

# The irony of the Remain Parliament.

Yesterday the Opposition parties and 17 Remain Conservatives voted for amendments to legislation to try to ensure Parliament has to meet in September and October to give them more time to try to delay or cancel Brexit. They call this taking back control and advocating Parliamentary democracy! It is of course the opposite. Labour and Conservative MPs were elected in 2017 on a manifesto for each party that promised to implement Brexit. Parliament voted by a large majority to send the Article 50 Notification of our exit, which means in European law we will leave on 31 October. I remember explaining to the Commons then that was the decision point, the moment Parliament legislated to leave. Now they wish to tear up their promises and refuse to take back control of our laws, our money and our borders despite the referendum.

I do not think even this discredited Parliament full of Labour MPs and a few Conservatives who have ratted on their promise to implement the decision of the people will find a way and a majority to revoke our exit letter. Short of doing that we will leave on 31 October, as promised by the likely next Prime Minister. We are due to leave according to European law. The UK Parliament cannot overturn European law, and only the PM can ask for a delay and seek agreement to changes to EU law to delay our official exit date.

The people made clear in the European election what they thought of the decision of the two major parties to delay our exit. They rejected both. They made it even clearer what they thought of Mrs May's Withdrawal Treaty, which got less than 9% support from the electorate in that election. The Conservative government must press on with preparations for our departure in October. Only such an exit can save this Parliament from driving itself even further from the electors it is meant to serve, and only such an exit can provide a platform for the two main parties to start to rebuild the trust of voters which has been undermined by the delay to Brexit.

The desperate idea this morning that a Remain majority should ask the Queen to override the PM taking us out is absurd.

Meanwhile Project Fear is in an extreme stage. Yesterday the OBR gave us a very pessimistic "scenario" – not a forecast – for a so called No Deal exit. If we just leave and have a Brexit bonus budget as outlined here we will grow faster next year as a result. All the time we stay in the EU as today with a combined monetary and fiscal squeeze we will grow slowly at best against a difficult world background for trade and manufacturing activity. The right fiscal boost, facilitated by saving our budget contributions to the EU, coupled with a more positive money policy could deliver considerably better growth than in the Euro area for us next year. The UK economy has proved very resilient considering the anti growth and anti enterprise policies being pursued.

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## Thank you Mr Barnier

Mr Barnier's refusal to re open the Withdrawal Agreement makes it clear. We leave without signing it, and offer a free trade agreement on the way out.

We do not need months of more uncertainty trying to unpick a small amount of the unpalatable things about the draft Withdrawal Treaty. We voted to take back control of our money, our laws and our borders, and must do so by 31 October.

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## A country's defence depends on industry as well as its armed services

There is substantial joint working between the defence industries, the Commanders of the armed forces and the government. With technology playing an ever more important role problems are analysed and resolved by manufacturers of equipment and programmers of software. As we enter the era of cyber warfare more of the combatants are civilian computer experts, or service personnel with special training turning up at an office or command centre well away from the adversaries.

It was always the case that to win a war the country fighting it had to produce sufficient weaponry, make available plenty of supplies to fighting personnel, and innovate to outwit enemy weapons and defences. In the two world wars of the last century large amounts of the country's production capacity had to be made over to war work to support the fighting personnel. The UK had to be much more self sufficient in food for home supplies, given the attempt of the Germans to sink inbound products coming by sea.

The UK in the second world war achieved amazing results at gearing the economy to war output. At the peak the country was manufacturing over 26,000 planes a year, and replacing millions of tonnes of sunk shipping. The navy was expanded massively from its peacetime lows. It added 553 new ships to the 332 that started the war, including 58 new aircraft carriers. There was a constant flow of innovations, from the world's first code cracking computer through jet planes to mobile harbours, bridges and an oil pipeline.

Today the UK needs to review its strategic capability to manufacture planes, ships and munitions. We trust there will not be another terrifying global scale war of the big powers, but even for interventions in lesser conflicts a country may not be able to pursue the course it wishes if it is dependent on

imported weapons or components. Mr Trump is demanding that the USA keeps the ability to produce all the steel it needs for military and other domestic purposes as a strategic industry. He is also keen to protect US intellectual property and the security of US communications systems as the best protection against cyber attack. It is time the UK was more insistent that UK weapons, tanks and naval ships of all kinds are made in the UK, and that we have the necessary capability to make the components for them.

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## **Independence and military co-operation**

The main continental EU countries are out to strengthen their military collaboration. Over the years they have worked away at joint exercises, common weapons procurement, common standards, exchange of personnel, unified commands and shared missions. There are now military interventions undertaken by EU directed troops or naval vessels. The UK has been particularly concerned about being pulled into a European army, owing to the legal constraints that operate on a member state once it has accepted the competence of the EU in any given area. Some think the UK has already consented to more collaboration than is desirable and is now entrapped. Others accept that as we leave the EU we cannot be forced to co-operate or to participate against our will.

The UK has been keener on joint working through NATO, including our US allies. NATO too has a long tradition of common action, shared defence procurement programmes, common standards and procedures, exchanges of personnel and unified commands for given tasks, exercises and missions. It is clear under the NATO charter that whilst we and the other members sign a mutual pledge to defend each other, a NATO member is free to determine their own commitment to any resulting NATO action. NATO is a coalition of the willing, that makes up missions from members in the light of the needs based on consent.

Under President Trump the USA would like the continental countries to make a bigger contribution to NATO defence. The USA points out that European members of NATO rely on US engagement and the common security guarantee for their ultimate protection. Surely, the US asks, the Europeans could at least meet the minimum funding requirement for NATO membership so they are making a bit better contribution to the collective defence?

The UK does meet the minimum requirement, and does possess military capability to join NATO engagements around the world, contributing naval vessels, aircraft and mobile soldiers. UK forces have worked hard to ensure they can co-operate with US forces, as well as undertaking training and exercises with European forces.

Setting our armed services in the context of collaboration and assistance with others does bring a downside. It might mean that we lack particular

capabilities where we rely on others, which would limit our own ability to undertake a mission for ourselves. The UK needs to ensure it has sufficient capability to go to the assistance of our own territories or allies, and to defend ourselves at home, whoever the aggressor and whatever our principal allies might think.

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## The world's oil balance

The USA has increased her output of oil and gas substantially under President Trump, and seems set to expand it further. As a result OPEC wields less power than it used to. The Cartel has had to limit output to try to keep prices up in the face of large increases in US supply. US output has risen from under 9 million barrels a day under Obama to over 12 million under Mr Trump. Oil using industries have been getting a boost from more and cheaper feedstock and energy.

Meanwhile Germany and the continental Europeans are busy making themselves ever more dependent on Russian gas, much to the consternation of the USA pledged to protect them through NATO. At a time when western countries say they are concerned about Russia's backing for Iran, her provocative cyber challenges and her special disruptive missions it is an odd idea to make the continent more dependent on Russian goodwill and supplies.

The present tensions in the Gulf over Iran threaten the supplies moving through the Straits which are largely bound for Asia and are not needed in the USA. This leads the US President to seek allies and help when dealing with rights of passage through the Gulf, pointing out that other countries need that open waterway more than the USA herself.

I was interested to see Mr Hunt offering to release the Iranian oil tanker from Gibraltar in return for promises from Iran that the cargo will not be delivered to Syria as that would break EU sanctions. Iran has in response declined any such assurances and demands the release of the tanker without any conditions. It is difficult to see how Gibraltar could ensure the oil did not end up in Syria if they let the tanker go. So far the Captain and senior crew of the tanker have not been charged with any offences. Meanwhile the UK is sending a destroyer to the region a little ahead of schedule to strengthen the UK's naval presence there. Mr Hunt says he wants to reduce tension with Iran, who dislike the western naval build up.

What is the UK's national interest in all this? How should the UK make itself secure over energy?