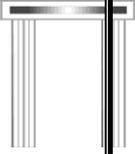


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### **Surrender or Sovereignty?**

**As the government faces down Brexit's enemies at home and in the EU, these are the real alternatives, says think tank Director.**

**Publication:** 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019

**PDF:** [\*Now or Never: Countering the Coup Against Britain's Democracy\*](#)

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, is in battle with Parliament on behalf of the people. He intends to leave the EU on 31 October and so execute the democratic decision taken by the majority of voters in 2016. He will do so either with a deal, now on the horizon, or without one, although MPs have passed a law to delay, if not prevent exit.

In *Now or Never: Countering the Coup Against Britain's Democracy*, Sheila Lawlor, Politeia's Director and a historian by profession, examines what is at stake as the EU decides whether to strike an exit deal. She explains what lies behind the current impasse, how Brexit's opponents in the EU and UK have sought to obstruct, if not reverse the decision, and why and how the Prime Minister must be resolute.

In particular she explains:

- On this battle hangs the fate, not only of Brexit, but the freedom of people in this country to decide how they are governed and by whom, adding:  
‘This is a fight not only to make Brexit happen as promised, but to preserve and restore the tattered institutions of government and parliament as the servant, not the master, of the people.’
- Over centuries the UK's political arrangements reflected the popular will, to which monarchs, governments and parliaments deferred, often reluctantly, often late. If they failed to do so they lost office.
- Although parliament is supposed to guarantee that authority, since 2016 it has sought to defy it, aided for a time by ministers under Mrs May's leadership. As Lawlor writes:  
... We are seeing ... the last throw of the dice by MPs to entrench a parliament that has lost popular support on the greatest matter of the day, has forfeited the constitutional authority to legislate, and now refuses to seek it. For in Britain's constitution the authority to exercise power comes from the people. Having voted to restore the country's sovereignty, like [the Prime Minister], they want Brexit ‘done’...

The author traces failure to execute Brexit to the EU's relentless campaign to keep the British economy under EU law and discusses how the EU's tactical use of the Irish border to subjugate the UK economy won the day. She outlines the complex history of the backstop as the EU sought to impose its economic agenda - including by the backstop.

Discussing the background to the Good Friday Agreement and its aftermath, the evidence is that mutual arrangements for north south cooperation have worked well and ‘there is no reason that [that] ... should not continue’. She warns that the EU should accept that:

It has no right to stir up the historic battles, now buried, of a complex and difficult past, to its own political ends, reigniting embers of a dying fire.

The author concludes by proposing:

- The Prime Minister should, as he is now doing, seek to push through his declared policy to leave with a deal, if the EU cooperates
- But the UK should be confident about leaving without an exit deal, if one is not agreed. Britain would trade under WTO rules.
- Simultaneously, the UK should propose a future free trade deal with the EU and begin preparations.
- Under both scenarios, given that the UK and EU will be starting out with the very same rules, the EU would be in breach of international law if it tried to obstruct UK trade or put up regulatory barriers.
- Whether or not the UK leaves with a deal, the continuity of arrangements over the Irish border will be fixed under international law.

Commenting on the wider picture, Dr Lawlor explained:

‘Brexit is not only a battle about constitutional freedom and the sovereignty of the UK. It is a battle between two economic systems. The EU’s centrally planned and controlled economic system run by Brussels is incompatible with the UK’s tradition of free markets and competition, open to challengers and small companies alike.

For France and Germany the EU was a Franco-German project developed in the 1950s for reasons of history, politics and France’s national security. There may still be good reason for each to put their future in the joint venture for EU integration. But for the UK, the world’s fifth richest economy, with a different history and a tradition of economic freedom under the law, the EU system is incompatible with this country’s constitutional sovereignty and economic freedoms.

The UK's focus should now be on a future free trade agreements with the EU and globally, without the constraints of being bound by EU law.’

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***Now or Never: Countering the Coup Against Britain’s Democracy*** by Sheila Lawlor will be published by **Politeia**, 14a Eccleston Street, SW1 W9LT, on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019, priced £8-00. [\*Now or Never: Countering the Coup Against Britain's Democracy\*](#). Hard copies are available from [press@politeia.co.uk](mailto:press@politeia.co.uk).

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