

**VOX**  
journal

University of York  
The student journal of philosophy, politics, economics

# Brexit: Reflections & the Future



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# editorial note

Brexit has proven to be a topic that has engaged and divided particularly young people like us. According to the Guardian's survey, 74% of 18-24 year olds voted to remain in the European Union. Although post-Brexit Britain relies heavily on the final Brexit deal negotiated with the EU, in this issue we will be gaining some insight from our fellow students and professors on what they believe the future holds.

By choosing the theme of Brexit for this issue, we encourage you to view the issue through various lenses and get a deeper understanding behind the events which have unfolded since 24th June 2016. We also want you to consider what kind of future we are heading towards once we officially 'divorce' the EU. In this issue our writers will take on both retrospective and prospective approaches to a variety of topics. These include; the 2016 EU Membership referendum - a topic tackled by Busola, as well as post-Brexit Anglo-Franco relations covered from different perspectives by both Idriss and Clara. In addition, we also have an article on post-Brexit China-EU relations by Laura, in which she explores the possible opportunities open to China in light of Brexit.

A special thanks to Professor Sandra Fredman (of University of Oxford) and Dr Meghan Campbell (of University of Birmingham) who in their interview give us a close analysis of what Brexit could mean for human rights. We are also honoured to invite Simon Sweeney (of University of York) to discuss post-Brexit party politics.

As we launch this issue we are in the process of rebranding Vox Journal. We particularly want to expand our online presence by creating more web-based content for our readers to enjoy. We are currently looking for regular bloggers for our fortnightly online blog: 'Voxsensus'. Please do contact us if you are interested. Until then, enjoy our first issue of the year.

*Hannah Alban Richard William Wang*

Co-Senior Editors of Vox Journal

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# Brexit Infographic

Over the past year, we have witnessed the importance of Brexit in British politics. It has dominated media headlines and been the topic of many a conversation. In this Infographic we have decided to break down some key information for you.



Around 3.7 million EU citizens live in the UK whilst 1.26 million UK citizens live abroad in EU countries.



In the run up to the referendum (June 7-15th) the subjects most tweeted about were *jobs*, *immigration* and *government issues*.

## Quick Stats:

51.9

PERCENT

of the British electorate voted to 'Leave' the EU after the referendum vote in 2016

15

PERCENT

of businesses in the Eurozone plan to move operations after Brexit

43

PERCENT

of UK exports currently go to countries within the European Union

[http://www.expertsystem.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/BrexitReport\\_20160622.pdf](http://www.expertsystem.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/BrexitReport_20160622.pdf)

<http://uk.businessinsider.com/ubs-survey-eu-companies-move-all-staff-out-of-uk-brexit-2017-9>

<https://fullfact.org/immigration/eu-migration-and-uk/>

<https://knoema.com/iwvuitb/brexit-explaining-the-uk-s-vote-on-eu-membership>

*“The EU is a shrinking element of the global economy. It has already reached its peak of global influence and is being eclipsed by Asian development.”*

**-Paul Cammack, Honorary Professorial Research Fellow,  
Global Development Institute, University of Manchester**

*“I don't think Brexit would have happened if it hadn't been for the political and economic events of the preceding 10 years. People were disillusioned. They felt badly treated. They felt squeezed.”*

**-Alistair Darling former Chancellor of Exchequer from 2007-  
2010**

*“I believe this is an era of trust. We have no reason not to trust Britain. I have always been an advocate and defender of global free trade. Globalization is not a tool, it is an idea, a vision and a responsibility.”*

**-Ma Yun, Founder and Executive Chairman of Alibaba Group**

*“I believe that if we take this period of change as an opportunity for the UK to draw closer to high-growth, low-income countries.”*

**-Amy Jadesimi, Chief Executive Officer, Lagos Deep Offshore  
Logistics Base**

*“The UK wants to have its cake and eat it. Before, they were in and they had many opt-outs; now they want to be out with many opt-ins. We're not on Facebook where there's an 'it's complicated' status.”*

**- Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister of Luxembourg**



# Interview

## Oxford Human Rights Hub



**Oxford Human Rights Hub**

A global perspective on human rights

The Oxford Human Rights Hub is based in the University of Oxford Faculty of Law. They aim to bring together academics, practitioners, and policy-makers from across the globe to advance the understanding and protection of human rights and equality. Vox Journal had the opportunity to ask Professor Sandra Fredman (Oxford University) and Dr Meghan Campbell (Birmingham University) about their work and how they think human rights in Britain will be affected by Brexit.

### **Vox: What work has the Oxford Rights Hub been doing on Brexit and human rights?**

**Sandra and Meghan:** The Oxford Human Rights Hub has been fully engaged with the debates on Brexit and human rights, and particularly on its effect on rights to equality and labour rights. In the run-up to the referendum, we ran a series of blogs by leading academics and practitioners, with a further series following the referendum. We have continued to provide incisive analyses on our blog page as the process unfolds, with a sustained conversation over the *Miller* case, including a podcast with experts and a livestreamed panel discussion.

We have also proactively sought to influence policy on Brexit by asserting a strong voice for human rights. Together with our colleague Alison Young, we hosted a high-level workshop at the British Academy on *The Impact of Brexit on Equality Rights*, bringing together academics, politicians and policy-makers to explore potential avenues for ensuring the robust protection of equality rights after Brexit. The report on the workshop has been widely read, and we will be organizing a follow-up in April.

Drawing together leading academics in the Oxford law faculty, we have made four submissions to Parliamentary committees on the issue. In addition, I gave oral evidence before the Women and Equalities' Committee in the House of Commons, which was included extensively in the report of the Committee. In December, we released two podcasts on Northern Ireland, Brexit and human rights, with Colin Harvey from Queen's Belfast and Evelyn Collins of Northern Ireland Equality Commission, which have both been very popular.

## **Vox: How will no longer being under EU law affect the human rights of UK citizens?**

**Sandra and Meghan:** Most countries have a constitutional bill of rights, which entrenches human rights, including equality. But because the UK does not have a written or entrenched constitution, human rights in the UK are not protected by a constitutional bill of rights which would limit the extent to which they could be eroded or removed by Parliamentary legislation. This means that any protection for human rights takes the form of Parliamentary legislation which can be repealed by Parliament. However, in relation to the right to equality, EU law has performed a similar function to a constitutional guarantee: EU equality law is binding on the UK Parliament and in some cases it can be enforced directly in UK courts, even in the absence of legislation. It can also be used to disapply legislation which fails to meet the standards of EU law. The withdrawal of the UK from the EU therefore raises serious legal issues for the protection of the right to equality. After Brexit, and the consequent removal of binding force EU law, there will be no obstacle to Parliament repealing or undermining the fundamental right to equality, currently largely contained in the Equality Act 2010 (EA). Even more concerning are proposed powers to be given to the executive by the EU (Withdrawal) Bill 2017-19 (Withdrawal Bill) to amend primary legislation without full Parliamentary scrutiny (so-called Henry VIII clauses). This could include the power to amend aspects of equality law without full Parliamentary safeguards. Moreover, the Withdrawal Bill specifically states that the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights will no longer be part of domestic law after exit day. Although often overlooked in the discourse in England, these issues become even more pronounced in the context of the devolution of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

## **Vox: A few years ago the Conservatives wanted to pass a British bill of human rights - is this more likely in the face of Brexit?**

**Sandra and Meghan:** The ECHR should not be confused with EU law. It is a separate treaty which is not affected per se by Brexit. However, many people do in fact confuse the two treaties, and some of the objections to the ECHR were based on a similar antipathy to anything European and a belief that both the EU and the ECHR were different manifestations of limitations on the sovereignty of the UK imposed by Europe. A British Bill of Rights was proposed as a form of 'home grown' bill of rights, rather than one imposed from outside. This also involved repealing the Human Rights Act 1998, which incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law.

However, it was never clear which parts of the ECHR were regarded as inappropriate for the UK, especially given that the Convention includes the basic human rights found in almost all treaties and domestic bills of rights. There was of course the potential to improve on the ECHR. But the greater risk was that of rolling back on basic human rights. One particular target was the right to respect for home and family life, which was attributed with giving refugees and asylum seekers the right to bring their families into the UK, an issue which tapped into a general hostility for migrants and a refusal to recognise their human rights. It is likely that the same sentiments are still held by those who were in favour of such a Bill. However, the process of Brexit is so long and complicated that it is very unlikely that there will be Parliamentary time or political will in the short term to revive this process. Nevertheless, those who respect human rights need to remain vigilant.

## **Vox: Does Brexit provide any opportunities for the field of human rights law?**

**Sandra and Meghan:** It has been argued by some that the UK can now improve the standards of human rights in some respects, including for example the scope of affirmative action provisions, which has been narrowly interpreted in EU law. However, given that in UK law a much more restricted approach to affirmative action has always been taken, this seems an unrealistic hope. Other possibilities include improving collective rights for trade unions, which have been interpreted by the Court of Justice of the EU as giving way to rights of free trade and free movement of labour. However, here too the domestic law is very much more restrictive than EU law, and it would need a very big change in the political balance of power for collective trade union rights to be fully restored in the UK. On this score, we therefore stand to lose more than we could hope to gain, by a long way.

## **Vox: As part of the Council of Europe, Britain is still committed to the European Convention of Human Rights, could this change in the future?**

**Sandra and Meghan:** In the Conservative Party manifesto at the last election, Theresa May promised to put proposals to withdraw from the ECHR on the back burner. As mentioned above, there remains a deep antipathy among a vociferous group of politicians to anything European, as without distinguishing clearly between the EU and the ECHR. This antipathy is unlikely to disappear. However, it is unlikely to resurface in concrete proposals in the near future because of the overwhelming nature of the challenge of leaving the EU. At the same time, the refusal to incorporate the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights into the UK does not bode well for the long-term future of human rights and the ECHR's role in the UK.



## Vox: Will Brexit cause Britain to take their international commitments (i.e treaties) more seriously?

**Sandra and Meghan:** It is unlikely that politicians or civil servants will take international human rights commitments more seriously in the future at their own initiative. However, civil society groups, public interest litigators and human rights bodies such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission can work to raise awareness of these commitments. For example, shadow reports by civil society movements can be submitted to international bodies monitoring human rights and the same is true for the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Litigators can draw the attention of courts to international human rights treaties, which, although not directly binding on the UK in the same way as EU law, are regarded as 'persuasive' or influential by courts. In fact in a recent case, one UK Supreme Court judge, Lord Kerr has argued that if the government has 'committed itself to a standard of human rights protection... it should be held to account in the courts as to its actual compliance with that standard<sup>1</sup>.' Individuals can also submit complaints to some of these bodies, where the UK has signed on to such a procedure.



Professor Sandra Fredman is Rhodes Professor of the Laws of the British Commonwealth and the USA at the University of Oxford. She is also director of the OXford Human Rights Hub which she founded in 2012.



Dr Meghan Campbell is a lecturer of Law at the University of Birmingham, She is also Deputy director of the Oxford Human Rights Hub.

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<sup>1</sup> R (*SG & Ors*) v *Secretary of State for Work and Pensions* [2015] UKSC 16 [235]

# Would the result be the same if the referendum was held today?

## The promise of a Brexit referendum

Before the referendum there was long-standing Euroscepticism amongst some MPs, primarily in UKIP and the Conservative party. When David Cameron became the Leader of the Opposition he had promised to get his party to “stop banging on about Europe” due to their complaints. Top-down Euroscepticism led us to the point of referendum, but does not necessarily equate to general Euroscepticism that would lead us to leave the EU. There was, however, limited but growing support for separationist policies, as was seen by UKIP’s growth. The stance of these parties is important considering that they are democratically elected and so reveal the opinion of the public. Cameron called for a referendum during the 2015 general election campaign, showing his desire to capitalise on Euroscepticism and its influence. The prelude to the call for the referendum shows that there was growing disapproval of our state of membership in the EU, and suggests that the result of the referendum would be the same considering the EU has had no significant reforms or changes in its nature.

## The campaigns and immediate effect of Brexit

The campaigns were fought on the key aspects of state sovereignty and the economy. Under state sovereignty, there were the issues of whether we have control of our immigration,



<https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2016/06/24/brexit-poll-results-uk-votes-on-eu-referendum.html>

laws, and budget. Free movement of people, being under the jurisdiction of the EU Court of Justice, and contributing to the EU budget are both staples of being a member of the EU. This suggests that people would not change their minds, but the misleading information during the campaign did not help the situation. For example, the leave campaign advertised that we send £350 million a week to the EU, when the net figure is £200 million due to the UK rebate, not to mention the other economic benefits that can be seen to cancel that out. There were “widespread reports of people who felt the media – and by extension the campaigns which were directing their communications via the media – were not providing them with the accurate information which they craved” (Brett, 2016). The misinformation during the campaigns disillusioned voters, but now people can make educated decisions about Brexit. Under the economy, there were the issues of trade and investment. The leave campaign argued that Brexit would guarantee economic prosperity. Instead of this, the pound dropped to a 31 year low at \$1.33 on the day after the result and the value of gold went up. This is not a certain projection for Britain’s economic future, but may convince some voters that we are better off with the certainty that the EU provides.

## **Progress of negotiations**

The progress of negotiations was stalled for some months which can be seen as the EU blocking the UK’s prospects in order to enact revenge on

them, enforcing the idea of the EU as a bureaucratic organisation cementing people’s desire to leave. Recent developments have resulted in a 2-year adjustment period where we remain a member of the single market under the jurisdiction of the EU Court of Justice, paying around £50 billion. For those on the remain side, negotiations have given us the same benefits as membership, but sacrificed our say and cost us money. This has been translated as the personal failure of Theresa May, illustrated by the nickname given by Nigel Farage “Theresa the Appeaser”, showing that leave voters may still believe in prosperity outside of the EU.

## **Change or no change?**

A change in the decision would be determined by which issues individuals hold as most important. The EU as an institution has not changed and so those who made their decision with full knowledge of the institution and its effect on Britain, either voting leave or remain, will continue to hold the views they did on referendum day. Change would be determined by either the realisation of misinformation, or just simply regret when being faced by the consequences of their decision. Even if there is limited change in the choices of those who did vote, there is also a newly politically engaged youth due to Jeremy Corbyn, exemplified through the increase in the 18-25 vote, who would vote remain. Furthermore, the highly documented negotiation process would increase political engagement with those holding views on both sides, as having seen the importance of this decision they would want to have a say in what happens.

## How do we go about future referendums?

We could respond to the potential change in this decision by changing how we conduct future referendums. A petition emerged after the result which suggested setting limits. In this case, it was suggested that for the result to be adhered, the vote had to have a 60% majority with a total turn-out of 75% in the polls. The petition accumulated 4,150,262 votes in 6 months, which the government dismissed based on the reasoning that “The European Union Referendum Act received Royal Assent in December 2015, receiving overwhelming support from Parliament. The Act did not set a threshold for the result or for minimum turnout” (Petitions, UK Government, 2016). In order to set limits there would have to be a change in referendum legislation, which is determined when the decision to call a referendum is made. Setting limits would ensure that the decision made is more representative of what the country wants, but if those limits are not met then the referendum process would grind to a halt. Considering the debate on a ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ Brexit, which the British public did not make clear, it would be helpful to have further questions on the ballot in order to elaborate on what the country wants. Another change could be to include the voices of 16-year olds, which was done in the Scottish independence referendum. There was a clear distinction in the opinions of the young and the old, and so allowing 16-year olds to vote would arguably allow the people who are going to suffer the most severe consequences of these decisions to have a say.

**" Those who argue against including 16-year olds believe they will be uneducated, but people across all age ranges are, as was greatly exemplified during the EU referendum. "**

A crucial lesson here is the need for education when approaching referendum time, with an impartial organisation giving accurate facts.



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Electoral Reform Society. It's good to talk 2016 EU Referendum report. [Online]. Available at: <http://archive.electoral-reform.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/publication/Its-good-to-talk-2016-EU-Referendum-Report.pdf> [Accessed 13 Dec 2017]

Petitions, UK Government and Parliament (2016). EU Referendum Rules triggering a 2nd EU Referendum. [Online]. Available at: <https://petition.parliament.uk/archived/petitions/131215> [Accessed 6 Dec 2017]

# France-UK cooperation: Beyond Brexit

Since the United Kingdom became a member of the Union, its intentions for European integration have been in conflict with that of France. While the UK has been very cautious regarding political and monetary integration, France is usually an advocate for more unification.

Be that as it may, the United Kingdom and France have a history of cooperation: they are geographically close, and share special similarities in their history, politics and economy. They share a complicated colonial history and are rivals for the rank of 5th global economy. They were rivals in Napoleonic Wars but allies during two World Wars. Could it be that France will take the opportunity given by Brexit to become the dominant political, economic and military power in Europe? Will it become a competitor for the UK as a result of Brexit or will both countries keep their close cooperation?

Firstly, this article will argue that the political and economic relationships between France and the UK are likely to suffer from Brexit, giving an opportunity for France to build a stronger collaboration with Germany and replacing London as the European City.

Secondly, it will explain why military collaboration is unlikely to disappear after Brexit.

In spite of being in competition for the rank of 5th economy in the world, the UK and France remain historical allies. In recent years, the UK has been ahead with a slightly higher GDP and a lower unemployment rate. However, globally, both economies are similar and very integrated: France is the United Kingdom's second most important intra-EU partner for exported goods in 2015 and the United Kingdom received 7.1% of France's total exports in 2016 (Ec.europa.eu, 2017). However since June 2016, the economic future of

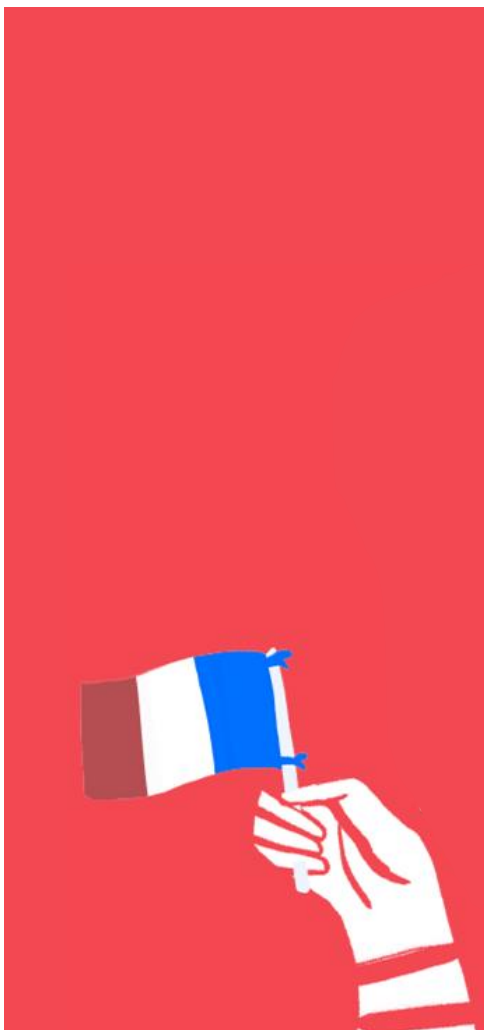


<https://news.sky.com/story/uk-france-summit-emmanuel-macron-says-uk-must-pay-for-post-brexit-city-deal-11212766>

the UK has become uncertain. The relationships between Great Britain and the EU may suffer from the negotiated Brexit bill (The Economist, 2017), worth up to €50bn (BBC News, 2017), and future trade will depend on whether or not the British Government chooses a 'soft' or 'hard' Brexit, of which the latter seems most likely.

In the occurrence of a 'hard Brexit', the UK will exit the European single market and stop allowing the free movement of people within its territory. The trading partnerships between the UK and its main European partners, including France, will be weakened by the new economic barriers. After Brexit, London will become a less desirable financial centre for some multinational firms (L'Express, 2016). In this case, it seems like the French government intends to replace the UK - specifically London - as the financial and commercial hub linking the EU to the rest of the world.

**"Unlike London, after Brexit Paris is more likely to be base for financial regulations in Europe."**



During Macron's first months in office, his presidential speeches abroad have targeted foreign investors, researchers and companies to attract those leaving the UK after Brexit, in spite of the British efforts to keep its competitiveness (L'Express, 2017).

Macron is trying to reform the French labour legislation, trying to make it more flexible and internationally attractive. In order to make Paris more appealing, the current French government has removed the 20% tax on the salaries above 152,000 euros/year, a new labour reform among many to come (Chavagneux, 2017).

Leaving the European Union will also reduce the European funds for research granted by the Union to British universities: EU research funding generates more than 19,000 jobs across the UK, £1.86 billion for the UK economy and contributes more than £1 billion to GDP (Universities UK.ac.uk, 2016).



This is an opportunity for France to shine in comparison, and build incentives to attract foreign research investment and academics.

**"Hence, the French president is working hard to present France as the country of entrepreneurs and progress; and it may set France as an economic competitor to Great Britain."**

Similarly, the question of immigration, which was so important in the Brexit debates, has an impact on French politics and home policies: current president Macron is trying to increase France's cultural openness to lessen the nationalist wave in France (which was strengthened by the success of Brexit). This also may aim to assert its role as a European power, trying to manage with Germany most of the immigration crisis (The Economist, 2017).

Undeniably, the French president is making an effort to build a new relationship with Germany, balancing Berlin's influence in the Union with its own (The Economist, 2017). Macron's plans for Europe is to create a "two-speed Europe", where the most economically stable countries will pursue greater integration and adopt leading roles in the EU: "He wants a Europe "of different speeds", centred on the euro zone" (The Economist, 2017).

Even though the UK and France are likely to remain in collaboration, this new special relationship between Paris and Berlin may eclipse the one between Paris and London, and position France

as a more serious competitor for Great Britain, both economically and politically, especially after Brexit.

In terms of defense, the UK and France have a long history of cooperation and their special relationship exists beyond and before the European Union. Both countries share a common colonial past, similar military capabilities and homogeneous military involvement in foreign conflicts (Goldblatt et al., 2010). The Lancaster House Treaty, signed in 2010, has tightened the existing military cooperation from arms production to deployment of their army.

Nonetheless, the Brexit vote is likely to impact this special relationship: during his campaign and the first six months of his presidency, President Macron has shown his willingness to further European integration like few European leaders have before. One of the main issues raised during the French presidential elections has been to better internal security, manage immigration and contribute to solving the conflicts in the Middle East without increasing insecurity and terrorism in Europe. Macron's main solution to this day is to deepen Europe's

military integration: “At the beginning of the next decade, Europe must have a joint intervention force, a common budget for defense and a joint doctrine for action” (Macron, 2017).

This would allow European powers to send troops abroad as a region instead of being separate countries involved in foreign conflicts. The decision process might then seem less partial and intervention will seem less self-interested and more legitimate.

**"If the EU follows this ambition, Brexit will exclude the United Kingdom from this collective military goal, which will diminish its military influence and its weight in regional or international discussions. "**

Furthermore, with the UK leaving the Union, France remains the only member that has the nuclear weapon and a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, granting it considerable influence in the UNSC and within the EU. If France chooses to promote collaboration at the European level instead, then this may diminish their willingness to maintain Anglo-Franco military cooperation. In this process, France may become more of a military competitor to the UK. That is, if it benefits from additional European funds for military equipment and supplementary weight on the international scale due to its special military role within the EU.

Nevertheless, if we look more closely to the Lancaster House Treaties it seems unlikely that the military cooperation will disappear. The seven-year-old treaties guarantee the sharing of military materials, production and equipment, the building of joint facilities, mutual access to each other's defence markets, industrial and technological cooperation, a combined joint expeditionary force, and cooperation for counter-terrorism intelligence (Taylor, 2010).

After developing these goals for seven years, it is likely that French and British militaries are interdependent, and it is doubtful that France could compensate fully with other European powers. For example, they collaborate on the technology associated with nuclear stockpile stewardship, however they are the only countries to have the nuclear weapon. Both countries also spend a similar amount of their wealth on defense, unlike other European countries.

The UK and France's historical cooperation is not ready to come to an end, in spite of the Brexit vote: both countries have announced that their military collaboration will continue because of their past cooperation and the similarities between both military powers (The Ministry of Defence, 2017). The economic and political relationships between both countries will undeniably be affected by Brexit, to an extent that depends on the terms of the final agreements, but a stronger relationship between Germany and France does not make it a competitor to the UK and Macron has stated its wishes that "the UK will find a place in the new Europe" (Macron, 2017).

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# Post-Brexit Anglo-French relationships: Historical rivalry, territorial brotherhood and cultural affairs

“What if they were mistaken?”. That is how a major French newspaper (L’Express, 2017) introduces the result of the latest poll made by BMG Research on behalf of The Independent by the end of September 2017. It states that about 52% of British people are in favour to remain in the European Union. This sudden increase may be the consequence of complicated and tough months of negotiations with the E.U. By this point, no common agreement is visible and one of the only certain deadlines set is March of 2019 when free movement will theoretically come to end.

## The UK, the EU and their “Brex-up”:

A ‘bloody’ lot of confusion wraps the Brexit dossier, from exact data to updated European leaders’ position on whether this divorce should be proceeded the soft way or the hard way. The Franco-German power couple of the European motherland will have to show a united front more than ever on this concern.

According to recent reports, the European Parliament expects about 100 billion euros (887 billion pounds) from the United Kingdom when Theresa May is willing to pay, whilst it represents a significant progress to put 40 billion pounds on the table to pay the bill (Business Insider UK, 2017). However, President Macron stated in October that “a major effort should be made on the side of the United Kingdom” and was clearly disappointed by the slow pace of talks at this stage, saying “we have not reached the halfway point of the road” (HuffPost, 2017).

If it seems as though the 27 state-members are putting an unbearably heavy pressure on the United Kingdom, it is mostly because there is quite a broad agreement on this matter.

**"From a French perspective, It is a though the unexpected departure of the UK had caused a swift unification of the EU"**

Indeed, the risky temptation of ‘Frexit’ has been omnipresent during the French elections, largely used by the far right-wing candidate Marine Le Pen and to an extent the far left-wing candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon as well as some other minor outsiders jumping on the bandwagon. Now that the threat of this Pandora box has left France and other states, it seems natural that the European Union plans to keep up with this exceptional momentum of complete unity and dissuade others from seeing a departure from Brussels as a desirable possibility, thus the consequences of Brexit must be severe and clinical in order to act as an exemplary case.

## **The Anglo-French relationship's new chapter:**

France and the United Kingdom have always had an intense political relationship. President De Gaulle refused entry to his victorious brother in arms to the European Union when it was still at an embryonic stage. Historically, the UK mulling over their membership is not new either. In fact, it is the only country which held a referendum after joining in 1973 to confirm whether they wanted to remain or leave, in 1975. Another uneasy period of their relationship was due to the intervention in Iraq in 2003. As a matter of fact, most of the French think Brexit is a great shame but the UK nation must take its responsibility and meet the various costs of this heavy farewell. Even though the averagely educated French citizen understands it has been voted by an unrepresentative minority of the UK and its future, very little compassion is shown towards those across the Channel in this never-before-seen yet democratic decision.

**" Despite historic ties, geographic proximity and sharing the same status as permanent UN Security Council members, Paris keeps prioritising its romance with Berlin rather than fully embracing London. "**

Macron's presidency is more likely to be firm from a "*Brexitting*" perspective, though he remains conscious that excessive explicit sanctions would be harmful for the post-Brexit era and upcoming diplomatic cooperation.

A too-soft Brexit would make Macron come off as politically weak, which is often what critics reproach him for as well as in the case of a too hard Brexit, an eventual politically plus economically struggling United Kingdom would only benefit the French and European extreme parties in their endeavour to bash any further on the European Union. This option is utterly undesirable for the French as well as European leaders. There is a necessity to operate a diplomatic, smooth and comprehensive Brexit transition without undermining its aftermath.

The volatile nature of British public opinion has been counterproductive to the UK's integration within Europe. However, bilateral trust will have to be achieved somehow for other top concerns such as counter-terrorism intelligence collaboration and the significant diplomatic roles played by the two nations on the international scene. Regardless of the nature of Brexit, these issues will ultimately be Brexit-blind as France and the United Kingdom still hold key positions within the post-Cold War order.



<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/star-columnists/2018/01/20/why-britain-is-pondering-an-exit-from-brexit.html>

## Post-Brexit Education:

In light of several major disagreements between the UK and the EU, especially the 'European Army' project (E-International Relations, 2017), which the British firmly refuse to consider due to sovereignty concerns, larger facts must be kept in mind to avoid any further panic induced snowball effect.

The United Kingdom has always been a hub of major academic excellence for young talents both within and beyond Europe. Its top-ranking universities remain highly attractive both for academic influence and economic local growth. Indeed, according to official figures based on a study covering the 2011-2012 academic calendar, the higher education sector contributed 2.8% of UK GDP by generating over £73 billion (Universities UK, 2014).

From anticipated plans to speculative rumours regarding UK universities post-Brexit expansion, quite a few announcements have been made: KCL is working on its new European campus in Dresden, Germany (The Independent, 2017), Oxford University denied it has

any plans to expand to Paris but Warwick officials say they are considering many offers that have been made to them (ibid).

The European Union throughout the single market accounted for £240 billion of goods and services exported to other EU countries in 2016, which represents about 12% of the British economy value in the same year. Ultimately, the economic consequences for the UK after what will seemingly be an amicable divorce arguably remain the largest concern. Over the past decade, this figure has fluctuated between 12% to 15% while the other way around, exports from the EU to the UK were not worth more than 4% of the size of the pre-Brexit EU's economy in 2015 (Fullfact.org, 2017).



Far away from the unstable and fragile Trump administration and close enough to a particularly intense European Union bloc,

**"the UK will naturally keep a linked destiny with France as organic neighbours"**

The mutual attraction gathered around the London-Paris axis, the defence cooperation and global responsibilities to maintain are written down on a common agenda. This 'supra-European' agenda is meant to overcome the current painful yet necessary treatment.



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That is where the uniqueness of the Franco-British relationship lies.

The Erasmus generations, who were born in 1987 when the initiative was created, are likely struggling to sobering up, considering the very uncertain future of the program concerning UK students. Obviously, this European bond and all the vast experiences associated with it will not break because of a referendum decision.

It will be the job of the *youth* to take a new, organised and clearer stand allied with a concise self-defined vision on a UK-EU integration. De jure, with a close natural ally, de facto, with its 'frenemy'.

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# China's Europe Strategy after Brexit: From Misfortune to Opportunity

## Context



After the UK's vote to leave the EU in June 2016, not only was shock felt deeply in Europe, tremors of surprise and uncertainty were also felt in China. During his 2015 state visit to the UK, President Xi Jinping made it clear that China was supportive of a "united EU". With the abundance of recent Chinese investment in the UK, it is no wonder then that the initial impact of the 'Leave' vote sent the Yuan into decline. Following the referendum result, despite China's expression of its respect for "the choice made by the British people", there is no doubt that China will lose a fundamental ally within the EU. The UK has played a central role in

Chinese diplomacy in the EU and the loss of this ally in the EU will affect several aspects including trade and investment, economic policy and diplomacy.

From a monetary perspective, London has been an ideal financial centre in the West for China to internationalise their currency. In 2014, London became a centre for the Yuan, which according to Summers played "an important strategic role in bringing Europe into the internationalisation of the Chinese currency". After the UK's exit from the EU, this process could likely be slowed down.

The UK has also been a vital gateway for Chinese investment to the extent that after Brexit, the EU will no longer be China's largest trading partner. Over the past fifteen years, the United Kingdom has become the leading destination for Chinese investment, ahead of Italy and France. According to the China Global Investment Tracker, China invested over \$26 billion in the UK between 2010 and 2015. During the same period, the PRC invested \$21 billion in Italy, \$11 billion in France and \$7 billion in Germany. China has also made headway in banking investment in London as a European base. Considering the potential loss China faces as a result of Brexit, as discussed above, it is vital that Beijing reviews its European strategy.

## Benefitting From a Weak Brussels

After the UK's exit, EU will feel a weakening from an economic and GDP standpoint. As of 2015, Britain made up 17.5% of the EU's total GDP.

## **" Ideally speaking Beijing would prefer a stable EU as a counterbalance against the United States."**

Nevertheless, instead of viewing this as a negative, Beijing should seize the opportunity and aim to fill the gap. The objective should be to act while the EU is in a weakened state, to negotiate more favourable commercial relations with EU member states on a bilateral level.

If negotiations are carried out as such, then China can benefit from competition among European countries to facilitate Chinese companies and investment. This presents a chance for China to utilise its "strategic economy" tools.

### **Finding a 'New Ally' in Europe**

However, while it is important for China to re-strengthen its foothold within the EU, there are still advantages to be had by continuing investment in the UK. As a result of the 'Leave' vote, the British sterling took a huge hit. As far as China is concerned, this meant a drop of 9.43 Yuan to 8.97 following the referendum. Since then the GBP has continued to fall against the Yuan; as of November 2017, the value is equal to 8.77 Yuan. Following Brexit, and more likely a "Hard Brexit", British companies will be keen to maintain Chinese investment.

## **" Moreover, given the fall in the pound, Chinese companies are in a strong position to strike a deal. "**

Therefore, Chinese investment must take advantage of an isolated UK.

With Beijing losing its "best friend in the European Union", China must find a new ally in the EU as soon as possible. Jan Gaspers, head of research at the European China Policy Unit, highlights that "London has often served as an advocate of Chinese trade and economic interests in Brussels". A report from Chatham House reiterates this sentiment, pointing out that British officials within the EU have often been in China-related jobs and have made fundamental contributions to EU discussions about China. Within this framework, the UK's strategy towards China has been liberal in regard to economic and commercial interests, with promotion of engagement an important factor.

Given that Germany is the only European country among the top ten exporting countries to China, it is a natural strategic move for China to put more emphasis on Germany within the context of a China-EU relationship. In addition, if Germany's imports continue to increase then, as Schibotto suggests, China's dependence on traditional trade partners such as the US and Japan could decrease. Moreover, investment in German automotive, technology and innovation industries would be of strategic importance to China.

## Taking Advantage of Political Benefits

As for global governance in the wake of Brexit, some even argue that a Sino-German alliance could play a leading role in the international order. James argues that China and Germany are becoming increasingly aligned on many fundamental issues, including carbon emissions and trade protection. If this is a continuing trend, China can gradually let the shine fade on the “golden era” of China-UK relation and focus more on building a “special relationship” with Germany. Furthermore, with a potential reduction of the EU’s status as a ‘major power’



according to Summers, China could adapt by focusing on Europe in a wider respect with select member states, especially Germany.

Looking at Brexit from an alternative angle, China could also draw on political benefits. The UK’s vote to leave the European Union represented a spectacular display of democracy on an integral level.

**" From many perspectives, including Beijing’s, this is an example of democracy gone seriously wrong resulting in economic uncertainty, social disruption and political instability to the greatest extent. "**

This is a key propaganda advantage for China, which can be used to support and promote the benefits of the Chinese Single Party State.

Another strategically political angle, as highlighted by Li Xiaopeng, that China could take, is to draw on a potential UK dependence on China. With an isolated UK looking to form new trade agreements with China, this could allow the PRC to encourage more support from the UK on the international stage. Zhao Hongwei argues the vulnerable post-Brexit UK could be used as the “main voice” for supporting China’s bid for market economy status as well as its aim to have the arms embargo lifted.

## Conclusion

Despite the fact China will lose the UK’s key support and economic access within the EU, there are still strategic advantages to be made. While a weakened Europe was not supposed to be on the cards, from the Beijing viewpoint China will have to build on new economic and governance ties.

In this respect, Germany would be the ideal candidate with the potential for a growing special alliance to lead on the world stage. With a Europe in disarray, China can take the opportunity to develop bilateral ties from a strong standpoint.

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# Brexit: A right wing coup without tanks, while Labour plays at Waiting for Godot

MPs are putting party interests ahead of the national interest.

Lord Adonis is the latest high-profile resignation from Theresa May's government. A respected peer, and former Minister in the Blair administration, he has criticised transport secretary Chris Grayling over his 'ideological' handling of the East Coast rail franchise, including a taxpayer funded rescue of Virgin Trains and Stagecoach. Adonis says the debacle is symptomatic of how major policy issues are being mishandled due to the distraction of Brexit, with scarce civil service resources being redirected towards preparing for the UK leaving the European Union.

This article offers an assessment of the Brexit process and considers whether during 2018 we can expect any change of direction, such as a commitment to remaining in the EU single market, or abandoning Brexit altogether. I discuss the state of the major political parties in Britain and whether we may see the government implode under the stress of it all, precipitating an early election.

## Party Positioning

We begin with a short overview of where we are with Brexit. The Conservative government has a slim majority in Parliament thanks to support from ten Ulster Unionist MPs, all of whom are committed to a 'hard Brexit', which means leaving the Single European Market (SEM), ending the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), and ending free movement of labour. They also want

a 'soft border' between Northern Ireland and Ireland, an outcome completely incompatible with a hard Brexit.

The Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn enjoys popularity among young voters but it is an inconvenient truth that Labour lost the election in June 2017 and requires a further 60 seats to gain a majority. On Brexit Labour finds itself stranded between keeping faith with voters in mainly northern towns which overwhelmingly voted leave, and younger voters and metropolitan supporters who want Labour at least to commit to the Single Market. The problem with this 'Norway option' is that it requires free movement of labour, CJEU jurisdiction, and contributions to the EU budget, things that Leave voters rejected. Corbyn's prioritising the economy, jobs, working conditions and



the environment is understandable in a Labour leader, but his opposition to Single Market membership conflicts with the reality that Brexit on terms short of full SEM access undermines these very priorities. The Norway option is to all intents and purposes the same as full EU



membership, but without any role in EU/SEM decision-making and legislation. It is an illogical end-point of the process.

## Labour's Ideological Fix

Another peer, Lord Heseltine, a Conservative elder statesman and thorn in the side of the Tory Right, sees abandoning Brexit completely as the only way to avert economic disaster at home and a political tragedy for the UK and for the European Union. He sees no gains from Brexit, unlike Corbyn and Labour who want to respect the 'decision of the British people' in the 2016 referendum, and hope that once outside the Union, Britain can more easily adopt socialist policies that might otherwise be blocked by EU rules. The weakness in this argument is that Germany and Sweden, among other EU member states, have been far more successful in ensuring a civilised and humane social democratic environment based on stakeholder capitalism and the defence of public goods than has the UK under Labour and Conservative governments. In many EU member states quality infrastructure and public services have not been sacrificed to corporate interests to the extent that has happened here. The creeping privatisation of the NHS is the latest example. Labour has always had an anti-EU faction of which Corbyn was a key member during years as a recalcitrant backbencher. Anxious to hold his fractious party together, he is averse to clarity on Brexit while his Brexit spokesman Keir Starmer claims Labour's position during 'transition arrangements' is 'absolutely clear'. Both main parties are committed to 'transition arrangements' after the end of the Article 50 process when the UK officially leaves the EU in March 2019. But transition to what?

## 'The People Voted to Leave'

Labour and the Conservatives insist that Brexit must happen because 'the people voted to leave'. Both argue that 'transition arrangements' will mean continued Single Market access while

Image: <http://www.argeointernational.com/2016/09/05/corbyn-vs-smith-how-foreign-policy-will-affect-the-labour-leadership-campaign/>

'alternatives' are put in place. The Tories insist they will complete Brexit and leave the Single Market after a transition of not more than two years. The EU has also usefully set a two-year maximum on transition. Meanwhile the popular impression is that Labour wants a 'soft Brexit' and the government a 'hard Brexit'. Indeed, Prime Minister May has not substantially altered her Lancaster House commitment to leaving the Single Market and the customs union and 'taking back control' of borders and legislation currently under the jurisdiction of the CJEU. There are several problems with all this. The EU will not agree to any deal that gives Britain any advantages over membership, so access to the Single Market (which takes 44 percent of Britain's exports compared with around 7 percent to Brazil, Russia, India and China combined; the entire Commonwealth takes just 9 percent of UK exports, the same as Switzerland and Belgium) will not be available without substantial payments to the EU budget and compatibility with EU law on freedom of movement and much else besides.

On the referendum, the view that 'the people voted to leave' ignores several facts: the referendum was advisory; the Leave campaign was fought on false assurances; the UK constitution holds that Parliament is sovereign, and Parliament therefore could override the referendum in the national interest, offering – if it so decreed – a second referendum with alternatives, such as remaining in the EU, exit on similar terms to Norway's, or the hard Brexit that is the likeliest outcome from the current process – without any transition.

## **Party Interests Above Principles – Unity at All Costs**

Labour and the Conservatives are afraid of divisions in their own ranks as well as upsetting core supporters. Tory renegeing on their commitment to leave the EU risks splitting the party and provoking an election the party does not want. A Labour denial of Brexit, it believes, would cost support among 'traditional Labour voters', and very possibly, split the party. A Labour split is more likely than a Tory split. The Conservative Party is the most successful political machine in the democratic world and the energy devoted to keeping the party together eclipses even the efforts expended on Brexit. In other words, party interest far outweighs national interest among Conservative MPs. Labour is not appreciably different but the risks of a split are greater given the visceral loathing between Labour members of a different hue: Blairite 'modernisers' and Corbyn supporting 'socialists'. Since the June election an uneasy truce is holding as many Labour MPs believe the next election, whenever it comes, will bring further gains. They also believe that Brexit complexities dictate that constructive ambiguity suits Labour as much as it does the Conservatives.

Both parties are kicking the Brexit can down the road. Tories, let's be clear, are shading towards the hard Brexit dreamland of a deregulated offshore island of low tax and low wages. Millions of workers will endure endless austerity in insecure jobs in the service sector. An enhanced servant class will cater to the needs of the super-rich elite, less than one percent of the world's population, and less than ten percent of the UK's. For this happy few, virtually all hard-core Conservatives, Brexit has few immediate consequences. This minority will benefit from global capital investments and a volatile but fundamentally resilient financial services sector, feeding off the

global capital of the world's richest, benefiting from rising share prices in the multinational corporations that dominate the FTSE 100 and shape the lives of billions of people worldwide. These same corporations will suck out the world's resources, destroy the environment through fossil fuel extraction, and increase production and careless disposal of plastics while promoting constant and unsustainable consumption worldwide. The millions of UK voters who voted Leave in 2016 will suffer most from market deregulation and destruction of public services that will follow a hard Brexit combined with a Tory government intent on preserving the privileges of the few over the needs of the many.

## What Labour Should Do

Labour did not create this mess but in opposition it has a duty to prevent the worst consequences of a foolish decision by the previous Conservative leadership. If Labour knows what is good for it in the long term, and good for the United Kingdom and the European Union, it should commit to staying in the Single European Market with the offer of a new referendum if that is what people want. This would reflect the recommendations made by several prominent voices in the Labour movement including Lord (John) Monks, former TUC General Secretary, Richard Corbett MEP, and Chukka Umunna, MP, in a pamphlet produced by Open Britain, the campaign group for a 'soft' Brexit. They argue that many traditional left-wing arguments against the European Union are false: the EU does not prohibit state support for industries, nor would it prevent a future Labour government from renationalising the railways. On migration, the EU has rules to limit absolute freedom of movement; on trade, the prospects for

the UK securing better trade relationships than it already has as an EU member are extremely remote; on austerity, EU membership cannot be blamed for UK government policy since 2010; on the NHS, EU rules have nothing to do with the increasing presence of private provision in the NHS; on employment law and environmental protection, EU membership offers levels of protection that would be severely threatened by future Conservative governments once outside the EU Single Market. The document does not call for a halt to Brexit, but it insists that membership of the Single Market and the customs union is vital in order to avoid a major economic hit that will hammer government revenue and damage living standards.

Labour should also commit to an independent review to explore electoral reform with a view to adopting a system of proportional representation which would guarantee the need for consensus building, and reduce the risk of extremist factions taking over Parliament as has happened since the Brexit referendum. The morning after the referendum I considered the result a right-wing coup without tanks; nothing since has altered that assessment. The Brexit impact on Ireland ought to focus minds on the need for a change in direction. Britain's leaving the Single Market would present a severe economic and political threat on both sides of the Northern Ireland border. Any physical infrastructure or impediment to free movement across 310 miles of border with over 400 crossing points would be a disaster for the Irish and Northern Irish economies and could destabilise the peace established since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. It is astonishing that this issue did not feature more prominently in the referendum campaign, which was dominated by immigration issues including the pants-on-fire lie that Turkey was about to join the European Union.



<https://blog.politicsmeanspolitics.com/why-did-committed-remainers-flock-to-the-pro-brexit-labour-party-57186e3e7683>

Lord Adonis has said that the referendum represented ‘a dangerous populist and nationalist spasm’. The impact is far more permanent than that implies. There is a real danger, as Heseltine has said, that the UK splits from Europe for at least a generation. This act of self-harm could be avoided if MPs who voted Remain could only remember why they did so and fight once again for the national and European interest, rather than accede to the nonsense that an advisory referendum cast a decision in stone, and that party unity above all must be maintained. This twin curse is corrupting Parliament’s overriding duty to serve the electorate’s best interests - as argued by Edmund Burke, the great eighteenth century statesman who established the principle of Parliamentary sovereignty in our constitution. He was also an ideological shaper of the true Conservative tradition. It is extraordinary that the party and the Brexit process is now in the vice-like grip of partisan extremists committed to a hard Brexit. Meanwhile Labour plays a *Waiting for Godot* role, waiting, barely knowing what it is waiting for. It may wait and wait - until the damage is well and truly done.

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## Want to get involved?

### Call for Papers: write for our next issue

We would all admit to a certain extent that the electronic gadgets are an inseparable element of our daily life; this trend was unimaginable before the 21st century. It is natural for humans to bear mixed opinions and emotions towards the contemporary technological advance in fields such as artificial intelligence, humanoid robotics, biotechnology, the Internet of Things, 3D printing and automobiles. Vox Journal would like to invite students and the teaching staff at the University of York to write for our next issue on the '*Fourth Industrial Revolution*'. We encourage a wide array of topics, which concern the history, ethics, economic or political impacts and the discussion of the possible future implications of technological development on society will be.

The word count of the writing should be **1,000-1,500** words including your references, bibliography and illustration(s.) We expect you to use **Harvard referencing**. The submission deadline is **18:00 on 12th March 2018**.

### Bloggers Wanted

We are pleased to introduce you to our UoY Blog on current affairs-Voxensus. The name 'Voxensus' is a hybrid of the Latin words that refer to voice (vox) and perception (sensus). The blog will consist of academic style opinion pieces. Voxensus welcomes all ideas and insights from our university students and professors. University students and professors could use this platform to engage in debates and offer their insights on the current affairs that matter. Your blog writing will be published fortnightly on **PEP-VoxJournal.co.uk**

The word count for the blog writing is from **300-500 words**, excluding the references and the illustration(s). We would need a bibliography and expect you to use Harvard referencing. The submission deadline will be at **18:00 on each Friday**.

If you are interested in writing for our next journal issue or contributing to our new blog Voxensus please contact us at **pep-vox@york.ac.uk** for more details.



# Our Journal Partners

This year we are proud to announce we have teamed up with fellow student-run academic journals from across the UK in order to support each other as well as share writers and ideas.

These publications are:



## **Interstate Journal of International Affairs**

Run by undergraduate students at Aberystwyth University in Scotland and associated with the university's International Politics Department. They publish twice a year and cover international and current affairs.



## **Essex Student Research Online (ESTRO)**

An online multi-disciplinary journal published annually at the end of each year by students at the University of Essex.



## **Incite Journal**

A political journal published by the University of Surrey's politics society. They cover campus events as well as current affairs and debates in politics.



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