

BREXIT PROTESTS TURN UGLY

If there's one thing for certain in Britain today, it's the case that Brexit will be guaranteed to raise our emotions.

Brexit conjures and plays with our communal emotions and heart strings. Do we identify as a Remainer or a Leaver?

Do you want a deal or no-deal. Do you want a 2nd referendum or not? These questions now serve as a way to identify who we are in the post-Brexit vote environment. That is until March 29th 2019 when (at the time of writing) the UK is scheduled to leave the European Union and all of its good and bad points are left behind – for good.

WE HAVE HISTORY

To truly have any chance of understanding the emotional impact of Brexit on the UK, let's look at the history of the UK/European Union (EU) relationship. Turbulent would be an understatement;

The EU formed several years after the second world war when old enemies France and Germany started to co-operate economically and politically.

Before the UK's first European referendum in 1973, the UK had already said a resounding "Non!" to becoming one of the founding countries of the emerging EU. Until the referendum that saw us enter a new era of co-operation with our European allies.



Anti-European newspaper headlines

But when it comes to Europe, us Brits have always had an emotional view of its benefits to us.

The 2017 referendum result to leave the EU was a blow to many. But Leavers were overjoyed. They now had the chance to get back the sovereignty that they felt the UK lost by what they saw as the UK handing control of UK law to Brussels and the EU.

MIGRATION

However, Ray Finch UKIP MEP for South East England told me that he believes that a large "majority of people voted to leave the EU on migration" and not really anything else.

They felt (and indeed still feel) that most problems in the UK were down to migration taking away jobs from UK people and that the NHS would be healed by leaving the EU.

At a recent Brexit protest in Westminster I met and spoke to people who passionately believe in leaving



Ray Finch MEP (UKIP, South East England)

Europe with or without a trade deal in place. Their cry of “Out Means Out” goes to show that there is a belief that the UK is being lied to.

CIVIL WAR



The UK has to be very careful. Feelings were running high at the protest I attended. Remain supporters mixed side-by-side with Leavers but the banter between them was not convivial or pleasant. Raised voices, attacks on property and menacing tones were evident. It appears that civil war is an option for some protesters if they don't get their own way.

The self-styled Yellow Jacket movement has taken a lead from the French civil unrest movement that is currently protesting violently against their government. Although the UK version seems to be

Anonymous Leave protester
UK.

taking their “fight” right to the heart of the

“SOUBRY IS A NAZI”

There's a new way of talking to MPs emerging. One that seems to allow some members of the community to have a voice.

Figureheads such as James Goddard are spearheading vocal attacks on MPs and police. Forever changing what is acceptable as far as free speech is concerned.

This new style of protester, one that brings intimidation and fear to otherwise peaceful protests, has prompted the House of Commons to issue new safety guidelines for Members suggesting that they do not wear security passes in public; as this would identify them as a potential target to protestors. They even go as far as suggesting that Members take a discreet route into Parliament to avoid feeling unsafe. This no doubt follows the murder of MP Jo Cox in 2016 when she was fatally attacked in public in her constituency.



But now we see Conservative MP for Broxtowe Anna Soubry being heckled while live on air recently. She was labelled a Nazi by football style chanting. Visibly shaken she was then followed along the street by a group of men shouting questions until she reached safety to chants of “scum, scum, scum” from the protestors.

A COUNTRY DIVIDED

Not all protesters are happy with these new emerging potentially violent tactics. Steve Bray has been a regular fixture outside parliament conducting a committed peaceful protest since 2017.



He is increasingly being seen as a figurehead for Remain supporters to rally behind.

Although he's worried that the Brexit divisions will harm the country. Steve told me that the far-right Yellow Jackets are not condoned by the other pro-Brexit organisations.

Leave Means Leave have even removed banners and other paraphernalia as the Yellow Jackets have tried to jump on the Brexit bandwagon using them as a stepping stone.

Polly, another Remain supporter described the difference in the difference between the protesters. She said that the police presence outside Parliament is essentially only there to

protect the Remain supporters from the Leave supporters. She says that Remain protesters are peaceful and not at all violent. She says that this was evidenced by a recent rally that was attended by around 700,000 people where not a single arrest was made.



Polly

UNCERTAIN TIMES

Where does all the protesting leave the UK on Brexit?

At the time of writing Prime Minister Theresa May has set a vote for MPs to accept or reject her deal with the EU.

Commentators say that this vote is very unlikely to be successful. If it were not, this would leave the very real prospect of the UK withdrawing from the EU at 11pm (UK time) on March 29th 2019 with no trade deal or answer to the Northern Irish border question in place.

If the UK leaves the EU without a deal or any agreements in place – no-one knows what would happen.

This may be enough for the emotional Leave campaigners. We shall have to wait and see.

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CONTRIBUTORS

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Soubry footage – Reuters

James Goddard footage twitter.com/dunc_saboteur

Steve Bray (Stand of Defiance European Movement protest since September 2017 REMAIN protestor)

Polly