

## If we want to beat Brexit a Peopleâ€™s Vote is not...

Published: January 15, 2026, 10:15 pm

---

A weekend of reflection leaves me still bemused by Brexit. Or at least by Brexiteers. Let's leave aside all the nastiness of some who claim to represent those interests. Let's instead consider what Brexit is supposedly about. Except I cannot. Because I do not know.

The claim that Brexit is about the freedom to negotiate trade agreements is obviously wrong: we cannot get a better deal than we have got from the EU.

The idea that it is about English nationalism is also incorrect: the country it would create is nothing like that which those who promote this idea think they recall, as I argued recently.

Whilst the democratic deficit of the EU is very obviously no worse than that which we are suffering in this country at present.

And we all know that almost no Brexiteer can name an EU regulation that they would actually want to repeal.

Or a decision of the ECJ that they actually dislike.

So what is it that those who support Brexit really want?

I will not resort to comment on race: again, I think that overstated, although freedom of movement is an issue despite the benefits it brings to this country, which is why little effort has actually been made to control it.

The reality is that no one really knows what Brexiteers want, except to be out of Europe for reasons unspecified.

So I come to three conclusions. First, the virtues of Brexit are mythical: there simply aren't any.

Second, in that case a lie has been perpetrated: the consequent question that has to be

asked is why?

Third, this all fits into a model of exploitation that is as old as life itself. This model is of a powerful group drawn from an elite that itself feels alienated from power propagating a myth to win support from those they also feel isolated from the advantages of society to win support, indifferent as to whether they meet the need of those others or not.

In other words, Brexit is a giant con trick. It has been made possible by the fact that a powerful elite, who feel as though society does not understand them (which is wrong; it does and treats their ideas with justifiable contempt) has control of a significant part of our media precisely because it is not as competitive or open as their preferred economic model would deem desirable, and use that control to peddle lies. The aim has been to misinform, and it has succeeded.

Of course I know all, the problems with this analysis.

It suggests that there is an alienated elite behind Brexit, but I think that beyond dispute.

Just as I think their far-right thinking is the indisputable reason for their being alienated.

And the idea that they have captured the media, partly though their own histories within it, is incontestable.

Whilst they have undoubtedly and deliberately arbitrated regulation intended to create media impartiality to their own advantage, and without compunction.

Just as some have shown little regard for the law.

So far, so good then: the sell-in of the myth has been effective.

But is it fair to say that there was an alienated section in society open and willing to buy the myth? Isn't that patronising?

I suggest not. The politics of neoliberalism, accepted far too widely across the political spectrum (still) created that alienation. I think that indisputable.

And it went on for too long and too perniciously for those subject to it to ignore it. I think this fact, although bizarrely the leadership of Brexit bare-faced denies it whilst seeking to exploit it.

And could the resulting resentment be exploited? Of course it could. We know that. If exploitation of opinion was not possible advertising would not exist and modern society would be very different from what it is. Let's not pretend otherwise.

Which all then leads to the question, so what?

The answer is threefold.

First, the credibility of the purveyors of the lie has to be shattered: there is no better world outside the EU, save for those who lied and their disaster capitalism. I think that is becoming apparent now.

Second, their narrative has to be replaced: there has to be a better story to tell. And, of course, it has to be backed with a credible plan for delivery.

And third, the systemic failings that allowed this very obvious minority to seek to hold a majority to account have to be addressed.

The shattered Tory party cannot do this, and will not for a long time. Their wounds are too deep and their confusion too great.

The Brexiteer parties are the problem, and not the solution.

The Lib Dem's helped create the problem. I do not anticipate their re-emergence. They are, in any event, answering yesterday's question.

I wish Labour was fully engaged in this issue. But its current leadership is obsessed with mid-twentieth century mechanisms and process for controlling the means of production. That's a big problem. What matters now are what is made, what is said, and how the political process is managed. These are what will determine whether the threefold needs of sustaining life on earth; ensuring all benefit fairly if that is to happen; and delivering truly representative democracy can be achieved. Against these criteria 'if only' has still to be what is said of Labour; if only it could not just reject neoliberalism (which it is seeking to do) but replace it with a meaningful alternative.

And of the rest? The SNP leadership is moving worryingly and determinedly neoliberal, austrian and banker-friendly. But there are those who do oppose that and the membership appear aware of the risk.

Plaid do not seem to be making that mistake.

And the Greens seem most in touch with the agenda we need. But the world watches and applauds Blue Planet and carries on as before.

All of which means displacing the Brexit myth remains hard. Until the left looks to itself and realises that it has to tell a very different story - an epic of survival, transformation and reform worthy of any multi-part series - we're stuck fighting the massively powerful but false narrative of Brexit with visions of rail nationalisation.

And that will not do. Lives are literally on the line now. When will the left realise that it remains their job to transform prospects for all, or it has no purpose? But limited exceptions apart, that's not the story it is selling.

If we want to beat Brexit a People's Vote is not enough: little short of a revolution in thinking will do.