

# Resistance

## 'BREXIT: FOR THE



## MANY, NOT THE EU'

The 2018 Labour Party conference, but not the red flag flying high.

### Q: Is it likely that Parliament will insist on a second referendum, the so-called 'People's Vote'?

The steps to getting a Withdrawal Agreement accepted are discussed in a readable publication 'The Brexit Endgame' by academics in UK In A Changing Europe.

After Nicola Sturgeon's recent comments, informal estimates are that only approx..95 MPs (around 30 Lab, 6 Con) actually support a second referendum – and the total number is unlikely to reach 300, even if Labour declares support.

Some support will be conditional on a 'No Deal' outcome, which is unlikely. Bookies currently put the probability of a vote at around 30% (9-4 odds).

### Q: Should we have a second referendum as the 2016 Leave campaign lied and overspent?

Very few people were influenced by the official Vote Leave campaign, let alone specific claims about Turkey joining the EU or diverting public funds – most made their minds made up before 2016. The Vote Leave campaign followed official Electoral Commission advice over using donations. Remain campaigners were also fined for irregularities and the Cameron government's 'Project Fear' pamphlet was not accounted for in Remain spending.

### Q: You just don't want people to have their say?

People had their say in 2016, after a prolonged debate. The largest ever popular vote was confirmed at the 2017 general election, when parties opposed to Brexit slipped back. It is the Remoaners who don't want the people to have their way!!!

### Q: Don't people have the right to change their mind?

Yes, but individuals should still abide by the majority decision. We don't rerun general elections because some individuals regret their votes. Nobody is asking Labour to give back the seats they won last year after the promises made to students were later shown to be unaffordable.

Those who argue this right most should heed their own claims about deciding on inadequate information!

The recent 'debate' has been very one-sided and noisy, with the EU hardly negotiating in good faith and a largely appeasing British government constrained by EU rules – hardly a level playing field. In the short term, this won't give a representative picture of life after EU.

With the tedious party conferences out of the way, there seems to be a record number of anonymous quotes on how the British government and the EU plan to complete negotiations.

A survey shows the most common reaction to Brexit is boredom, with Leave supporters just wanting the government to get on with it.



Unfortunately as time for scrutiny decreases, the chances are that the government will concede hand over fist to get a deal through Parliament. Sir Bill Cash MP is resigned: "My friends in the European Research Group and I have accepted the implementation period up to 2020". Trade Secretary Liam Fox sighs that the agreement can be changed once we're out.

This issue looks at some of the questions that people are asking.

There won't be a final deal much before 2022, when the next general election is due. Whereas much of a free trade agreement could take 2 years to agree, the more advanced details could take 5 or 6 to fully phase in. Brexit might only be properly assessable into the next Parliament.



### Q: Would Remain win if there was a second referendum?

This is sometimes claimed on the assumption that Leave voters will die off and flocks of new teenage voters will be pro-EU. Also that Don't Knows and some Leavers from 2016 will back Remain after finding out what Brexit really means.

This is far from assured. A Deltapoll survey (see above) found more Remainers had changed their minds than Leavers.

James Carver MEP has reported Remainers changing their minds due to the way Britain has been treated by the EU. Reluctant Remainers might be reassured after 'Project Fear' claims failed to materialise and trade looks set to carry on. Many of them will not like the EU or at least will respect the referendum result.

Brexit media coverage has been very one-sided. The balance of coverage would tip back in a live campaign. Experience of 'Europe' referendums has been that the more that the EU is discussed, the more the anti-EU vote grows. Voters would be reminded of the EU's ambitions for an army, political union, etc.

Headache for Corbyn



### Q: What is Labour's actual position on a second referendum? Officially a fudge to keep all options on the table.

Although Labour's "Six Tests" would mean opposing any deal that wasn't a close match to EU membership, it is clear that they relate to the future relationship that can't be decided until well after we've left. The Withdrawal Agreement could pass as it largely keeps the status quo – Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry says Labour 'accepts transition'.



**Q: Will there be attempts to keep us in 'a different kind of Europe'?**

There will always be Remoaners offering the mirage of EU reform. Voters saw through David Cameron's failed renegotiation and reality dawned that no powers would come back to Britain from within the EU.

President Macron wants to keep Britain in the EU. With only 28% approval in France, he is posing as a leader of Europe. (Other national leaders are sceptical of him though.)

His party chairman has just signed up to the Spinelli Group 'Manifesto for the Future of Europe: A Shared Destiny'. If anything, this calls for the completion of a federal Europe. It is based on an earlier Spinelli Group plan offering countries outside the EU a looser membership at first, but with a trapdoor into full union! (See Midsummer 2014 *Resistance*.)



**Q: Is the 'backstop' for Northern Ireland essential to a deal?**

It is also known as the 'Protocol for Ireland/Northern Ireland' in the EU's draft Withdrawal Agreement (WA). It would effectively keep Northern Ireland in the EU for trade in goods, some tax matters and agriculture. This would create a border within the UK unless the entire UK was bound by the same rates and regulations.

Sammy Wilson MP feels that the 'backstop' push is more about keeping the entire UK in the Single Market and a Customs Union.

(The EU says a backstop is needed, but Irish foreign secretary Simon Coveney denied claims that 'No Deal' will reignite violence. News agency Bloomberg has reported that the EU's 'support' for the Republic may be linked to a demand to end its low tax rates, particularly for the Digital Single Market.)

The High Court heard and rejected the argument that Brexit would undermine the Belfast Agreement. Both Labour and the Conservatives reject a hard GB/NI border. BBC Europe Editor Katya Adler suspects that the wording might be made loose to secure agreement.

**Q: Why is there an impasse? What else has been contentious?**

The EU has acted tough to make leaving look difficult and deter others. Although chief negotiator Barnier has ruled out seeking early nomination for Commission President, he could well become 'compromise candidate' so aggressively champions the EU.

Facing domestic image problems, Angela Merkel has talked tough, only to talk up a deal before key Bavarian elections (jobs are at stake). After being seen to concede too easily, Theresa May has also spent the summer talking up 'No Deal', but this might just be for show.

The EU demand for the European Court of Justice to rule on disputes could be dropped, as in principle a lighter touch approach has been agreed for the future relationship.



**Q: How likely is 'No Deal' now?**

Both sides want a deal; the draft WA is 80%+ agreed (Coveney says 90%) with the joint political declaration set to be agreed in November. Guardian Economics Editor Larry Elliott cited a consensus that a deal would be 90% likely. With European Parliament elections in May and anti-EU parties making ground, EU leaders have every incentive to avoid disruption.

At least 20 countries with 65% of the population must agree a deal. Austrian foreign secretary Karin Kneissl noted a rare show of unity.



**Q: How solid is the EU position?**

The EU has cited 'the integrity of the Single Market' to insist that Britain accepts free movement of services, goods, capital and labour. This is bunk – the EU admits that all non-members get free movement of capital. Any country with a free trade agreement (e.g. South Korea) gets a bespoke deal on goods and services. Within the EU, a 'single market' in services doesn't truly exist yet.

The EU's proposal for Northern Ireland is exactly the cherry-picking it objects to the wider UK having!



**Q: Does anything seem favourable for Britain?**

The EU must obey WTO rules that give us some safeguards. Later WTO agreements (e.g. TBT, SPS) would trump the EU's ability to use its Customs Union to discriminate against Britain. Any attempt to stop the export of goods fully compliant with EU rules could be challenged at the WTO (with fast-track procedure).

The EU has a 'common veterinary space' with Switzerland. If the EU insisted similarly compliant British livestock and food items were rerouted to Border Inspection Posts, the WTO could rule that this was an unnecessary restriction on trade and force the EU to accept reasonable alternative control measures.

Manufacturers are concerned about component 'rules of origin' that can complicate exporting. Britain has signed the PEM Convention and the Barcelona Declaration enabling free, tariff-free circulation within the EU, EFTA and Mediterranean countries. (It also commits to respect the UN Charter and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs!)

As we are signatories in our own right, there is evidence that these agreements will not lapse because we've left the EU. By the same chalk, nor would the EEA Agreement, keeping trade with the Single Market.

Even the EEA's supporters admit that it is not ideal, but it would keep trade flowing short term and give breathing space to our incompetent government. Brexit not being an immediate economic disaster would be the single biggest setback to our opponents, who will be itching to push us back into the EU at the earliest opportunity.

References and notes for this issue [www.newalliance.org.uk/ref1018.htm](http://www.newalliance.org.uk/ref1018.htm)

Also links to a Glossary of terms used.



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