



LORD DAVID OWEN DECIDES TO VOTE TO LEAVE

In an historical analysis of the UK's membership of the EU, Lord Owen concludes it is time for the UK to leave the EU in the forthcoming referendum. In his book, first published in 2012 and now extensively revised and updated to take account of his decision to support VoteLeave, Lord Owen recognises “that Europe has moved away from us. Its elite chose a different path long ago and it is not a path the UK ever wished to follow.”

“To remain in the EU is in my judgement a more dangerous option for British security in its deepest sense – economic, political, military and social – than is being admitted or even discussed in the wake of Cameron’s failed negotiations.”

Economically, there is the all-important total absence of any agreed treaty changes to restructure and reform the Eurozone and no timetable for changes, though serious people mention 2023 at the earliest, or 2025, perhaps even longer. The lengthy, unpredictable route of an intergovernmental conference carries no guarantee of the necessary unanimity in all twenty-eight countries.

Politically, there has been no substantive movement on the problems of the compulsory right of free movement of labour between EU member states, which many believe is not strictly needed for the successful operation of a single market but is needed within the Eurozone. By not negotiating for such a change in the EEA not just the UK but the EU lost the opportunity of offering Turkey now, and eventually other states from the wider Europe, full voting membership of the EEA without freedom of movement of labour.

Recently all the member states, including the UK, have compounded that political failure by inexplicably speeding up the entry into the EU of Turkey, a country of more than seventy-five million citizens, complete with free movement of people and labour. Cynically, the EU governments may later intend to slow Turkish entry down when the appalling Syrian crisis is over. But that will have serious geopolitical consequences and could even lead to Turkey leaving NATO.

Militarily, the EU persists in trying to create a ‘common defence’ organisation not just within the EU but in a wider definition of Europe, involving for example Ukraine. In the process it is damaging NATO while most EU countries are still failing to meet their two-year-old pledge to spend 2 per cent of GDP on defence. The wording of the EU association agreement with Ukraine was ill thought out and damaging and in itself it triggered the dangerous conflict in eastern Ukraine. Of course Russia was wrong to exploit this and to annex Crimea but the EU should not have been so foolish as to give it the opportunity. No wonder the Dutch people are calling that EU–Ukraine agreement into question in a referendum in April 2016.