



Explaining Brexit and what the results signal for the US election

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There obviously will be a million post-mortems written about why the United Kingdom opted to Leave the European Union. As [I wrote previously](http://www.redstate.com/diary/Matt_Mayer/2016/06/20/%EF%BB%BFparallel-brexit-federalism/) (http://www.redstate.com/diary/Matt_Mayer/2016/06/20/%EF%BB%BFparallel-brexit-federalism/), my sense is that three issues fundamentally drove voters to pull the lever for Brexit.

First, there is a growing disconnect between the playing fields at Eton and the halls of power in London, and the countless Main Streets in towns and villages across the UK. The financial, media, and political elite in the UK love the EU and the idea of one world-ism. They have thrived as they've waxed on about the importance of supranational organizations at Davos.



(http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/RTX2I0YD_britain_brexit-e1466791515709.jpg)

Nottingham, England, June, 24, 2016, Reuters/Action Images / Craig Brough Livepic.

A majority of people, especially in England, however, are the ones who have seen what the EU and globalization can do to their industries and way of life. People quite simply want to maintain [control over their sovereignty by keeping power in the hands of those they elect](http://www.opportunityohio.org/european-disunion/) (<http://www.opportunityohio.org/european-disunion/>) and not bureaucrats in some far-off city. As my colleague, John Bolton, points out: Leave's victory was a [true populist revolt](https://www.aei.org/publication/brexit-victory-is-a-true-populist-revolt/) (<https://www.aei.org/publication/brexit-victory-is-a-true-populist-revolt/>).

Next, the influx of immigrants over the last two decades occurred too quickly and during major

economic upheavals in manufacturing, mining, fishing, and textiles.

As a result, fairly or not, many citizens put the blame on the EU and immigrants for undermining their pay, taking their jobs, and changing their communities. Perhaps had immigration been done more slowly and with an eye on what was happening outside of London, the environment wouldn't be so toxic today. When Germany's Angela Merkel opened Europe's arms — the borderless nature of the EU under the Schengen Agreement expanded her reach far beyond German's borders — to refugees from North Africa and the Middle East, the immigration issue was surely going to drive the Brexit debate.

Finally, with the terrorist attacks in Paris, France, and Brussels, Belgium, the immigration issue added a dangerous element related to radical Islam and the flood of refugees from Muslim countries. Unlike people, including second and third generation immigrants, raised in the West, many of the refugees don't see freedom the same way we do. There is a clash of culture that can be unsettling. Ironically, the item that may have had more influence on voters may not have been the [tragic death of MP Jo Cox by a deranged right-wing](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/16/labour-mp-jo-cox-shot-in-leeds-witnesses-report/) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/16/labour-mp-jo-cox-shot-in-leeds-witnesses-report/>) extremist; rather, I submit that the decision by [London Mayor Sadiq Khan shortly after his election to ban advertisements](http://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/jun/13/sadiq-khan-moves-to-ban-body-shaming-ads-from-london-transport) (<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/jun/13/sadiq-khan-moves-to-ban-body-shaming-ads-from-london-transport>) in London's transport network featuring woman in bikinis and other scantily clad outfits may have been more concerning to voters. For a country [raised on The Sun's Page 3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Page_3) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Page_3), seeing woman in skimpy outfits is a part of life. Mayor Khan's ban [may have been seen by voters](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/15/world/europe/london-bans-ads-with-unrealistic-body-images.html) (<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/15/world/europe/london-bans-ads-with-unrealistic-body-images.html>) as his implementing his personal Sunni religious beliefs.

What do the results mean for the US presidential election?

I believe the results signal the rise of populism related to fighting the elite/Establishment is a more powerful force than some in the US want to acknowledge. Americans feel that politicians have lied to them and let them down. The fact that Donald Trump could so easily defeat sixteen well-qualified opponents in a primary and remains close in polls to Hillary Clinton despite some of his pronouncements and actions is glaring proof of that reality.

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Voters in the Rust Belt states of Ohio and Pennsylvania share a lot in common with voters in the UK's Midlands. Similarly, immigration will be a key issue in the US election, especially with [the US Supreme Court's decision effectively killing President Barack Obama's executive actions](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-court-immigration-idUSKCN0Z91P4) (<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-court-immigration-idUSKCN0Z91P4>) on immigration. Trump has championed building a wall, slowing down the level of immigration, and limiting entry to only Muslim immigrants who share "our values." These proposals gain strong support among Americans outside the Beltway and the coastal elites. Lastly, after the terrorist attacks in San Bernardino, California, and Orlando, Florida, Americans, like citizens in the UK, are very concerned about terrorism and radical Islam. They want a leader who they believe will keep them safe.

Over the next five months, expect economic populism, immigration, and terrorism to drive the US election, as those issues drove the Brexit debate. If Trump can harness those three issues, he could win the presidency, which for the world's elite will be as shocking as the UK voting to Leave the EU.

Learn more: [The parallel between Brexit and US federalism](http://www.aei.org/publication/the-parallel-between-brexit-and-us-federalism/)
(<http://www.aei.org/publication/the-parallel-between-brexit-and-us-federalism/>) | [America's federal immigration system fails but one state succeeds](http://www.aei.org/publication/americas-federal-immigration-system-fails-but-one-state-succeeds/)
(<http://www.aei.org/publication/americas-federal-immigration-system-fails-but-one-state-succeeds/>)
| [Private sector wisely acts to protect power grid](http://www.aei.org/publication/private-sector-wisely-acts-to-protect-power-grid/)
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