



Will Britain Leave the European Union?

Great Britain will stage a national referendum on June 23 on whether to leave the European Union.

British Prime Minister David Cameron has made it clear that he supports continued British membership in the EU, and admits that his efforts to win “concessions” from the EU’s 27 other member states are designed to make the EU more palatable to its opponents in his own country.



Those concessions, however, are illusory and would not be legally binding. This is the clear position of Nigel Farage, a British member of the European Parliament, and the leader of Britain’s United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), who challenged European Council President Donald Tusk about the concessions Cameron hopes to win.

“But is this deal legally binding, Mr. Tusk?” Farage asked. “The ECJ [European Court of Justice] rule[s] in favor of the existing treaties until we get a new treaty. But who is to say there is going to be a new treaty? Any new treaty would trigger yet more referendums and would not be favored by the big groups in this parliament.”

Farage pointed to the “migrant crisis” as a reason for Britain (and other European nations) to “take back control of our own borders and our own democracy” and leave the EU.

While the central goal of the EU (and its predecessors, such as the Common Market) has been an “ever closer union,” that goal has never been popular in fiercely independent-minded Britain. Knowing the British public’s concerns over the rising tide of immigrants from the Middle East, Cameron was able to secure an agreement from the European Union that the U.K. would not have to give child-tax credits or other financial aid to EU citizens in financial distress for the first seven years. (The “EU citizens” in question are migrants from the Middle East to Britain by way of another EU nation first.)

However, Farage and others in the UK believe that not only are such concessions not enough, but that they might not be legally binding, and could well be dropped after the referendum.

Justice Secretary Michael Gove is among those who oppose Cameron’s efforts to keep the country in the EU, recently insisting that Britain would be “freer, fairer and better off outside the EU.” He contends that the EU had “proved a failure on so many fronts,” and despite his reluctance to oppose his own Conservative Party’s prime minister, he believes that he must put his political convictions before his loyalty to Cameron.

At least four other Cabinet members are also deserting Cameron on the issue.

On the other hand, Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne fears that leaving the EU would be “a huge leap in the dark.”

The referendum is the fulfillment of a 2013 promise of Cameron that he would extract concessions from the EU, then give the British people the final say as to whether the UK should leave the EU or remain.

Cameron contends that the EU gave him the concessions he asked for, including promises that the



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other member states would not push Britain to become part of a “European superstate.” He declared, “There will be tough new restrictions on access to our welfare system for EU migrants. No more something for nothing. Britain will never join the euro, and we’ve secured vital protections for our economy and a full say over the rules of the free-trade single-market while remaining outside the euro.”

Prominent EU leaders, such as Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel, want the British to remain in the EU. It is also clear that she believes Cameron’s goal all along was to get enough concessions to convince the British public to stay in the EU. She stated, “We believe we have now given a package to David Cameron to elicit support in Britain for Britain remaining a member of the European Union.”

Britain’s exit (or “Brexit,” as it is popularly known) is certainly feared by those who want to see a European superstate. Britain has the second-largest economy in the EU, behind only Germany, and its withdrawal would greatly diminish the continued viability of the EU.

Farage remains unconvinced that any of the proffered concessions to the U.K. would even be honored, declaring, “Mr Cameron has told us that he will lodge the deal, he will lodge the documents, at the United Nations but frankly you might as well lodge an old pair of socks because it would be completely meaningless.”

“So what happens?” Farage asked. “We have a referendum, we follow Mr. Cameron, we vote to remain and then we come back to this [European Union] parliament. Is this parliament going to support British exceptionalism? I think we have heard voices today that make it perfectly clear that that will not happen.”

Farage insists that the deal is neither sufficient nor legally binding, and that the “safest” option is for the British public to “vote for us to leave.”

The emerging European “super-state” feared by so many EU opponents began as a modest free-trade union in coal and iron back in the 1950s. The stated goal of its proponents was that the free movement of goods and people, with economic integration, would prevent a new war in a continent that had already suffered through two world wars. But, of course, if the prevention of a future war was the only goal, if Britain would have simply allowed Hitler to take over all of Europe in the 1940s, there could have been political and economic integration then, and no more war.

Surely liberty is another important goal that should be considered in this issue.

Since the inception of a simple trade union in the 1950s, Europe has moved steadily in the direction of a one-continent government, with the EU dictating not only trade issues, but also social policy throughout the continent among the member states.

The elites who have driven this move toward the political union of Europe have been indignant at any opposition to this goal. Another European Union opponent from Britain, European Parliament member Daniel Hannan, has stated, “Consider the EU’s response whenever a referendum goes against closer integration, as in Denmark, France, Ireland or the Netherlands. Public opinion is treated as an obstacle to overcome, not a reason to change direction.”

In 1987, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was reelected to a third term. Because of her leadership, the Conservative Party had clearly become the dominant political party in the United Kingdom. Yet, her opposition to increased European political integration led to a coup d’etat within her own party, and her ouster in November 1990.

With the “Iron Lady” out of the way, the Maastricht Treaty — so called because it was signed in



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Maastricht, Netherlands, but formally known as the Treaty on European Union (TEU) — created the EU in 1992. This treaty also created the common currency of Europe known as the euro, and established the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Justice.

The British people were never afforded the opportunity to vote on the treaty.

Thatcher explained her opposition:

Like many of my fellow Tories, I too have a favorite quotation from [19th-century Prime Minister Benjamin] Disraeli. At Manchester in 1872 he said that “the program of the Conservative Party is to maintain the Constitution of the country.” This Conservative government, like its predecessors, should have as its main priority the maintenance of our constitutional freedoms, our democratic institutions, and the accountability of Parliament to the people. Because I believe in these principles so deeply, I cannot support ratification of the Maastricht Treaty.

She then became more specific:

Some have talked of the treaty being decentralizing, and of doing nothing to compromise the idea of a Europe as a group of nation states, maintaining their own individuality. The reality is nothing of the sort. The treaty will hand over more powers to unelected bureaucrats, and erode the freedoms of ordinary men and women in this country. And no mere declaration on subsidiarity is going to change the Articles or the thrust of the treaty itself.

And she was clear as to what she believed that “thrust” would lead to: “A United States of Europe in embryo.”

It is clear that this “United States of Europe” is not intended to be a limited government, with respect for individual liberty. Rather, it is an authoritarian regime. As Hannan noted in describing the undemocratic nature of the EU, “Power is vested in an appointed bureaucracy which, astonishingly, combines executive and legislative power.”

Hannan also answered the assertion that the EU was needed so the countries could work together, calling this “the idiotic assumption that without the EU, there’d be no cooperation among states.” Offering contrary evidence, he cited international cooperation in areas such as airmail, which requires no superstate such as the EU.

He also dismissed the argument that the EU makes Europe richer, by pointing to the example of Switzerland, which is not an EU member, but is among the wealthiest nations on the continent. “Anyway, the idea that you need to be part of a bigger bloc to be successful doesn’t stack up,” he declared. “If it were true, China would be outperforming Hong Kong, Indonesia would be outperforming Singapore — and the EU, for that matter, would be outperforming Switzerland. What counts is being able to tailor your policies to your own needs.”

The lesson for Americans is obvious. We do not need closer integration with the other nations of the western hemisphere, with some North American Union, or any similar arrangement. Instead of seeking greater centralization and integration with other nations, our policy should be a healthy dose of federalism — leaving most economic and social matters in the hands of the states.

And trade treaties? While international trade can certainly bring great economic benefits to our country, formal trade agreements creating what is more “managed trade,” rather than “free trade,” should be steadfastly avoided.

After all, as viewers can see in the first *Star Wars* prequel, *The Phantom Menace*, Senator Palpatine



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began the fundamental transformation of the Galactic Republic into a Galactic Empire via a Trade Federation!

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