

Why a second referendum would be a disaster

Voters were told we would make the decision on leave or stay. We were told it was a once in a generation opportunity to make this decision. This was all in the government leaflet and in the Hansard record of the Referendum Bill debates. So any second referendum would be a clear violation of past promises, bad for trust in government and politics. No-one thinks the establishment would give a second thought to a second referendum if they had won for Remain. They would have been biting and scornful in turning down any such requests from unhappy Leavers. Many of us would have accepted the result as we did for the prior one we lost where we did not ask for another for the first 20 years or so. It was only when the so called Common Market people voted for had visibly morphed into a monetary union with a planned political union on top that we sought a referendum on this fundamental change of character in the EU.

The most likely outcome of a second referendum is another win for Leave, which would presumably do nothing to appease those who lost last time and now demand another go. Were the second to narrowly reverse the first, then Leave would rightly feel cheated and would ask for best of 3.

Campaigners say we need to vote now we know the terms of exit. The truth is of course we do not have a clue what the terms of an agreed exit will be, and might not know them for 2 or 4 years were something like the Withdrawal Agreement to resurface or were there to be a delay for more talks.

Second voters also cannot agree the question to put. It is insulting to put the same question again, telling 34 million people they did not know what they were doing last time and they have to have another go. Justine Greening and others propose a three way question – do you want to just leave, or to remain, or to have a negotiated exit. What is the third one? How can this bring the country back together again, when the winning proposal may only have 34% support? That would be a huge invitation for continued unhappiness and more debate over what a three way vote actually meant, and why the majority was thwarted.

Some say they want a vote between some negotiated agreement and remain. That means most Leave voters are disenfranchised because our preferred model is left off. Some say lets have a contest between a negotiated departure and no deal. That is the least offensive one. It is a new question. It cannot take place before there is an agreed option. It would annoy Remain enthusiasts as their option is not on the table, so it is difficult to see the point of it. Meanwhile the law says we leave on 29 March whilst Remain MPs are still trying to thwart Brexit.

[Wokingham Town Centre and Christmas shopping](#)

My recent visit to the shops saw good trade in Waterstones where I found a good present for a family member, and saw plenty of people trying out Gail's Bakery where bread is baked on the premises and where people can get a good café service including lunch menus. I would encourage more to come and try the new Wokingham in the run up to Christmas. There is free parking on the Saturdays before Christmas in the Council car parks.

[Congratulations to Dr Antoni Chan of the Royal Berkshire Hospital](#)

Last Wednesday I met my constituent Dr Antoni Chan of the Royal Berkshire Hospital who received the award for 'Best Care by a Rheumatologist' from the National Ankylosing Spondylitis Society. Voted for by patients, the Patients' Choice Awards recognise those health professionals who have gone above and beyond to help people with axial spondyloarthritis including ankylosing spondylitis (AS). Dr Chan received a large number of nominations describing him as "inspiring" and "amazing", going "above and beyond his role".

The award was presented at the Houses of Parliament on 3 December, to coincide with the launch of NASS' new campaign Every Patient, Every Time.

Many congratulations to Dr Chan for his outstanding work.

[A managed exit without signing the Withdrawal Agreement](#)

I will be writing soon about how this is our best way forward. It is not "crashing out" but cashing in, as we will keep the money the EU wanted to extract via the Withdrawal Agreement.

May day

Yesterday Mrs May at last admitted she could not win the vote. She had to accept the Withdrawal Agreement was disliked by far too many MPs.

It was therefore a curious decision to spend the first half of the campaign rushing round the UK as if appealing to voters in a General Election, and to spend most of the last week-end wooing businesses as if they had some kind of bloc vote.

The Prime Minister did not once approach me about my intentions. Maybe she accepted my view and realised she could not change it. Her Chief of Staff told me I would be invited to a one to one meeting with her which never materialised. Several other MPs I have talked to were also left alone, when the government needed every Conservative to vote with it to give it any chance of winning. They had already lost the support of the DUP.

Stirring the country up did help generate a lot of constituency and nationwide correspondence. I received more messages to oppose her Agreement than to support, and many positive messages about the approach I took in the Parliamentary debate. It also shifted opinion against the Agreement. One recent poll says 62% wanted the Agreement voted down and only 25% support it.

Mrs May implied she can get some reassurances about the Irish backstop and then try again to get it voted through the Commons. That is very unlikely, given the magnitude of the opposition to it. There should be no doubt that this is a completely unacceptable surrender of powers and money by the UK for no good reason. This is allied to the very worrying treatment of Northern Ireland as some new country called UK (NI), to be treated differently for customs purposes and with different legislation to the rest of the UK. Even if the whole backstop was removed completely I would not vote for this one sided and unfair Agreement, and nor would a good many other Conservative MPs. What bargaining power would we have left for a better Future Partnership after signing away powers over laws, borders and money?

Only a large defeat will send a clear message to the EU that a few cosmetic changes to the Agreement will not be sufficient to get Parliament to change its mind, and to get them to understand we will be leaving with no Withdrawal Agreement unless they radically change their approach. The Prime Minister's decision not to press the vote means there would have been a big defeat.

I have given Mrs May and her team plenty of advice to avoid this outcome which they have ignored. This Agreement is Mrs May's Agreement, and this latest Project Fear campaign was her campaign. The more they run Project Fear and the more extreme they make it, the more most of the public shrugs its shoulders and scorns politicians who mouth such nonsense. Mrs May was unclear when she would bring this Agreement back for a vote, and unclear over whether it was even feasible to get changes to the legally binding text of the Withdrawal Agreement as opposed to the less important text of the vague Political Declaration.

Many MPs are asking why Ministers were made to go out and assert that the vote would definitely take place today, and why they had to maintain the fiction they would win. This has removed confidence in Mrs May from some more MPs who used to support her.