



Written by [John F. McManus](#) on March 6, 2016

## Brexit: EU on Trial

England's Prime Minister David Cameron has announced he will make good on a promise made in 2013. Even though very opposed to Britain leaving the European Union, he has scheduled a national referendum on the matter of membership for June 23rd. The possible loss of the second largest contributor to the EU budget has the moguls managing the Brussels-based EU quite worried. Cameron will do all he can to persuade his countrymen to remain tied to the 28-member super government knowing that other EU member nations may follow if Britain leaves.



England has been a member of the EU since its founding by virtue of already holding membership in the European Economic Community (EEC). In 1973, the EEC was known as the Common Market, a clever but deceitful name persuading many to think their country would benefit from increased trade and nothing more. But after Britain and other European leaders signed the Maastricht Treaty of 1993, the EEC became the European Union and member countries were now not only trading goods; they were trading away sovereignty.

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Britain's membership in the EU is somewhat unique in that the nation variously known as the United Kingdom has never given up its own currency. Where the Euro prevails in almost all of the 28 formerly independent nations, including nearby Ireland, the British pound still exists and is a constant reminder for many Britons of the desire to remain aloof from the many political and economic ties to the continent. Resistance to being dominated by a multiplicity of EU regulations and subjection to the decisions of the European Court of Justice have led many to prefer to quit the EU and go it alone.

In 1994, a Referendum Party formed by Sir James Goldsmith gathered support from many desirous of exiting the EU. But it never gathered enough strength to force a vote on membership and faded out of existence. Almost simultaneously, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) arose and has attracted greater support. UKIP members even won a few seats in Parliament but its main effect has been to increase opposition to the EU.

Soon after Prime Minister Cameron's Conservative Party won the 2015 election, Parliament passed the EU Referendum Act and the fight to stay or leave the EU captured the nation's attention. Those who want out are referred to as advocates of a "Brexit," a cleverly coined term formed from the words Britain and exit. Though an opponent of quitting, Cameron has released his party's membership from any requirement that they oppose Brexit. A recent count shows that 140 of the 330 Conservative members of Parliament, including half a dozen cabinet ministers, support breaking away. Their numbers are growing. London's popular Mayor Boris Johnson has announced favoring Brexit even though he is a Conservative Party member and Cameron's close ally.

Here in America, the Obama administration has proposed the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment



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Partnership (TTIP) that will initiate a tying of the United States to the European Union. Just as small steps resulted in Britain becoming subject to the huge EU bureaucracy in Brussels, passage of the TTIP will start in the process of having the United States similarly subjected to Brussels. Should Brexit partisans prevail in the June referendum, prospects for congressional passage of the TTIP will surely be dealt a crippling blow. In what surely would be a huge bit of historical irony, English voters, whether they know it or not, stand poised to provide assistance in the campaign here in breakaway America to scuttle entanglement of our nation in the sovereignty-compromising EU.

*John F. McManus is president emeritus of [The John Birch Society](#). This column appeared originally at the [insideJBS](#) blog and is reprinted here with permission.*





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