

explainity explains: Brexit

BREXIT – short for “British exit”. A Term that describes the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, and it resembles a theatre play. The cast is made up of the politicians from the different parties, different prime ministers, the EU and, of course, the people.

So, set the stage for the first act and David Cameron.

The year is 2013. The British Prime Minister David Cameron makes a speech announcing his intentions to change the role of the United Kingdom in the EU and that he will ask the people to vote on whether or not to remain in the EU.

Three and a half years later, the time has come. The British people decide by a narrow margin in favour of leaving the EU. The word BREXIT is on everyone’s lips. Yet hardly anyone had expected this result. The next day, Cameron resigns from his post.

Enter Theresa May

In July, Theresa May is elected the new prime minister. Her task is to arrange BREXIT with the EU. In March 2017, she submits the official letter giving notice of withdrawal to the EU. This is the beginning of the two-year negotiation period.

Topics include free trade within the EU, citizens’ rights, Brexit costs, Great Britain’s outstanding debts with the EU and the backstop. The backstop is about the border between the British country of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Will the border remain open? Should there be strict border controls? Initially, the players involved can’t find any common ground on many points.

At the Brexit summit at the end of November 2018, the EU and the government of the United Kingdom reach an understanding on a withdrawal agreement. For now, Britain will continue to follow all EU regulations, but will no longer have a voice on EU committees.

Now voting starts in the House of Commons. The majority votes against the Brexit agreement that had been negotiated.

May prepares a new draft. But this and all subsequent alternative proposals are rejected by a majority of members in the House of Commons.

BREXIT has to be postponed.

After numerous setbacks, May announces that her efforts to reach a deal with the EU have failed. In June, she resigns the party leadership. She will however remain prime minister until a successor can be found.

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Enter Boris Johnson

On July 23rd of 2019, Boris Johnson becomes the new Tory party leader and simultaneously takes over the post of prime minister. The Brexit supporter aims to achieve withdrawal from the EU by October 31st – if necessary, even without a withdrawal agreement – the “hard Brexit”, as it is called.

With this idea he faces stiff resistance from the opposition, but to some extent within his own ranks, too. The House of Commons passes a No-Deal Brexit act. This compels the prime minister to postpone Brexit until the end of January 2020 if, by October 19th, he has still reached no withdrawal agreement with the EU.

Johnson asks for an enforced suspension of Parliament, from the evening of September 9th for a planned period of five weeks. He claims that this will allow the new government more time to draw up a new plan.

Several lawsuits by members of parliament against the suspension of parliament are rejected by different courts of law. Only a Scottish court upholds one of the claims. The highest court in London, the Supreme Court, thereupon decides unanimously that the enforced suspension was unlawful and repeals it 16 days after its initiation. Parliament is once more able to sit.

Johnson continues to meet strong resistance to his Brexit plans from the House of Commons. He wants to have the Parliament decide whether he should remain prime minister and makes several attempts to call for an early general election. But the House of Commons turns him down every time. The opposition demands that Johnson keep his promise to achieve Brexit, but only if he secures a deal.

On October 17th, a solution appears to be in sight. Johnson and Jean-Claude Juncker, representing the EU, agree on a deal for an orderly Brexit. But this proposal, too, then founders at the vote in the House of Commons. The consequent requested deferral of the EU’s decision was authorised, so now we have to wait until January 31st to find out whether the play is going to go into a fourth act...

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