

European Commission

Topic B: Negotiating the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Escola Americana do Rio de Janeiro

Eduardo Koranyi & Katherine Costa

"[The withdrawal from the European Union] is a once in a lifetime opportunity to get back the independence and self-governance of this nation." Those were the words of the leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) leader and head of the Brexit 'Leave' campaign, Nigel Farage. The unexpected power of such campaign reflects the reality that the United Kingdom is naturally divergent, both in geography and policy, when juxtapositioned with mainland Europe. Due to this, as of the formation of a predecessor to the EU, the European Economic Community, Britain was hesitant to join and only applied for membership in 1961. The natural differences were further demonstrated by their entrance being vetoed by France twice, with Britain eventually joining in 1970. Furthermore, even while it was a clear European leader and an avid member of the Union, the United Kingdom sought caveats to most treaties, and diverged from the potential further unification of Europe; the aforementioned may be exemplified by the British exemptions from the Eurozone and the Schengen Agreement, among many other such exemptions. Due to reluctance with further unification, the rise of Euroscepticism, their substantial loss in votes to UKIP, the migrant crisis, and the rise of terrorism, the Conservative Party (led at the time by David Cameron) promised a referendum to decide the fate of British-EU relations on the expectation that the nation would decide to remain in the Union. On June 23rd, 2016, the United Kingdom decided to leave it by a 52 - 48 margin, followed by the resignation of then PM David Cameron. The election of Donald J. Trump for the U.S. presidency and massive demonstrations of EU skepticism such as that of Marine Le Pen or Geert Wilders made it seem like the British withdrawal from the EU was pointing to a more significant political trend but the outcomes of said movements further evidenced the fact that the European Union must, and will, continue to thrive and that the British withdrawal only empowers it to do so by further unifying the Union and strengthening trade relations with a new, now foreign, world power.

The United Kingdom has been quick to respond and has demonstrated its strength and its intention to make the withdrawal from the European Union a mutually beneficial procedure. Already, it seems the negative impacts of British withdrawal were overstated and inaccurate: the Pound Sterling did have a substantial drop in value, but that stimulated foreign investment in the British economy and consumer prices were mostly unharmed. Furthermore, annual GDP growth has remained mostly unchanged at a quarterly ~0.5%, a relatively steady growth for a developed economy. Policy-wise, the United Kingdom has been acting quickly and efficiently despite the delay in the official activation of Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon. In fact, the Department for Exiting the EU is currently in place and extremely active, making plans for the prosperous future

of the European Union and the United Kingdom. This department has published a White Paper for the Great Repeal Bill, all details of which will be taken into account when negotiating the withdrawal from the EU. In future, the United Kingdom seeks strong bilateral trade relations with the European Union but also the restoration of full sovereignty to HM Government, especially in controlling immigration and being free to seek strong trade relations with other nations. It is also worth reminding that in current UK law, anyone residing legally in Britain for five or more years have the permanent right to reside, so EU citizens residing in Britain need not worry.

Many leaders from within HM Government have made it clear that no deal is better than a bad deal, which doesn't mean that Britain does not seek a healthy relationship with the European Union, but just that the EU needs to be prepared to make significant concessions to realistically allow prosperous relations. For example, the Union needs to stand down on its stance of allowing Spain veto power over all matters concerning Gibraltar even though it's an integral part of the United Kingdom. The province was ceded to the British in 1713 and when there was a referendum on joint sovereignty of the province in 2002, 98.97% of citizens voted against it, totalling a measly 187 votes for co-sovereignty. Another major concession that Britain must expect the Union to consider is the inherent special relationship between the constituents of the British Isles, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Said nations must enjoy a relationship with free and open trade and free movement and goods, and those born in Northern Ireland should continue to have the ability to choose between Irish citizenship, British citizenship, or both. Therefore, it is necessary that the Union allow the Common Travel Area (CTA) to remain in place. There is also reason to believe that the EU will seek to maintain continued full and unrestricted participation of the UK in European security, criminal justice, and counter-terrorism initiatives, as there are mutual benefits and no tangible downsides for either side in British participation. Lastly, the United Kingdom would like to seek as healthy and beneficial a trade relationship as possible with the EU outside of the Single Market, as long as the UK remains free to control its borders and to seek other trade relationships with non-EU nations without restrictions. In all, HM Government believes it is possible for the United Kingdom and the European Union to turn the British withdrawal from the EU into an opportunity for prosperity if the EU is willing to open some concessions and genuinely seek a mutually beneficial relationship rather than seeking requital for the withdrawal.