

BREXIT AND MURDER

Jo Cox (1974-2016)

Tassos Symeonides

(RIEAS Academic Advisor)

Copyright: Research Institute for European and American Studies (www.rieas.gr) Publication date: 18 June 2016

The street murder of British Labour lawmaker Jo Cox by an apparently deranged attacker has thrown the Brexit contest into disarray.

Beset by fear mongering and palpable mutual hostility, both sides, shocked by the crime, have suspended their respective referendum campaigns. Pundits now rush to place bets on whether the tragic death of the mother of two young children could give the upper hand to the “Remain” side; Jo Cox was an ardent pro-EU MP who campaigned briskly in favor of keeping the UK inside the fold. London bookies, the accepted weather-vane of electoral contests, sped to update their prediction in favor of “Remain.”

Emotion matters in politics. With the potential “Brexit” vote growing stronger by the day according to the most recent [polls](#), the “Remain” supporters hope that emotion over the murder will give them a much needed boost. On the surface, this hope looks legitimate. But a closer look paints a different picture.

The referendum scheduled for June 23 emerged from *the lengthy alienation of the British public* toward the EU and its bureaucratic and undemocratic excesses. Heeding the political signals, PM David Cameron promised that the British people will have their day at the ballot box “to settle this European question in British politics.” When he won the 2015 general election, his promise automatically became a must-do he could not avoid (he now regrets his decision that has split the Tories in unprecedented ways). Cameron’s fallback position was an “energetic” re-negotiation of British EU membership earlier this year. The concessions [he won didn't](#) trigger a massive change of heart among voters. The “Remain”

camp well knows of this which explains the immense fear campaign that equates Brexit with the end of the physical universe as we know it.

By focusing on disaster scenarios with such virulence, the “Remain” side may have triggered reaction it did not mean to stir. The British voter, while retaining his “Britisher” tendencies, is not very different in his human reactions to claims of disaster, which often backfire if driven to extremes. The “Remain” campaign, including PM Cameron, didn't describe in digestible form *what are the true benefits and positives of remaining in the EU*. This crucial point has left the “Remain-ers” open to withering fire from the opposition, whose leaders, like Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage, miss no opportunity to declare that the UK is “prisoner” of the Brussels bureaucracy and its German masters. In times of economic uncertainty, with many British workers wondering about tomorrow, this fact is a powerful message that does not go unheeded.

The “Remain-ers” are exposed over the illegal immigration crisis. British voters, polls have testified for the longest time, are concerned over the swarms of Asians and Africans trying to cross the Channel, and set up themselves as “gray zone” residents, but about the free movement of citizens from other EU member states as well. Immigration, both legal and illegal, is a landmine the “Remain-ers” try to sidestep but still run into every turn of the way.

Exploiting the Cox murder by the “Remain-ers,” with public statements and claims using it as a tool of last resort, is out of the question in the present climate of division and, often, not too hidden hate. Otherwise, the murder, in the role of the unpredictable “positive” disaster, is [stirring the markets](#) whose distaste for crises threatening the European experiment is well established: dealers round the world must be praying at their desks that the tragic demise of the British lawmaker scuttles Brexit.

This alone should discourage all but the most irrational and unthinking players from investing beyond a passing emotion to the loss of Jo Cox. Against this backdrop, rushing to politicize the murder and capitalize on it, as the EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos [did](#), is insensitive, blatant, and dangerous.

June 23 will be a momentous turning point for “united” Europe irrespective of the outcome. The deep fissures in the EU edifice are spreading; the disastrous German failure to attack illegal immigration in ways that nip the Moslem invasion of Europe in the bud; the malignant economic crisis that refuses to go away; the blazing resistance of EU mandarins to democracy; and the growing pressure upon individual member state identities by enacting ever growing regulations and demands *without the slightest democratic legitimization* promise a future that will shake the world.

