

European Unification Divides Europeans: How Forcing People Together Tears Them Apart

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Unification of Europe has brought about radical new divisions within Europe. The most significant split is between the people and their political leaders.

The June 23 British majority vote to leave the European Union has made strikingly evident the division between the new ruling class that flourishes in the globalized world without borders and all the others who are on the receiving end of policies that destroy jobs, cut social benefits, lower wages and reject as obsolete national customs, not least the custom of democratic choice, all to make the world safe for international investment capital.



Actually, the lines are not quite so clear-cut. Political choices never correspond completely to economic interests, and the ideological factor intervenes to blur the class lines. Globalization is not merely a process of economic integration regulated by flows of capital, which is deepening the polarization between rich and poor in the Western countries. It is also a powerful ideology, basing its moral certitudes on simplistic lessons drawn from twentieth century World Wars: the idea that the root cause of wars is a psychological attitude called “racism” which expresses itself in the nationalism of nation-states. This ideology gains semi-religious conviction by reference to the Holocaust, which is considered to have proven the point. Ergo, for the benefit of humanity, national borders must be torn down, national identities must be diluted by unlimited immigration, in order to achieve a worldwide multicultural society in which differences both coexist and cease to matter.

This is a Utopian notion as unsupported by evidence as the Soviet dream of creating a “new man” who voluntarily works unselfishly for the benefit of all. Similarly, it considers human psychology to be perfectible by economic and institutional arrangements. Especially by promoting immigration, the multicultural mix is supposed to result in people all loving each other; there are even national laws to punish alleged expressions of “hatred”. The European Union is seen as the most advanced experiment in this worldwide Utopia of universal love. It is regarded by its intellectual sponsors such as French political guru Jacques Attali as an irreversible advance of civilization. For its fanatic champions, the very thought of dismantling the European Union is equivalent to returning to the stone age.

A chorus of Europists are screaming to high heaven that the world is about to come to an end thanks to lower class Brits too stupid and too racist to appreciate the glorious globalized world that the European elite is preparing for them. One of the fastest on the draw of his pen was the hysterical propagandist Bernard-Henri Levy, whose venom quickly spilled onto the pages of Le Monde and other obsequious journals. BHL trotted out his entire range of

insults to decry the LEAVE vote as the victory of demagoguery, xenophobia, the extreme right and the extreme left, hatred of immigrants, stupid nationalism, vicious hatred, the unleashed mob, idiot leftists, drunken hooligans, the forces of darkness against civilization, and even the victory of garden dwarfs over Michelangelo. Many others worked the same theme, with less verbiage.

The main theme of this wailing and gnashing of teeth is the allegation that the LEAVE vote was motivated solely by racism, racism being the only possible reason that people could object to mass unregulated immigration. But there are indeed other reasons.

In reality, for the majority of working class voters, opposition to unlimited immigration can be plainly a matter of economic self-interest. Since the EU's eastward expansion ended immigration controls with the former communist countries, hundreds of thousands of workers from Poland, Lithuania, and other Eastern European nations have flooded into Britain, adding to the large established immigrant population from the British Commonwealth countries. It is simply a fact that mass immigration brings down wage levels in a country. A [Glasgow University study](#) shows statistically that as immigration rises, the level of wages in proportion to profits drops - not to mention the increase in unemployment.

Those who enjoy the pleasure of traveling through Europe without having to stop at borders or change currencies and who relish the luxury level of cultural diversity find it hard to understand the anguish of those who lack advanced degrees, family connections or language skills, and who feel marginalized in their own countries. Yes, some of them probably like garden dwarfs. But you cannot convince millions of people that their only prospect in life must be to sacrifice themselves for the glory of the World Market.

Moreover, whatever their social status, many people in Britain find it unbearable to renounce their traditional parliamentary democracy in order to carry out Directives and Regulations drafted in Brussels without even any public discussion.

The British

The astonishment and indignation of the Europists to see Britons vote to go *out* is odd considering that most Britons never really felt entirely *in*. When I worked as press officer at the European Parliament, I observed that the only national press corps really present and interested was the British press corps, all eagerly on the lookout for the latest absurd rule or regulation which the Brussels bureaucracy was foisting on the Member States. British media paid attention to the EU because they hated it. Ridiculing it was fun. The rest of European media were largely ignoring it because it was boring and nobody cared. Main exception: a few earnest Germans doing their job.

In the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher forced the EU to twist its rules by demanding "my money back". The United Kingdom stayed out of the Schengen Treaty on free movement of persons. It refused the euro in favor of keeping the pound sterling. More profoundly, the insular English have always had a strong sense of not belonging to "the continent" as well as a particular sensitivity to the notorious "democratic deficit" of the European Union, which leaves law-making to the Brussels bureaucracy.

Considering the insular nature of Britain and its psychological distance from the continent, it is too soon to expect that other EU Member States will soon follow the British example. Indeed, some of the most Euroskeptical populations today were the most Euroenthusiastic in

the past, notably France and Italy, and it is awkward to turn around 180 degrees. For charter Members France, Italy, Benelux and Germany, the break would be much more dramatic. Nevertheless, even in those key Eurozone countries disenchantment with the EU is growing rapidly. Brexit is seen as a warning signal. Thus the Western ruling class will hasten to try to shore up the EU-NATO fortress. The Washington Post quickly called for “strengthening NATO”. This probably means even more strident denunciations of Putin and the “Russian threat”, if such as possible. There is supposedly nothing like an external threat to bring people together.

What Next?

Unfortunately, this referendum did not mark a clean break. Two great difficulties loom. EU rules require a lengthy and complicated process to actually withdraw, a matter of years. And second, there is no viable political force ready to steer Britain through this process. The result is to split the political class still further from the people it should be representing.

The British political landscape is littered with wreckage. Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron called the referendum for internal political reasons, failing to realize that if given the chance, the British would vote to jump ship. His name is now mud all over Europe, condemned for the foolish move of letting people vote on the EU. Cameron has announced his resignation, but his government is dragging its feet in initiating the withdrawal process. Some are even demanding that the referendum be either ignored or held over again until people vote as they should – the procedure that followed previous national referendums that turned out badly for the EU. Meanwhile EU leaders are demanding that London hurry up and get out, so they can get to work strengthening the edifice.

Nigel Farage’s UK Independence Party that campaigned for leaving the EU is a single issue party with no general program and no aspiration to run the government. Former London mayor Boris Johnson has positioned himself to take over Party leadership by advocating Brexit, but he is not taken seriously by most of his own Conservative party and is also stalling on the exit procedure.

The situation of the Labour Party is critical. Jeremy Corbyn, who was elected party leader by a grass roots uprising expressing a strong popular desire to move the party to the left, comparable to the Bernie movement in Democratic Party primaries, has always been opposed by the Blairites who still dominate the party apparatus and parliamentary representation. In this uncomfortable situation the gentle Corbyn has tried to exercise what is meant to be an inclusive sort of leadership, listening to all sides. This softness already led to the mistake of failing to strongly defend party members falsely accused of “anti-Semitism” by pro-Israel zealots. Now the Blairites are blaming Corbyn for what they consider the Brexit catastrophe. It is all supposed to be the fault of Corbyn for having failed to support REMAIN vigorously enough.

Indeed Corbyn’s support of REMAIN was mild, some say because he actually favored LEAVE, but was bowing to the majority in the upper ranks of his party. This concession, if it was one, has not prevented the Blairites from demanding that Corbyn resign as party leader. Petitions are circulating both for and against him.

The trouble is that the mainstream caricature of the Brexit voters as narrow-minded racists, if not protofascists, has not been balanced by any articulation of the strong underlying rejection of the EU as a denial of democracy, as the authoritarian rule by a self-satisfied

globalizing elite with total contempt for what the people might really want.

There is no political party in Britain that is at all prepared to turn away from the increasingly discredited and disavowed globalization trend in order to lead the way to a truly democratic alternative.

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