

BREXIT:

Introduction – What is Brexit?

The Schengen Area:

- The Schengen Area is a group of countries linked so that you can pass through them without needing to show your passport as you venture between them, for example you can travel from France to Germany to Spain without needing to show your passport (an area of open borders)
- The UK and Ireland, although in the EU, are not part of the Schengen countries, which is very idiosyncratic to the general grain of continental Europe
 - This tells us that the UK has a tendency to exploit the variable geometry of the EU as a supranational organisation with varying levels of membership
 - It suggests that the UK is Eurosceptic while still exemplifying a desire to be European, signifying that the UK national interest is in preventing Europe from becoming too powerful as a Super State
 - In other words, Britain wants to derail the European Integration Project by being an EU member but objecting to all of its plans → THIS disruption to the EU has been the key focus of British foreign policy for the last 50+ years, and has been particularly spurred on by the UK's fear of Germany as an economic powerhouse

Brexit Summary:

- In January 1973, the United Kingdom, alongside Denmark and the Republic of Ireland, joined what was then known as the European Communities and later become the European Union
- The United Kingdom European Union Referendum was held in 2016, resulting in a victory for the 'Leave' campaign, which dominated polls 51.9% to 48.1% 'Remain'
 - Many who voted to leave say it takes away the sovereignty of UK countries, hence the motto of that campaign being 'take back control'
 - They also believe the EU to be overbearing, costly and undemocratic, wanting decisions affecting the UK to be made in the UK and by its 66 million members, not by the 508 million present in the EU who are unlikely to be affected by its outcome
 - They wish to reinvoke the Age of Empire, spirit of war, and Margaret Thatcher's approach to political rule
 - Those who voted to stay see the EU as a protector of human rights and the freedom of people and businesses to move as per globalisation, etc.
 - Many believe that if the UK leaves the EU, they will face many issues of food and global security, among other challenges
 - Referendum statistics:
 - 60-75% of voters aged 18-34 voted to remain
 - 50%+ of voters aged 55-65+ voted to leave
 - 57% of wealthy, educated, upper class professionals voted to remain
 - 64% of semi-skilled, manually employed and unemployed workers voted to leave (this is ironic as they would be the most negatively affected by Brexit)
 - Brexit is very much detested in the elite political and social circles of Britain's upper echelon since it goes against the grain of how the world has been developing over the past 60+ years (returning to the nation-state idea in a globalised world)
- There is a conflict of perspective between those who thought Northern Ireland should remain part of the UK and those who think it should become part of the Republic of Ireland
 - In 1999, a compromise was reached known as the Good Friday Agreement, that states that there must always remain an open border between Northern and Southern Ireland (known as the Backstop)
 - Ireland and the EU will not agree to a Withdrawal Agreement without the presence of a hard border between Northern and Southern Ireland, which has become one of the key challenges- if not the biggest challenge- of Brexit to date, since if Brexit occurs, this promise will be difficult to maintain
 - With the UK leaving Brexit, the EU must have a border for regulatory purposes
 - A compromise by Theresa May was reached, which suggested that Northern Ireland and the UK remain in a customs union with the EU until the technology required for completely

borderless trade is established, for example the ability to scan travelling transport trucks as they venture from the Schengen EU states into the separate UK ones → this deal was struck down three times in Parliament

- If there were to be a second referendum, polls held in early 2019 indicate that the leading vote would be to remain according to the people

The Benefits of Being in the EU:

- It creates a more influential economic bargaining bloc with greater buying power as a conglomerate of countries than that of a single country
- Due to the principles of the Schengen Area, travel between Schengen countries becomes easier
- Helps to quickly modernise countries which would otherwise have taken longer to do so, through the EU's commitment to the development of human rights, law, and the market economy within member states
- It creates another level of security as a protector of human rights and political and economic bloc
- The core countries of the EU have the same currency, which reduces transaction fees associated with importing and exporting internationally and also ties weaker economies to stronger ones, like Germany (3rd largest in the world), and therefore prosper (the UK considered changing to the Euro in the late 1990s but decided it was too much sovereignty to give up)

The Cons of Being in the EU:

- Instead of national decisions being made by the country involved, they are deliberated by the 508 million members of the EU, meaning a large portion of national sovereignty is surrendered to the European community (including UK frenemy Germany)
- Being in the bloc restricts the sovereignty and legal action pursuable by local governments
- It lacks transparency in some instances
- Member states have to support the EU with billions of monetary units each year

The "Seasons of Brexit:"

- Season 1:
 - 'Leave' campaign of June 2016 Brexit referendum wins
 - After taking over from David Cameron, Prime Minister Theresa May invokes Article 50 and began what was supposed to be a 2-year exit from the EU, with the original exit date set for some time in March 2019
 - Brexit is predicted to be the "easiest deal in history" by international trade secretary Liam Fox
- Seasons 2 and 3:
 - Theresa May laid down "red lines," the EU negotiated, and a deal was reached, only for this same deal to be struck down in the worst Parliamentary defeat in British history, losing 432 votes to 202
 - This bill went on to be struck down twice more
 - On March 27, 2019, Theresa May confirms that she "will not lead the UK in the next stage of Brexit negotiations," resigning in July 2019
 - That same month, May was succeeded by conservative MP Boris Johnson as Prime Minister
 - The original Brexit date in March was extended until October 31, 2019
- Season 4:
 - Boris Johnson seems very sure that a deal can be reached but is also preparing for a no-deal Brexit, (arguably hoping for a no-deal Brexit) however:
 - In September 2019, labour and conservative MPs both vote to block a no-deal Brexit, forcing Boris Johnson to apply for another extension
 - 3 days before the second Brexit date set for October 31, President of the EU Donald Tusk grants the UK another extension, this time until January 31st, 2020

Contributing Factors to Brexit:

Reading – Goodwin and Ford:

- “The vote for “Brexit” sent shockwaves around the world, rocking financial markets and rekindling global debates about the power of populism and nationalism, as well as the long-term viability of the EU”
 - Paddy Ashdown, former leader of the Liberal Democrats, said: “I am fairly certain that history will marvel at Brexit as the most bewildering act of national self-harm knowingly and wittingly committed by an advanced nation in full possession of its faculties”
- “Aside from calling attention to challenges to mainstream liberal democracy and international integration, the vote for Brexit also highlights the deepening political divides that cut across traditional party lines in Britain and now threaten to further destabilize an already crumbling two-party system”
- The underlying social changes that contributed to Britain’s historic vote to leave the EU began decades ago with the slow but relentless shift in the structure and attitudes of the electorate, including:
 - The growing dominance of the middle classes and of socially liberal university graduates
 - Changes to the electoral calculus (identified below) have altered the historical foundations of the dominant Labour and Conservative parties, whose traditional dividing line has been social class
 - In the 1960s, more than half of those with jobs in Britain did manual work, and less than 10% of the electorate had a university degree
 - By the 2000s, the working class had reduced to around 1/5 of the employed electorate, while more than 1/3 of voters were graduates
 - Traditionally Labour could appeal to the working class while the Conservatives had to find competitive advantage in a cross-class appeal, however by the 1990s shifts in Britain’s class structures required a revolution of old strategies through the blurring of the boundaries they once relied upon
- A second long-running social change is the growing divides in one’s value of national identity, diversity and multiculturalism, more widely known as social liberalism
 - Rising social groups such as ethnic minorities, graduates, and middle-class professionals hold values that are very divergent to those of the once-dominant electoral groups like white voters, the working classes, and school leavers. Values of social diversity and inclusivity are now regarded as a core social strength, and discriminations by gender, race, religion or sexual orientation is considered a social evil
 - The increased political prominence of this outlook reflects the typical worldview of the university-educated professionals whose electorate is rapidly increasing, and who have also come to dominate the top tiers of politics and society
- Subsequently, by the early 2000s, Britain had a growing pool of electorally marginalized, politically disaffected, and low-skilled white working-class voters whose values and identity attachments were increasingly at odds with the mainstream liberal consensus
 - These voters were now available to form the nucleus of a new political movement, however did not have an issue or party to crystallise their discontent and to mobilise it into electoral politics, but with the emergence of immigration as a central controversy in the mid-2000s and resulting surge in support for a new political challenger, both of these arrived

Lecture – Simon Tormey:

- The Economic Grievance Theory – Mark Blyth:
 - Blyth’s economic grievance theory suggests that Britain was severely affected by the Global Financial Crisis of 2009 since its chief export is finance
 - London’s banking sector accounts for 25% of British GDP alone
 - As a result, the Conservatives took over from the Labour party in 2015 and enacted a series of austerity policies, which reduced public spending on universities, hospitals, housing, etc. in order to pay the banks to reflate the economy and recover from the GFC
 - This is ironic since it was the banks that catalysed the GFC in the first place
 - After the GFC caused national debt to skyrocket in 2009, these austerity policies encouraged it to continuously climb, drastically implicating the existing struggle of British communities and individuals, thus leaving them disgruntled by their negative

experience of the interlocked global trade/financial networks and igniting a distaste for globalisation

- The Cultural Grievance Theory – Pippa Norris and David Goodhart:
 - States that the people of the UK were/are inherently concerned with their individual and national identities and the “tolls” immigration places on these
 - This cultural resentment has been simmering for some time in England, spurred on by the perception put forth by the “leave” campaign that immigrant families are taking British jobs and cyphering off their resultant incomes to relatives in their home countries, for example in Poland (hence the leave campaign’s motto to “take back control” of British borders)
 - This resentment has led to the creation of what Goodhart terms “**somewheres**”:
 - At least 50% of the British population will die within 25 miles of where they were born, meaning they are deeply attached to these regions. Where these communities have been diluted as a function of immigration, locals feel threatened and therefore exhibit a preference for nationalistic leadership and foreign policy
 - This contrasts with “**anywheres**”, who are from the transnational political class who revel in the fact that they’re not grounded by a strict regional attachment to their birthplace or home community
 - They subsequently have a cosmopolitan outlook that likes the globalised European setup, and have a different political perspective to the “somewheres” who exhibited deep patriotic tendencies and therefore wanted to leave the EU
- The Democratic Grievance Theory – Simon Tormey and Henrik Bang:
 - If one traces recent nationalistic events like Trump’s election and Brexit, they are largely about the underlying disenchantment of politics rather than about culture and economics
 - In other words, it is more about how we feel about political leaders than it is about our actual political concerns
 - In Australia, only 3.5% of the population trusts our political elites, and only 25% trust any of our politicians at all, signalling an erosion of trust and political engagement in society
 - In the generation of ‘Baby Boomers,’ 30% of the population was/is a member of a political party, whereas now only 1.5% are. As Tormey and Bang argue, this is because we are disinterested with the ‘politics’ of politics, which has subsequently contributed to the democratic grievance of modernity

The Future of Brexit:

- Prior to the continuation of Parliament in September following its Summer recess, Simon Tormey’s best prediction of the future of Brexit was that Boris Johnson would aim for or accept a No-Deal Brexit, in which Parliament would be required to undertake a Vote of No Confidence to counteract his decision and bargain for another Brexit delay (this ended up happening, and the third Brexit date is now set for January 31st, 2020)
- There may be a break-up of Britain, in which Scotland will leave Ireland and Wales-England, leading to the destruction of a union which has run since the 1800s*
- The Republic of Ireland and Southern Ireland may take a vote to reunify, solving the backstop issue
- Anti-EU forces are on the rise, with many EU countries now experiencing an increase in civil desire to leave the bloc
 - This would increase Russia’s power since it would be able to negotiate/bully smaller, singular countries instead of with one large supranational powerhouse
- According to Dani Rodrik’s Globalisation Paradox, any 2 of the following 3 options are possible outcomes for the UK:
 - Hyperglobalisation
 - Nation State
 - Democratic Choices
 - Since Brexit in itself signifies the UK’s anti-globalisation mentality, it is likely that the other two options will come to fruition