

## Cambridge Analytica and Brexit: what next?

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I have followed the Cambridge Analytica story with interest. It is of enormous importance, especially with regard to data security. It also matters to the whole Brexit story. But there is one question that keeps occurring to me that is seemingly not being asked, and that is when it comes to Brexit 'so what?'

So what if Leave abused the rules, which I think they did: the evidence is overwhelming?

So what if they targeted voters who had not given their consent for their data to be used in this way?

And so, so what if the result does not really reflect a fair election?

All of this matters, but only as a matter of curiosity if nothing is to be done about it. And that then begs the question of what can be done?

Should the result be declared void? There would seem to be good reason to do so.

But if it does that mean Article 50 should be withdrawn?

Can we withdraw Article 50?

And will our EU partners be kind enough to agree it was all just a mistake and we can go back to where we are?

But what if we do not follow through on this? What is the PM ducks this issue, as I suspect she will? Does this suggest that rigging elections is acceptable because the consequences cannot be undone and some fall guys can be made to carry the insignificant price?

These are not minor issues. They go to the heart of what democracy and the rule of law means. And what seems very apparent is that they do not matter to those who secured a Leave vote. But in that case what are we to make of their aspirations? And what do

they say of the country we are heading to be?

I reiterate that the stories about Facebook and data are important and need to be addressed. But in my opinion the existential questions about how the UK has been stolen from those asked to determine its future seem more important still.

I am not saying that many of those who voted Leave would not have done so without this data campaign: I am sure that they would have done. But I also think it entirely reasonable to think that the referendum was tipped by the use of what seems to be illegal funding and data secured inappropriately. In that case it is not just fair, but right and proper to ask 'what next?'

So far politicians are not answering, but the reality is that they will need to. It's either they do or the decline and fall of the UK will continue, unabated.