

BREXIT: CLIMBING UP OR SLIDING DOWN?



A joining of the words ‘Britain’ and ‘exit’, Brexit is used as a description of the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union (EU), through the invocation of Article 50 (a section of a Treaty stating that a member may leave the EU after first notifying the council, followed by a negotiation period of up to two years). Many formal votes and discussions have been held since the first referendum on the 23rd of June 2016, this country has seen three Prime Ministers, and as of 11p.m GMT on the 31st of January 2020, the UK formally left the EU, finalising its withdrawal around 11 months later due to the end of the Brexit transition period. Now, in 2022, a year later, the outcomes of this event have yet to be clear, especially with the problem of the COVID-19 pandemic meaning we cannot exactly differentiate between what has happened due to Brexit, and what may just be a result of the Coronavirus (more workers returning to their families, less products able to be transported etc.). With heavy impacts made on Britain’s economy, sovereignty and immigrations, it is hard to tell this early on whether Brexit has come to affect this country for the better or worse.

Economy

The leaving of the EU has meant that significant and notable changes have occurred to the economy of the country. This includes topics such as the impacts on small businesses and large corporates, the loss of workers returning to their place of birth, and if the government has better control over its wealth now that it has left.

It can be understood that many good outcomes have been discovered economically after Brexit. Firstly, the government has promised to change the financial services within the country to accommodate businesses by altering regulations which were before accustomed to the EU. An example of this is the £20 million SME Support Fund set up to help small companies adapt to new customs inside and outside of the UK. Moreover, it has been stated by the government that they will fund inspiration for ‘cutting-edge technology’ which is the true way forward to develop a more futuristic and modern society within this country. Now that Britain is no longer part of the EU, it no longer must abide to the policies of said group and be restrained by any such rules demanding of less relations being possible with different countries like Singapore, Switzerland etc. From this, they can discuss possibilities of trade between the countries, replacing those with the EU. Small and middle-sized firms can also engage in trade now that they are free of regulatory rules.

On the contrary, Britain has cut loose many important ties, some would argue too many, with the EU, and now it is struggling in some aspects to regain control of the financial market. Fundamentally, now that the country has left the EU, although it is difficult to interpret if these changes are due to the COVID-19 pandemic or Brexit itself, most

businesses have seen a decrease in number of workers who have left the UK to return to their home nations due to several reasons, ranging from uncertainty in working with the EU in these circumstances to leaving because of decisions made by the rest of their family, which will result in an even larger loss of workmen. Consequently, the remaining citizens could then demand higher wages to do their now much-needed work, which raises prices of goods in our country, and so on. This then ends in less economic growth and competitiveness. It will be hard to fill spaces left vacant by people leaving, especially in the education or health systems, causing another problem for the government to solve. Over 7400 financial sector jobs have relocated to other European cities from London since the UK left. Additionally, it has been said that many investors and businesses could lose faith in London due to their uncertainty about how the UK works as a country as itself and instead choose a different city such as Paris or Frankfurt.

Economically speaking, based on all the points listed above, experts have predicted that the per-capita income of each British citizen is likely to reduce due to the outcomes of Brexit, at least for the foreseeable future.

Sovereignty

Many people in the UK believe that the best outcome of Brexit is the fact that the country has more control over its own decisions, national borderlines, and national security in military alliances. However, it may be too early for them to tell if the government has made much progress towards these seemingly beneficial matters.

Now that Britain has left the EU, everyone in the population of the UK, no matter if they voted to leave or stay, can all agree that being part of the EU had restricted Britain's ability to grow as a nation and had forced the country to lose control over some domestic issues. Instead of following British laws, the European Council's laws were to be followed above all else. In short, the Union had put limits on Britain's power that would be taken away when the UK left the group. For example, the country is now free to rise as an independent nation and potentially build relationships with other countries such as Singapore, Switzerland, and the US – may it be trade deals, military alliances, or investment programmes. Britain can also focus its efforts to stabilizing connections with Commonwealth countries, further proved by the Commonwealth games being held in Birmingham (the second largest city in England) in 2022. In addition to this, the government has larger control over the country's borders, enhancing the safety of the population by checking identification of people who wish to enter the UK, unlike the EU, where people may leave and enter countries part of this group as they wish. This could be a counter-terrorist method, one which may not have been possible due to the laws of the EU.

Contrasting with this, now that the UK is not part of the EU, it no longer has a seat on the European table with power enough to negotiate in substantial decisions. This also gave Britain a respected voice in accordance with the rest of the world. Furthermore, it can be argued that the government has been more focused on the matter of sovereignty over economy – an aspect of the utmost importance to this country's future. As seen in the section above, Britain's economy has taken a large hit, a result of politicians neglecting other topics important to this decision.

As a summary, Britain has gained free will in decisions for its own, yet it is still unclear if other problems could unveil themselves.

Immigration

In these coming years, we can expect a change in numbers for our population, as Brexit has caused people to reconsider their current living arrangements – if they'd prefer to stay in a country with new laws or return to their home country.

On the one hand, a reduction in numbers for this country means that there is less strain on the government to provide more resources, such as food, education, and healthcare especially. Now that everybody is experiencing COVID-19, there is pressure on the governments to provide vaccinations and tests for the people, the pressure loosened with less people to care for. Similarly, the government can now prevent people from coming into the country without authorisation, ensuring people are not permitted to leave or enter to country with bad intentions. This would send a powerful sign that Britain has regained control of its borders, further strengthening their points about national sovereignty. Just before the first referendum in 2016, net migration was estimated to be ~ +184,000. However, after Brexit, net migration had changed to ~ -94,000. Experts say that this is due to a mix of both Brexit and Coronavirus.

On the other hand, loss of population could also mean loss of talented workers, who may be people we need to help us in society, such as teachers or members of the NHS. This could result in difficulty providing quality education or healthcare, leaving Britain worse off than before Brexit. Additionally, agriculture is crucial to the future of the country, supplying it with much needed food for its citizens, and yet a study has found 99% of famers were from EU countries, many of which have not returned during the withdrawal.

The aftermath of Brexit has forced the government to look forwards and continue to strive towards their goals, with or without the skills of past citizens who have left their roles in this society behind.

Overall, although some effects of Brexit may also be blamed on COVID-19, it is evident that the path ahead will be bumpy, perhaps bringing more problems than the government had originally bargained for, such as loss of workers, decreased value of GDP, and less control over global affairs. It currently appears that the cons outweigh the pros in multiple places, however it has only been a year since the official withdrawal, meaning there is still time for Britain to flourish independently economically, politically and militarily now that the country has regained control over all aspects.

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