

In search of Independence

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The IEA/Brexit prize is to be awarded for the best blueprint covering Brexit, the process of Britain leaving the EU. In the IEA/Brexit scenario there has already been a referendum, an 'out' vote, and a notification by the British government triggering Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty. What happens next?

This is a welcome serious initiative and this study considers briefly the Brexit prize process against the background of the history of American Independence and Indian Independence.

Major Lesson

The major lesson to be drawn from the history of the movements to American and Indian Independence is that the course of these two movements was quite long and that the final outcomes were different from the aims envisaged by those who set the independence process in motion.

Pre-conditions of Brexit

A referendum vote for 'out' and the triggering of Article 50 are fairly heroic assumptions, given that the three major political parties would be likely to be on the wrong side of an 'out' referendum and, even if that result happened, would be loath to trigger Article 50. Indeed, some parliamentary chaos could well follow an 'out' result.

But, of course, the Brexit prize has to start from some assumptions.

At this stage it is simply worth noting that an 'out' vote, and even the triggering of Article 50, does not necessarily mean Britain leaves the EU. Of course, Article 50 does say that "*the [EU] treaties cease to apply*" two years after the date of triggering, whether or not a withdrawal agreement is in place. However, the likely course of events is that there would be years of negotiation, muddying of

discussions with counter-proposals and so forth. It is not impossible to envisage a politician, such as Alex Salmond, playing a similar role as Jinnah in pre-Independence India.

Similarly, an 'out' result, and the triggering of Article 50, does not mean the independence movement has achieved its goals and can come to a standstill. Both the history of the US and India show that, from the first statements of aspiration to independence, up until the final legal consummations – and leaving aside the course of the war in the USA and internal upset in India – there was a steady conversion of the political leaders and the entire political class to the inevitability of independence, even if crucial details, including geography, remained unsettled.

This conversion took place, not only in the countries seeking independence, but in the political class in the imperial power, Britain.

The course of American and Indian Independence

An examination of the course of American and Indian independence shows that the decision to move away from the status quo had been taken by part – but not all – of the political class some years before such independence was achieved and formalised.

Also, in America, the actual outcome either in 1783, 1788 or 1796, was quite different from what those advocating change in 1773 actually put forward.

In America, the original demand for self-government moved, in two years, to the Declaration of Independence, but the settled borders and the Constitution were finally achieved in 1788 and 1796. (Canada was excluded.)

In India, the original call for independence of a United India in 1929 was not achieved. Instead three

independent states emerged over the period 1947-1973.

Therefore, the evolution of independence did not follow the original aims of those who set the political process in motion but was also influenced by negotiations, the actions of outside powers (especially the French intervention in America being critical), errors by both sides, and the course of events.

However, in both America and India over the course of the independence process, there was a gradual conversion of the political class, the military, the financial elite and, indeed, the bulk of those who took a political interest, to its inevitability.

The reasons for Brexit

Therefore, the production of plans for Brexit has two aspects.

Plans for Brexit are hugely worthwhile as they set up a factual basis for action, identify problems and flush out the arguments of opponents. They should not, however, be considered a pre-determined and inflexible political pathway.

The other aspect is to convert the political class along with the financial, media and official elites, not only in Britain but also in the EU, as well as waverers in the electorate and the leaders of outside powers. A worked out plan demonstrates to these people that Brexit is a feasible and advantageous outcome.

It is, therefore, part of the process of winning over the electorate and the political class before a referendum vote is even held, as well as convincing the EU and outside powers that it is inevitable and that they should accommodate to it.

Major Steps to American Independence

1773 Boston Tea Party.

Continued on page 5

In search of Independence

Continued from page 4

1774 Rejection of authority of British Parliament, expulsion of officials and Continental Congress of 13 states' delegates formed but remained loyal to British Crown.

1776 Declaration of Independence.

1783 Treaty of Paris. Canada and Florida excluded from US. About 2% of US population (loyalists) leave for other British Colonies, plus about 10% of slaves. Britain gifts lands west of 13 states to US at expense of Indians.

1788 US Constitution approved (2nd Constitution).

1796 Jay Treaty finally settled boundaries in South, in Canada and process for settling debts. The final withdrawal of British troops in mid-

west.

Major steps to Indian Independence

1883 Formation of Indian National Congress.

1929 Congress policy to secure full independence for all subcontinent in one country (exclusive Sri Lanka and Burma).

18/7/1947 Indian Independence Act of British Parliament.

15/8/1947 Indian Independence. Most British troops began to withdraw.

14/8/1947 Pakistan receives independence.

Boundaries of new states completely unfixed, both as regards

mutual borders in east and west, and also with princely states who all became independent the same day. Outbreak of fighting.

1947 Both India and Pakistan send troops to Kashmir.

1948 India invades Hyderabad – a huge state in centre of India.

1950 India gets Dominion status.

By 1950 all princely states, voluntarily or compulsorily, joined India or Pakistan. Borders announced by Radcliffe Commission in 1947 were implemented in east and west but there were large population transfers.

1961 India invades Goa and other parts of Portuguese India.

1973 Bangladesh splits from Pakistan.

Japanese make unwarranted comments

Following the UK Governments requests for comments from countries regarding the what if the UK left the EU? The response received from the Japanese embassy suggested that Japanese investment in the UK could be threatened. This moved Lord Stoddart of Swindon to write to: His Excellency Keiichi Hayashi, Ambassador of Japan to the UK Embassy of Japan on the 23rd July.

Dear Ambassador,

I am writing to protest in the strongest possible terms at your country's unwarranted interference in the UK political debate over membership of the EU. I refer of course to the statement attributed to your Government and supported by the Embassy of Japan that was reproduced on the front page of the Sunday Times of 21st July 2013, commenting on the UK Government's Balance of Competencies Review.

Your Government's statement carried a very thinly veiled threat that Japan would reconsider its investment in the UK, if we were to leave the EU. The Embassy of Japan in London is quoted as saying: "We know some countries decided not to submit

comments but as a non-EU nation and major investor in the UK we thought it was appropriate".

"We have taken advantage of this occasion to express our expectations If the UK leaves the Single Market, countries investing in the UK and exporting to the EU would have to pay tariffs, and that is not good news."

I would point out that if the UK does leave the EU, it does not necessarily have to leave the Single Market. Access to the Single Market can be maintained through membership of EFTA and the EEA. Therefore, your intervention is both ill-informed and ill-considered.

I would suggest to you that, as an external country, Japan has no business interfering in a domestic issue that has absolutely no bearing on its own affairs. I can well imagine the furore there would be in Tokyo if the British Embassy were to issue statements telling the Japanese Government how it should conduct its affairs.

I would further point out to you that last year British-based car manufacturing offset a 9% fall in European sales with a 19% increase in global sales beyond the EU. There has

also been a surge in demand from the Chinese; and British-based car firms are enjoying a boom in exports to countries like Brazil, South Korea and Mexico. The European market remains important, but it is emerging markets that are driving long-term UK growth.

In addition, since the UK has an ongoing annual trade deficit of over £40 billion with the EU, it is most unlikely that they would introduce barriers to trade which would result in retaliation from the UK and severely damage their own interests.

Finally, the British people do not take kindly to being threatened by foreign countries and especially disapprove of their taking sides on crucial internal political issues, as Japan is doing by giving comfort to the europhile element in British politics, which, incidentally, represents only a minority. Therefore, I trust that, in future, Japan, in its own interests, will not interfere in United Kingdom internal politics because that will only harm the good relations which have been built up with the British people, since the end of the Second World War.

Yours sincerely
Lord Stoddart of Swindon