

*Bollocks  
to*

**BREXIT**

**Remain in the EU**

Andy Ross

Southbourne  
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# UK vs EU

## A tale of two unions

- **The United Kingdom** of Great Britain and Northern Ireland first adopted its present form in 1949
- The history of how England invaded Wales, fought Scotland before uniting with it in 1707, and fought the Irish before uniting with Ireland in 1801 and then losing most of it in 1922, is not a pretty one
- The UK is a monarchy with a parliament that badly needs reform
- **The European Union** took its present form in 1993 but it goes back to the European Economic Community founded in 1957
- The prehistory of the EU extends to the Holy Roman Empire founded in 800 and dissolved in 1806
- The EU is a modern grouping of (currently) 28 sovereign states

# The UK

A monarchy  
governed as a  
parliamentary  
democracy

- **The UK is a parliamentary democracy** under the sovereignty of a hereditary monarch
- The Westminster parliament has two houses, Lords and Commons
- Lords are selected in a way that is obsolete or corrupt, or both
- Today the Lords have only the power to delay and amend legislation initiated in the Commons
- Commoners are MPs elected by the voters in their constituency
- Legislation is drafted in committee by MPs and experts
  - Whitehall civil servants play a major role in drafting and implementing the legislation
- **The UK government** is formed at the invitation of the sovereign by the majority party in the Commons and effectively exercises total executive power in the UK

# The EU

A modern  
union of  
sovereign  
states

- The EU grew within the legal frame established by the Council of Europe founded in 1949 to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe
- The EEC founded in 1957 with 6 member states brought economic integration, including a single market and a customs union
- The UK joined the EEC in 1973
- The EEC grew and became the EU in 1993
- The collapse of communism led to a great expansion eastward
- **Today the EU has 28 member states, over 500 million citizens, and a GDP of over \$20 trillion**
- EU membership is open to any European state that has a stable free-market democracy and respects the rule of law and human rights

# The EU

## European Council, Commission, Parliament

- The European Union consists of:
- **European Council**
  - Forum for the 28 heads of the member states to meet
  - Sets the overall tone and direction of the EU
  - Current president: Donald Tusk
- **European Commission**
  - Like a big civil service for drafting and implementing legislation
  - Total numbers about same as Birmingham city administration
  - Current president: Jean-Claude Juncker
- **European Parliament**
  - MEPs from all the member states convene to pass legislation
  - MEPs are elected by proportional representation
  - Current leader of British MEPs: Ashley Fox

# Theory

## Western methods of governance

- **Governance** requires that some person or group of people hold the power within a state
- The ancient Greeks recognised monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny
  - Plato's ideal was not democracy but enlightened rule by a philosopher-king
  - Plato thought democracy would decay into populism and then into tyranny
- The history of Europe has demonstrated the flaws in all the methods of governance except democracy – so far
- The UK first became truly democratic in the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century
- The EU was democratic from the start
  - But its democracy is indirect and depends on effective democracy in its member states

# Theory

## Principles of parliamentary democracy

- Ideally, a democratic government enjoys the consent of the people and expresses **the will of the people**
- **A constitution** sets the frame defining its legitimacy
  - Unusually among modern states, the UK lacks a written constitution
  - The EU constitution is a long and complicated set of documents
- **Voting** in accordance with the constitution selects parliament and hence a government
  - The UK has a first-past-the-post voting system, which usually delivers a governing party but generally fails to ensure cooperation between parties
  - The EU and many of its member states use proportional representation, which ensures a representative parliament but often leads to coalition government
- The will of the European people as a whole is hard to define

# Practice

## Identity politics is endangering the EU

- **Populists** can easily say that national or regional identity trumps European identity
  - Populists in Hungary, Poland, Italy, and the UK are defying the EU and calling its founding principles into question
  - Only in the UK is there a serious movement to leave the EU
  - Only in the UK are memories of WW2 tinged with nostalgia
- The EU was founded primarily to preserve the peace in Europe
  - To secure the peace, it encouraged economic integration
  - Only in the UK was economic integration the primary motive for membership
  - Only in the UK, with its anglophone attachment to US global hegemony, was the EU a secondary attachment
- If UK populist agitation leads to a “successful” Brexit, this could encourage populism elsewhere and cause the EU to **collapse**



# Disaster

A descent into war in Europe would wreck global efforts

- **If the EU collapsed**, European nations would fall like dominos to agitation encouraged by Russia
  - Russian populists have developed an identity politics that finds resonances in Europe
  - Russia would like to be the leading nation in a new Eurasian Union (EAU)
  - The EAU would compensate for the collapse of the USSR
- A collapse of the EU could in the worst case cause democracy in Europe to morph into tyranny
  - The UK would join an Anglo-American Alliance (AAA) to resist the EAU
  - The result could be a WW3 in which the UK is destroyed
- **Global imperatives** such as fighting climate change, species loss, and economic injustice would likely stall

# Conclusion

The UK should  
stay in the EU

- **The UK is not an island** culturally or economically
  - Culturally, the UK shares everything with Europe and America, and increasingly with other states and regions worldwide
  - Economically, a rupture with the EU would cause massive damage in the short and medium term, with no foreseeable upside
- **The EU is the best club on offer** for the UK to leverage its strengths into a presence on the world stage
  - The EU is imperfect and needs reform – so is the UK
  - The EU is not a perfect democracy – nor is the UK
  - The EU is a union of mature economies – much like the UK
  - The EU wants good relations with the US – just like the UK
- **Brexit would distract the UK** from playing a leadership role in tackling big and important global challenges

# Afterthought

## What is sovereignty anyway?

- Are the British people sovereign?
  - The UK monarch is sovereign, in a way
  - The Westminster parliament is sovereign, in a way
  - The UK as a member state in the EU is sovereign, in a way
- Is Bournemouth-Christchurch-Poole sovereign?
  - The new council elected last week is beholden to Westminster
  - Locals elect MPs to Westminster, but the MPs work for the UK
  - You might say at least they're British, but that's discriminatory
- Am I sovereign?
  - Surely not as a subject of the UK crown
  - Perhaps not as an EU citizen either, but it's better
  - I like being an EU citizen