

Brexit's 'Operation Dynamo' via the EFTA/EEA Escape Route

Fast action is urgently needed to save Brexit

An improvised emergency operation is needed to extract our country from the European Union (EU) just as in the early summer of 1940 the original Operation Dynamo was required to rescue the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) from occupied Europe. And, as with the original, it will include a motley collection of ordinary people helping out under professional direction, since Mrs May's government cannot do it alone. As the days pass, the urgency becomes greater and our plight more desperate. There is no tangible Brexit progress under Mrs May's leadership and with the rule-bound control-freak EU, 'nothing is agreed until everything is agreed'. The two options seem to be to accept the EU's terms or let highly integrated trade with the Single Market (and wider European Economic Area, EEA) face huge disruption after we leave.

Mrs May has boxed us into an ever smaller dead end

Mrs May has seemingly left herself with no options apart from accepting the EU's increasingly demanding terms in order to deliver frictionless trade with the Single Market and wider EEA, along with a soft border in Ireland. All imaginary technical solutions and customs partnerships or unions have already been rejected by the EU. In any case the government doesn't have a stellar record of delivering complex IT projects to specification, on time and within budget. Further, it is membership of the Single Market (or EEA) that delivers near frictionless trade, between members **not participation in a customs union.**

Brexit in Name Only is coming

Brexit in name only with the UK firstly a temporary and then a

permanent EU vassal state can be the only outcome unless Mrs May changes direction. This is the case whether or not she caves in to the EU's demands. Even if she got her flimsy free trade agreement (FTA) and whimsical mutual recognition of standards, the concessions required from her by Brussels would still mean that we are a vassal state in everything but name, with the EU able to 'turn the screws' at any time. And frictionless trade with an FTA is a fantasy.

The EFTA/EEA Escape Route from EU Occupied Europe

Rather than being trapped under EU hegemony, which is what Mrs May is leading us towards, we could remain in the Single Market under different, much more flexible conditions by re-joining the free nations of Europe in the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). The EFTA/EEA route is a far better way of enabling us on 29th March 2019 to leave the political EU and its alien, autocratic straightjacket whilst still trading, as now, with the Single Market. As a temporary measure. it could buy time for FTA negotiations. (see also here, Brexit Reset, Ereferendum.com)

The EEA Agreement is the key to EFTA/EEA participation

The EEA Agreement, with its Annexes and Protocols, determines how the EFTA countries participate in the EEA. This agreement is regularly amended to suit the interests of the participating EFTA countries – each country has its own variation. Hence by taking the existing off-the-shelf versions we could adapt them to produce our own bespoke version to suit our needs and then at a later date, revise it as many times as we so desire to correct errors and customise it further to suit our needs and as conditions change.

The Free Nations of EFTA are Our Brexit Rescue Partners

Any EFTA/EEA negotiation, unlike the EU Article 50 negotiations, would be a collaboration not an adversarial

confrontation, and would be conducted within a different environment. Such a negotiation would involve amending the EEA Agreement to improve it, in both our and our EFTA partners' interests. And their expertise built up over many years would be invaluable. This would also go some way to making amends for Mrs May's betrayal of EFTA by deciding to leave the Single Market (and wider EEA), and leaving them out of any negotiations.

Key Items for the UK EFTA/EEA Agreement

We need our version of the EEA Agreement positively to address our major national interests, in particular, near frictionless trade and control of immigration. Frictionless trade is mainly about dealing with technical issues so that existing arrangements can be retained without introducing new barriers. Control of immigration concerns strengthening existing arrangements in the EEA Agreement (Article 112, the Safeguard Measures). These would already allow us unilaterally to manage immigration. However, in the UK there are permanent economic, infrastructural and societal factors which would justify introducing specific clauses to strengthen the right to retain permanent control of migration.

Stakeholder Working Groups for frictionless Trade

Delivering near frictionless trade is where the bulk of the work in amending the EEA Agreement would be needed, as it must cover a wide range of economic activities from aeronautics to zoology. This is obviously beyond the competence of Mrs May, Mr Davis or the Department for (not) Exiting the European Union. Yet untapped real expertise exists amongst the various (industry) stakeholders who are already familiar with relevant EU/EEA legislation and working practices. These people would be highly motivated to solve any issues, once they recognise the government's limitations, since their livelihoods often, in part at least, depend on frictionless trade. Multiple working groups from industry can function concurrently, whilst

learning from each other and 'comparing notes' to speed up their 'learning curves'. The inclusion of public consultations and publication of drafts could add considerable transparency to their activities, whilst moving the process away from destructive political in-fighting.

Preventing Abuse of the EEA Agreement

The EU doesn't want us back as a troublesome full member state. As an EU vassal state, they can get everything they want from us. However, it would be prudent to send a strong message to EU 'fifth columnists' that the EFTA/EEA agreement cannot be subverted – that it must always be used for its original purpose to provide access to the Single Market for free European nations (i.e., those outside the EU).

Brexit's Operation Dynamo can be made to work

It is all straightforward project management, not rocket science, and much less risky than Mrs May's fraught and furtive Article 50 negotiations. For starters, it need to: address resourcing requirements; build competences; set objectives, priorities and timetables; manage risks and co-ordinate efforts. This is merely following a systematic document preparation process, which can be adapted to build in various procedures, checks, controls and risk mitigation measures. Many industry specialists do this sort of thing all the time, for example, under the aegis of the British Standards Institution. There may also need to be continuity planning to keep trade moving under existing arrangements until the EFTA/EEA bespoke UK EEA Agreement can be fully adopted. This would not be difficult since we would be staying in the EEA anyway. Work carried out now and resources developed could also be useful in the years to come in developing international trade and reforming the Single Market.

Other Lessons from the Original Operation Dynamo

The original Operation Dynamo was a collective effort of improvisation in a short time – it worked better than expected in a national crisis. It provided a hard lesson about the pitfalls of insular complacency and laid foundations for a future national cooperative effort. A new crisis is coming as a consequence of Mrs May's shambolic negotiations and recklessness in deciding to leave the Single Market without a plan for frictionless trade. Just as in 1940, we need a committed, courageous and practical prime minister. Is Mrs May the person? I'll let you decide!