimately, if a majority of the referendum voters were to say no to the European Union, the UK would not suddenly be excluded from international forums, nor would it necessarily face any new security threats. Likewise, Europe's security and defence policy would not cease to exist: it would continue to develop according to the will of

the member states. Both sides, however, would be weakened. The more open the communication and cooperation channels between us, the better prepared we will be to respond to any threats to our interests.

The notion of regaining sovereignty as a solution to the problems we face as Europeans, and Britons, is an oversimplification on the part of those who believe that it is possible to live in a world that no longer exists. Total independence from others is not possible, even outside the context of the European project, because in a global world we are all deeply connected. Thus, when dealing with issues that go beyond any single state's borders, it is in every country's interests to be able to participate in the international regulation and decision-making process.

Translation by Santiago Killing-Stringer

THE OTHER EUROPEANS

Johano Strasser

Almost everything I think I know about the English, Scottish and Welsh, I have learned from books, newspapers, television, and reports from friends, both German and British. When I last spent any length of time in Britain, fish and chips still came wrapped in yesterday's newspaper, there was no sport on Sundays and last orders at the pub were called at half past ten. Of course I am aware that time has not stood still, that Britain today has little in common with my nostalgic memories from the late sixties. Nevertheless, for that eccentric island race I still retain an oddly persistent fondness, which has survived even the likes of Margaret Thatcher and David Cameron.

Yet now I hear that a narrow majority of the British have had enough of being told what to do by Brussels, and want out of the European Union. A referendum is to be held in June. In my nightmares I see "BREXIT" emblazoned across the white cliffs of Dover. Of course I am hurt, like anyone is hurt when they find their love so blatantly unrequited. Of course I ask myself what I did wrong, to cause so many British people to want nothing more to do with me. Should I comfort myself with the thought that national egotisms and separatisms are proliferating in many other European coun-

tries too? Should I lump my dear Brits together with the Orbáns, Kaczynskis and Le Pens, or with the small-minded, anti-European xenophobes currently causing a stir in Germany?

If there is anything we can learn from the British, it would be staying calm, keeping a cool head even when the situation looks bad. So, what has actually happened? In fact, almost nothing. A handful of British newspapers that have always run a populist line against the EU, a couple of opinion polls reflecting widespread (and in parts comprehensible) dissatisfaction with politics in general and the EU in particular. And Mr Cameron grabbing the opportunity to wring a couple of rather symbolic concessions from Brussels. When Britain votes in June to stay or leave, there is no knowing which way the decision will go.

Let us assume the worst, and to my mind the least likely: a majority to leave. What next? Then the Scots tally their own votes, probably finding that a large majority north of the border actually wanted to stay. Now many Scots only voted against independence in their recent referendum to avoid having to leave the EU. They would then have every reason to rally to the propagandists of a Scottish break-away – in order to re-join the EU as an independent country. I cannot imagine the British, with their famous common-sense, scoring such a dim-witted own goal.

Such an own goal would be a defeat for everyone else in Europe, too. That is the crux of the matter: even if Britain leaves the EU, it remains a part of Europe. It can weaken Europe, but it is stuck with the geographical facts. Way back in the days of the Empire, one might still have been able to claim that Britannia could get along without Europe if need be, and make do with half of Africa and Asia instead (and Europe might have been fine without the kingdom on its north-western margins). But today? Is Britain supposed to become part of the United States – a bit like Puerto Rico maybe – in order to survive in the global markets? Should Britain shrink to London and the south-east and reinvent itself as a kind of neo-Singapore?

I am certain that the British do not really want to turn their backs on us continental Europeans after all we have been through together, after all we have inflicted on each other in the course of history. In fact, I am even sure that the ties between Germany and Britain in particular – despite two world wars and the Nazi Holocaust – are so close that both sides can only lose if they go their separate ways. I am perfectly aware, of course, that by no means everyone on the continent sees things that way. There are certainly exasperated French, Germans, Italians who would be quite happy to finally see the back of the British malcontents. And of course it is true that in recent

times German politicians in particular have displayed sometimes dreadful arrogance towards the British as well as the Greeks. But was British truculence not occasionally also helpful, when bureaucratic routine in Strasbourg, Luxembourg and Brussels threatened to stifle the European idea?

I am a European. My father was born in the United States, in St Louis, at the beginning of the twentieth century, to a French mother and an Austrian father. My mother is Dutch. She met her husband – my father – in Paris in the twenties, at a conference of the World Esperanto Association. When I was born in 1939 my parents had just moved from France to the Netherlands. So I am Dutch by birth. Even before I could call the Germans by their proper name, I knew the Dutch expletive for them: *moffen*. It corresponds to the French *boches* and the English *krauts*. When I was learning to talk, Holland was occupied by the Germans, Dutch Jews were being transported to the death camps, and in my home town communists, socialists, pacifists and Christians were being persecuted, arrested, killed. My parents were Esperantists and pacifists, and hated the German occupiers. So we called them *moffen* or even *rotmoffen* (equivalent to *sales boches* or dirty *krauts*).

After the war my family ended up in Germany. I went to school in the flat north, finishing in 1958. As an Austrian national I dutifully renewed my residence permit every year. Not until 1965 did I acquire a passport identifying me as the German I had long since become. Although I had landed in Germany more or less by accident, I was already involved in matters German at an early age, in the language, the culture, the politics. Even Germany's past became my own, complete with its atrocities. As if I had imbued it along with the language with which I grew up, in which I think and write, with the friends, the German towns and villages in which I lived, with the art, the literature, the philosophy.

Post-war Germany profited greatly from the long democratic tradition of the British. Our public broadcasting, our still impressive quality press, our by and large consolidated political culture, all these were created after the war in a kind of British development aid, closely following the British model. And the fact that West Germany was soon able to find its place in the coalescing Europe was partly thanks to Winston Churchill of all people. In a speech at Zurich University on 19 September 1946 he called for a united states of Europe, while the French leader de Gaulle continued propagating his Europe of fatherlands into the sixties.

Okay, I had better not get carried away. There have been times when German politicians spoke of Britain as "perfidious Albion", when fanatical Germans despised

the "nation of shopkeepers" across the Channel, and preferred to be Germanic heroes instead. And on the British side there are to this day still boneheads who call the Germans krauts and can only imagine them in SS uniforms. Nevertheless, the cultural connections between the two nations have mostly remained very close. During his own lifetime Shakespeare, for example, was already being performed by travelling theatres in Germany, and in my native Holland too. By the time of *Sturm und Drang*, the Bard had become the be-all and end-all of German theatre. And the fantastic Schlegel-Tieck translation finally made him a German poet, in the same way as Goethe is in a sense an English poet, as demonstrated yet again by Matthew Bell's recent thousand-page *Essential Goethe*.

We Europeans recognise who we are and who we could become above all in our encounters with other Europeans. English, French, or Italian, Greeks, Poles, Swedes, Austrians and Germans: all the proud nations that make up Europe need one another – most of all in order to remain their own inimitable selves. Europe is obviously much more than a market, after all; it is a cultural space, simultaneously bemusing and splendidly diverse, complementary and enriching. Europe is more than "Brussels". And Europe is not a bureaucratic monster, not a tribe of petty-minded technocrats making the lives of decent citizens a misery with their rules and regulations. Where signs of such aberrations do appear, it is down to us, the citizens of Europe, to correct them, rather than going off in a sulk.

Europe is above all an ever-changing cultural cosmos that can only flourish if all its parts are permitted to be themselves and yet still stand together resolutely when it comes to defending freedom and diversity. It will never be possible to preserve all the things we value about Europe without a European political framework. Capitalism, we should not forget, is still capitalism. Anyone who believes that the blessings of the market can spare us the hard work of solving political, social and ecological problems, who thinks that a single nation alone can triumph in the arena of global financial capitalism, is making a terrible mistake. Such a fragile cultural entity as Europe can only survive in today's world of conflict if it is politically strong and – whatever the differences – fundamentally united.

Is it too much to hope that a continent that has succeeded since 1945 – after two horrific wars – in turning enemies into neighbours and mistrustful neighbours into co-operative partners and sometimes even friends might turn out to be a reliable force for peace in the turmoil of the twenty-first century, a bastion of freedom and democracy, a promoter of fruitful communication with other influential regions? Would it not be a

worthwhile achievement if we, the citizens of Europe, each with our own experiences, each with our own means, were to work together to make that possible? Without arrogance, without the insistent sense of mission in whose name we Europeans have caused so much historic grief in other parts of the world.

The political Europe was never the great leveller, and never will be. Its raison d'être is its diversity, its vital energy, its obstinacy. I do not travel to London or Paris or Warsaw or Rome to drink German beer and eat German sausages. What I seek in the other Europeans, in their language, their ways of thinking, their history, is the lost, the hidden, the future facets of myself. Europe is not the navel of the world, not the yardstick by which all other regions of the world are to be judged. Europe is a historic continent, perhaps the historic continent par excellence. What singles Europe out most of all is that all the greatest crimes and mistakes have already been made here, and we Europeans have felt the punishment. We Europeans know what structural problems mean, because we have been cramped together here for millennia. None of our problems can be solved by isolating ourselves or expanding into supposedly empty lands. We cannot just "go west!" Unlike the Americans, we know – even if we sometimes appear to forget it – that we can only live in peace if we also pay heed to the other side's interests.

Dear British neighbours, don't let anyone persuade you that we – the rest of Europe – want to take away your different-ness, your obstinacy, your trouble-making. We need you in Europe precisely because you are so different from us. And you? Would it be impertinent to suggest that you need us too, if you are to fulfil your potential? And if that is true – or at least not completely false – would it not be a rather poor idea to abandon Project Europe? I think so.

Translation by Meredith Dale