

## PREFACE

Never in my 20 year plus academic career have I been asked to address as many non-academic audiences and have been requested to give interviews to literally dozens of reporters from the international press than over the last two years. The reason was Brexit. The issue remains Brexit and the immediate future will be determined by Brexit. The study of politics in the United Kingdom has rarely been as fascinating as now. On the one hand the Brexit negotiations pit the UK government's interests and desires against those of the other 27 European Union member states. On the other hand, the Brexit negotiations require the UK government in London—at least in political terms—to include the devolved administrations in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh in the process. Inclusion and participation does not necessarily translate into influence and power. Indeed, the impact of the UK's departure from the EU plays out differently across the British state and different and divergent interests and priorities will surface. For someone resident in, and a native of, Northern Ireland the Brexit theme plays out very differently from not only London but both Cardiff and Edinburgh. Northern Ireland possesses its own unique characteristics and concerns that are addressed in this book.

I had thought like so many others that the United Kingdom's referendum on EU membership would produce a victory, albeit a narrow one for the 'remain' campaign. It seemed that David Cameron's ability to secure 'special status' for the UK was probably sufficient to win a majority. A narrow remain vote would have kept the theme of EU

membership alive but would have allowed the government and wider civil society to finally make a case for Europe. The vote to 'leave' was unexpected and threw up many challenges, possible opportunities and risks but also uncertainty about how to prepare for Brexit and the nature of Brexit. This book charts developments from June 2016. It has, on reflection, been a difficult one to write as statements, developments and events have continually changed. The issue of the UK's divorce from the EU also coincided with my own divorce and many a time the similarities have been striking as issues about money and the financial implications abound, uncertainty over the new settlement linger and questions arise about the desirability of new relationships or going it alone. This book was written in the first half of 2017. At times it has been a frantic exercise given the speed of developments and I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of special colleagues for helping me get through everything. I dedicate this work to my three sons, Oliver, George and Tom as their generation is the one that has to confront and successfully manage the implications of Brexit.

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Lee McGowan

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McGowan, L.

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