
Ludovica Marchi

# Brexit – some comments

## Presentation

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(In: Brexit and Germany – Positions, Conclusions and the Way Ahead, Olaf Wientzek)

Since I'm living in the UK, early in 2016 I enquired the views and feelings of a few people and academics concerning the incoming Referendum.

♦ The first point which emerged, as you probably imagine, is that the Referendum was felt more as a vote regarding the action of the Conservative Government, rather than a choice about the UK leaving or remaining in the European Union. This was also the result of the fact that Prime Minister Cameron promised to call for a Referendum in the far 2013, in the event he was going to be elected for the second time. Then, just recently, in 2016, from being Euro-sceptic Cameron changed position and opted for remaining in the EU; the business societies and the financial groups were alarmed at the idea of leaving the Union. The PM was also criticised in the domestic domain for having sought and accepted the support of external actors backing the In-Campaign. This was the case with regard to Chancellor Merkel as well as President Holland and President Obama.

♦ Another point which emerged through discussing with British people is whether the Remain Campaign's supporters have sent a clear message to their electorate. We agreed that, generally speaking, the British failed to develop a collective narrative about themselves and the role that they covered in the European Union. Hence, they did not transmit the sense of British presence and influence in the EU to the electorate, and, by consequence, the content of the Remain Campaign was unclear and weak, and it was not surprising that the In-supporters didn't win.

♦ Discussing with Italian politicians, on the other hand, about the Way Ahead, two trends emerged, one concerning the EU's internal consequences and the other the EU's external relations.

♦♦ In the first case, as many discussed, there is the need of discouraging other member states from following the UK's example, a risk that arises with regard to Austria and The Netherlands, among others. An action that could counter this risk is that of avoiding the strengthening of the political aspects of the Union, which means no new rules and no institutional reforms. However, certainly there is the need of firmly approaching some questions, such as the emergency of migration. A balanced attitude to this problem would be that of reinforcing the practices, and not the institutions, and essentially the functioning of the Eurojust and Europol's action.

♦♦ Concerning the Way Ahead in the area of external relations, we agreed with the Italian politicians that the United Kingdom played the important role of connecting the EU to Washington, and that Brexit brings in some risks for some states. This could be, for Italy, the danger of weakening the country's Atlanticism. How can this circumstance be explained? Rome was against

applying sanctions on Russia; the latter is eager to enlarge its area of influence, and Italy could enter Russia's orbit. A first action pointed out by an Italian politician (he twice served as the country's Prime Minister) to militate against the weakening of the trans-Atlantic relations was that of 'planning long, hard, rigorous and complicated negotiations' concerning the UK leaving the EU – which some found to be a kind of nasty suggestion.

♦ The last point I would mention concerning the Way Ahead, is: what could the European Council and the leaders of the member states do in the aftermath of Brexit?

The EU Council, Chancellor Merkel and the leaders of the member states might want to explain their own people that in an interdependent world, countries have to get the balance right between the desire for their autonomy and the necessity for international cooperation in order to approach the problems of the time. These actors would work hard to develop the social dimension of the Union, invest in training and reduce unemployment. In particular these actors would inform their citizens and make clear the values of the European project which are mostly unknown to the majority of the people of the European family.