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On Brexit: Why Britain Voted Out and What Happens Next

Interview with Denis MacShane, British former MP and Minister of State for Europe, and author of “Brexit: How Britain Will Leave Europe” (2015) and “Brexit: How Britain Left Europe (2016)

You said that Britain will leave the EU and draw a plan of that in your book already month before the referendum. How does it feel to be proven right?

I take no pleasure in being the Cassandra of the Brexit referendum for 18 months before the vote. I wish someone, anyone in the political, civil service, media and business establishment had read my book “Brexit: How Britain Will Leave Europe” published in January 2015 and organised an effective public opinion campaign to defeat the isolationists.

Why do you think the British people decided to leave the European Union? What made you so sure about that before the referendum?

All referendums this century with Europe on the ballot paper anywhere in the EU have been lost. Ministers and politicians and the press blame Europe for everything they don't like. In Britain there has been a 25 years campaign against the EU ever since the Maastricht Treaty and Britain's humiliation in being forced to leave the Exchange Rate Mechanism. Powerful press proprietors like Rupert Mur-

doch or papers like the Daily Telegraph and Daily Mail have been attacking the EU every day this century. The Conservative Party after 1997 decided to depict Labour and Tony Blair as pro-EU dupe – agents of Brussels who had taken over Britain. Above all the issue of immigration caused the Brexit vote. And there were direct lies that if voters supported Brexit there would be £350 million a week for health care and that countries like Turkey, Bosnia and Albanian were about to join the EU. We also now know that as many as 200,000 tweets and other social messages in favour of Brexit were sent out 48 hours before the polling day from Russia. It has long been an object of Putin's foreign policy to see the EU weakened the Brexit has done what the Kremlin wants.

Why do you think were most of the Election researchers and even the usually so 'reliable' bookmakers in Great Britain wrong with their prognoses?

I don't think they have any historic feel for what moves people especially outside the big metropolitan, multi-cultural, liberal cities. There is a forgotten left-behind England that took its chance to vote against the elites, the London establishment, Goldman Sachs, the denizens of Davos and a prime minister who represented the most narrow elite elements of the English ruling classes.

Why are the British voters so annoyed of the European Union? Are they not convinced of the European idea? An what were they furthermore expecting of the EU that the EU didn't give to them?

Britains was never been in love with Europe. We were not defeated or occupied after 1940. The big political parties have always opposed each other on Europe. Labour was generally hostile 1950-1985 and in 1983 the official Labour Party election manifesto called for withdrawal from the EU. Then from 1990 onwards the Conservatives became hostile to the EU culminating in the 2015 manifesto pledge to hold a populist plebiscite with the inevitable result. No prime minister since the UK entered the EEC in 1973 has made consistent pro-EU speeches or explained the benefits of Europe. The press has been mainly hostile especially after the end of communism when "Europe" was presented by the press and BBC as a kind of enemy of core British identity and interests.

Isn't Great Britain afraid of the economic impact of the Brexit?

On the contrary, the press and BBC, have allowed endless propaganda stating that the EU is economically backward, without growth, or without a good economic future and therefore Britain should link with dynamic economies elsewhere in the world – especially those who spoke English in North Americas or the Asian-Pacific region. Also it is true that in the last 20 years the economic picture from the EU has not been positive with low growth, mass youth unemployment, debt and deficit crises, and the cruel treatment of Greece by orthodox ordo-liberalist ideologues. Today it is

Britain that is the sick man of the European economy as a result of Brexit but before in the first 15 years of the 21st century Europe was presented in London as the economic model not to copy

What about Scotland? Could the Brexit be another chance for the separatists? Do you think that Scotland will have another independency referendum? Is Scotland about to join the EU again and maybe even the Eurozone?

No, the Scots voted against Brexit as did London, young people, Northern Ireland and big university cities. We should not forget that only 37 per cent of the total electorate voted for Brexit – a very low threshold for such a gigantic constitutional, economic and foreign policy upheaval. The Scottish Nationalist separatists are incoherent and illogical. They insist on a union with Europe but want to destroy the union with England, Wales and Ireland. In the June 2017 parliamentary election the Scottish Nationalists lost seats to Labour, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats who support the unity of the United Kingdom. Mrs Sturgeon dare not risk a second referendum as it would be lost right now. This may change over the next years especially if Brexit impacts negatively on Scotland but for the moment I do not think we will see a second referendum on secession.

Britain doesn't actually have a great tradition regarding nation-wide referendums, but this seems to have changed recently. What happened?

After 1997 as the Conservatives looked at the success of Labour's Tony Blair they started calling for referendums on everything to do with the EU – the Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon Treaties as well as the Euro. From the end of the 17th century to the 1970s Britain was governed by parliamentary democracy. The Liberal Democrats always insisted that plebiscite were a higher, purer form of democracy than parliamentary democracy. Tony Blair gave in to this fashionable view and it was an easy way of avoiding the responsibility of leadership in taking tough decisions. Mrs Thatcher called referendums "a device of dictators and demagogues" and opposed them strongly. Unfortunately they have now been normalised but since the UK has no written constitution there are no agreed rules on referendums that lay down a minimum threshold of support or allowing everyone to vote. 1.9 million voters aged 18-24 were denied a vote and up to 2 million British citizens living on the continent did not get to vote. The 37 per vote for Brexit based on lies and false propaganda with direct interference by Russia takes away some of the moral democratic worth of the Brexit vote but we have to live with it.

What do you think about the uprising right wing parties in the EU in general? Is that a sign of displeased voters? Voters they want the national identities to be saved?

Certainly there is a rise of populist identity nationalist and xenophobic politics in Britain as in other countries – look at Trump, the AfD, Pis in Poland, the FPÖ in Austria, Orban in Hungary or Geert Wilders in the Netherlands. There is also

a leftist populist anti-Europeanism represented by Podemos or Jean-Luc Mélenchon or someone like Yanis Varoufakis who spends all his time criticising the EU and is closely aligned with right-wing Tory anti-EU politicians in England. The classic 20th century social democratic left and its partner trade unions need a complete re-invention for the 21st century. There are too many left behinds, too many with mini-jobs that do not pay a proper wage, too much ostentatious wealth side-by-side with poverty, large segments of workers described 30 years ago by Ganter Wallraff in his book “Ganz Unten”, and too many parents who do not see a good future for their children. They are the voter base for those who offer populist simplistic remedies just as in the 1920s and 1930s many voted for communist and fascist parties.

Why does the EU not succeed in explaining the positive aspects of the Union?

There are more pro-European voices in the UK but they have had difficulty in getting access to major media platforms. The Guardian paper, for example, is liberal-left, but gave many comment platforms to anti-EU leftwing commentators. The Guardian’s economic editor has always been opposed to European integration and the most popular young left-wing commentator, Owen Jones, invented the term “Lexit” – left-wing exit from the EU. He finally campaigned against Brexit but his earlier childish, naïve anti-European writings helped create support for hostility towards the EU on the left in the years before the plebiscite in June 2016. The English political-media elites – of Tory and Labour – are mono-lingual, have never studied or worked in Europe, and have very little knowledge of how the EU works or the internal politics of other European countries. For years, British trade unionists were told that Mitbestimmung was class collaboration and a genuine trade unionist should oppose worker participation in running firms. The EU is very poor at communications and needs a major reform as President Macron has appealed for. But in the end it is not for Commissioners or bonzen in Brussels to sell the EU. It is all European politicians at national and regional level who have to do that because if they do not support for the EU will fall away as the No votes on all referendums on Europe this century indicated well before the Brexit vote. In the summer I read about 20 books on Europe for a book prize. They are all negative whether from the right like HS Sinn, the liberal centre like Ivan Krastev, or the left like Jan Werner Müller. All were pessimistic and painted Europe in dark colours. If the intelligentsia see in today’s EU a modern version of die Untergang des Westens and are gripped by such pessimism of the intellect why should ordinary citizens feel positive or optimistic about Europe?

Could the Brexit lead to a better organized EU? Isn’t it the chance to fight inefficient and expensive structures in the EU like even many people in Germany proclaim?

Yes, Brexit has to be a wake up call. I write about several essential reforms in my new book and I hope President

Macron’s ideas find support. But the nation states of Europe, their governments and parliaments, are in charge of Europe’s destiny and I see or hear little enthusiasm for reform and modernisation. Every country has its vested interests which it does want to see challenged especially the big founding states like Germany, Italy, France and Benelux.

How does in your opinion the future relationship between the EU and UK look like?

It depends on the final outcome. I would still like to see the Brexit vote suspended or taken over by MPs in the way the Swiss parliament took back control of the February 2014 referendum decision to ban immigration from the EU into Switzerland. It is possible that the UK leaves the political institutions of the EU and no longer elects MEPs, nominates a Commissioner, or sends ministers to European council meetings. But for the rest the UK could elect to abide by EU rules and has full economic access in a manner a bit like Norway except the UK is a much bigger economy and society than Norway. All this depends on public opinion and whether Tory MPs who are in the majority are prepared to compromise. But it will be confused and difficult and there will not be happy and problemless relations between the UK and the rest of the EU for many years ahead unless public opinion makes current political elites think differently.

Nick Clegg, who has written a book on how Brexit could be stopped, said that voters who opposed a poor Brexit deal should lobby their MPs to make clear their views. Is there really a chance that after all the Brexit could be stopped at that the UK remains within the EU?

Unfortunately Nick Clegg who inherited a big successful party with a lot of MPs who were strongly pro-European threw all that away when he decided to become Mr Cameron’s poodle and support right-wing austerity measures. As a result the Liberal Democrats went from over 60 seats in 2010 to 8 in 2015 rather like the FDP found that being in coalition with Mrs Merkel did not lead to electoral success! I agree with everything that Nick Clegg or Tony Blair says on the disaster of Brexit but unfortunately people do not listen to or follow them because of past mistakes made as party leaders when in government. There is no effective voice or campaign against Brexit in Britain. There are many small organisations and decent people but they have little money. Business and economic actors whether domestic or from abroad including German firms are not helping by speaking out on Brexit or giving financial support to those campaigns that would like to expose the lies of the anti-European ideologues and do audits in every community in Britain to show how Britain will be weakened, become poorer and encourage populist xenophobic emotions as a result of Brexit.



Dr Denis MacShane is a former UK Minister of Europe, a Labour MP for 18 years, and a former UK delegate to the Council of Europe. He was a former BBC producer and President of the UK National Union of Journalists. Between 1979 and 1994 he was based in Geneva working on international trade union cam-

paigns. He has written several books on European politics including the first biography in English of the French president, François Mitterrand, and the first book in English on the Polish trade union, Solidarity. He writes for UK, European and US papers.

Kokurrenz um die höchsten Punkte: Herausforderungen für die Deutsche Flugsicherung

Interview mit Fabio Ramos, Leiter der Abteilung Politische Angelegenheiten bei der DFS Deutsche Flugsicherung GmbH

Was ist die Kernaufgabe der Deutschen Flugsicherung, und wie funktioniert der Dialog zwischen der DFS und der Politik?

Die DFS Deutsche Flugsicherung GmbH ist per Gesetz für die sichere, geordnete und flüssige Abwicklung des Luftverkehrs im sogenannten „Kontrollierten Luftraum“ und damit für die Flugverkehrskontrolle in Deutschland zuständig. In der Praxis bedeutet dies, dass die Fluglotsen der DFS je nach Einzelfall mittels Höhen-, Geschwindigkeits- und Richtungs-vorgaben den Flugweg von Flugzeugen im Luftraum bestimmen. Die Aufgabe der Deutschen Flugsicherung beginnt bei der Freigabe zum Anlassen der Triebwerke am Flughafen oder beim Eintritt in den deutschen Luftraum und endet dann wiederum bei einer Landung oder entsprechend beim Verlassen des deutschen Luftraums.

Als Unternehmen des Bundes im Geschäftsbereich des Bundesministeriums für Verkehr und Digitale Infrastruktur findet naturgemäß ein intensiver Austausch in Fragen der Flugsicherung zwischen DFS und dieser obersten Bundesbehörde statt.

Gibt es Reibungspunkte?

Reibungspunkte entstehen eher selten bei unterschiedlichen Auffassungen in Sachfragen. Sie werden dann wahrscheinlicher, wenn andere Ressorts der Bundesregierung Politikziele verfolgen, die generell zu einem Widerstreit mit Zielen der Verkehrspolitik führen können.

Das kann Fragen des Lärmschutzes an Flughäfen und des Klimaschutzes genauso betreffen wie unterschiedliche Auffassungen, wie die Flugsicherung zu einem Erfolg der Energiewende beigetragen werden kann. Im Dialog mit Mandatsträgern in Bund, Land und Kommune spielen diese Themen im Einzelfall eine große Rolle. Hier ist die DFS in der Pflicht, ihren Teil der Verantwortung zu benennen, zu erklären und zu tragen, um einen praktikablen Ausgleich zwischen den widerstreitenden Interessen zu finden.

Wie nehmen Sie die Diskussion über CO2 Zertifikate in der Luftfahrt wahr? Wettbewerbsverzerrung zu Gunsten Arabischer Airlines oder tatsächliche Hilfe im Kampf gegen den Klimawandel?

CO2-Zertifikatehandel ist ein guter Schritt in die richtige Richtung, wenn er global wirkt, weil er international verpflichtend ist. Solange das nicht gewährleistet wird, wirkt er in erster Linie wettbewerbsverzerrend für die, die ihn anwenden müssen. Damit ist weder den Arbeitsplätzen gedient, noch der Umwelt. Insofern sind die auf ICAO-Ebene verabredeten Schritte zu einem global einzuführenden markt-basierten System, Kohlendioxidemissionen durch Klimaschutzprojekte zu kompensieren sehr zu begrüßen.

Jüngst wurde der neue Branchenverband A4E gegründet, bei dem sich durchaus auch Airlines zusammengetan haben, die auf den ersten Blick nicht viele gemeinsame Interessen haben. Wie erklären Sie sich das? Was ist das Ziel dieses Verbandes?

Erklärtes Ziel des Verbandes bzw. seiner Gründung ist, starke europäische Marktteilnehmer auf wenige Themen fokussiert stark auftreten zu lassen. Dahinter steht eine Lobbying-Philosophie, die weg geht von einem „gemeinsam sind wir stark“, die oft auf Kompromissen mit kleinstem gemeinsamen Nenner beruht. Die hin geht zu „die Großen, Lauten verschaffen sich Gehör“.

Dieser Verband hat einen „Brandbrief“ an führende Europapolitiker geschrieben, in dem sich über die untragbaren andauernden Streiks der europäischen Fluglotsen beschwert wurde. Wie stellt sich die Situation für die DFS dar?

Es ist schon bezeichnend, dass diejenigen, die europaweit selbst für die meisten Streiks in der Luftfahrt verantwortlich sind, sich an derart irrealen Strohhalme klammern. „Groß und Laut“ hat eben nur Erfolg, wenn die Politik eine stimmige Argumentation erhält und Lösungsvorschläge, die auch