

BREXIT: United Kingdom leaves the European Union. What next?

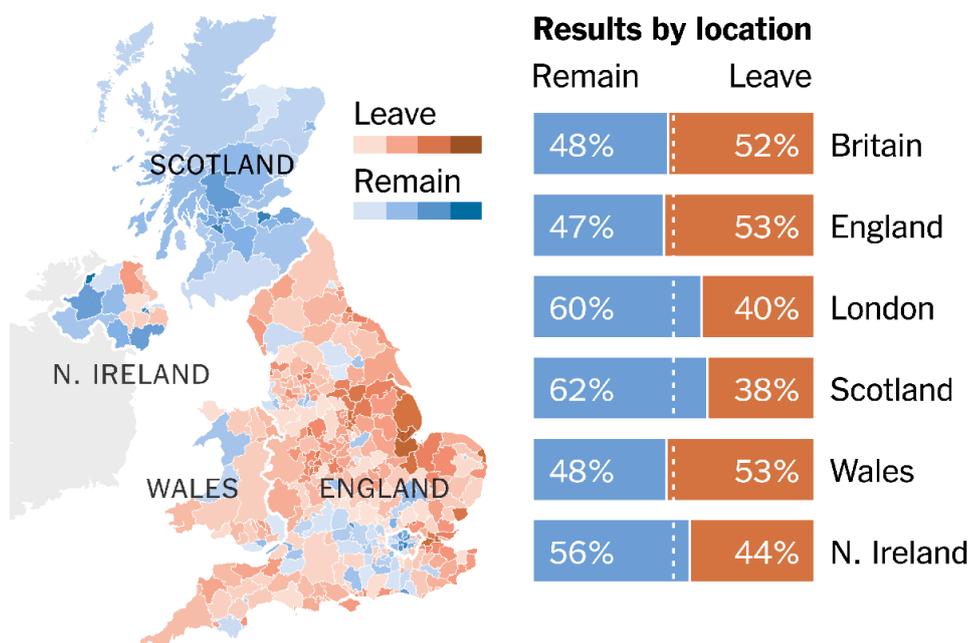


Photo Credit: The New York Times

More than 3 1/2 years after the [landmark Brexit vote](#), the United Kingdom (UK) formally left the European Union (EU) on Friday, January 31, 2020. There were celebrations and tears across the country.

What actually happens now?

There will be a transition period that will run through 31 December 2020. During these 11 months, virtually nothing will change for businesses or for EU and British citizens. There will be free movement of people, goods and services between the EU and Britain.

The U.K. will also continue to pay toward the EU budget but British lawmakers will no longer sit in the European Parliament.

Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson and other UK lawmakers will have a difficult task at hand. Up until now, the country shared many rules with other members of the EU. Now, the U.K. will have to make its own new laws and deals with nations in and outside the EU. They will need to negotiate details of their future relationship with regards to trade (movement of goods and services), security and immigration (movement of people).

Will it be easy for lawmakers to come to a deal?

Negotiating a new relationship with the EU will be much harder than leaving it. It has taken more than 3 years, 2 government changes and a lot of deliberations to get here.

Important issues like customs checkpoints and tariffs/duties on goods traded between the EU and Britain will become one of the main points of contention.

Stay tuned for more details!

It is Republic Day in India. Here are some things people are talking about.

Fun Facts: Republic Day 2020



This Sunday, January 26, 2020, brings India her 71st Republic Day. India gained her Independence in 1947, it was three years later on January 26, 1950 that we adopted our Constitution and became a 'republic'. It is marked every year by a magnificent parade that takes place in New Delhi.

Why did we choose January 26th as Republic Day? It is the same date on which, in 1930, twenty years before the adoption of the Constitution, that the Indian National Congress decided on complete independence or Purna Swaraj from the British empire.

If you would like to read our Constitution, it's going to take a while. **The Indian Constitution is the longest in the world.** At last count, it had 448 articles in 22 parts with 12 schedules and 97 amendments! No wonder it took Dr B.R. Ambedkar nearly three years to write it!

Our Constitution is also one of the few to have a Preamble. **The Preamble is an introduction to the Constitution and**

spells out its main purpose and philosophy. The word Fraternity was added at the last minute as the Drafting Committee thought it necessary to emphasise this after Partition in 1947. Another change was made in 1976, when the words 'Socialist, Secular and Integrity' were added to the first line. Given all the protests that are taking place across the country, many people are talking about and raising awareness about the contents of the Preamble.

Here's the Preamble of Indian Constitution

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation

Here are some of the things people are talking about on Republic Day 2020:

Tableaus: Every year, there are tableaus or 'floats' from various states on show during the Parade. This year there is an exciting new one - a Start-Up tableau with the theme, 'Reach for the Sky'. One of the highlights will be performers wearing AR and VR glasses! Look out for this one if you are there or watching on TV!

The **Chief Guest** at this year's event is Brazilian President Jair Messias Bolsonaro. Brazil has spoken against India at the WTO (World Trade Organisation) in the past and so farmers are upset that he has been invited. Others are too, as Mr Bolsonaro has strong views against LGBTQ people, women and immigrants. He is also unpopular with environmentalists, having recently passed several policies (especially in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest) against the global climate change agenda.

Another tradition is the **Beating Retreat Ceremony** on January 29th, which marks the end of the Republic Day celebrations. Every year, the Christian hymn 'Abide With Me', one of Mahatma Gandhi's favourite songs, plays towards the end of the ceremony. However this year, the Defence Ministry dropped it from the list of tunes. The move was severely criticised for being seen as 'non-inclusive'. It has now been reintroduced and will be played, along with Vande Mataram.



Written by: Pereena Lamba. Pereena is a freelance writer, editor and creative consultant. She is also co-author of *Totally Mumbai*.

Quiz Alert!

Let's see how much you remember about the people who fought to free India from the British!

China isn't happy with Taiwan's 2020 Election. Why?



Jimmy Siu / Shutterstock.com

News: Last week, Taiwan's first female President Tsai Ing-wen was re-elected in a landslide victory. Tsai Ing-wen is the leader of the Democratic Progressive Party and has been president since 2016.

Where is Taiwan? Taiwan is an island in Asia and lies just off the coast of China.

Why has there been so much buzz around this election? Much of it has to do with threats from China. China considers Taiwan as one of its provinces, while many people in Taiwan see it as an independent nation.

China has been trying to push the idea of 'one country, two systems' (where the Taiwanese would have some say in local government - the same model as Hong Kong) but most Taiwanese are not buying it.

Over the last few years China has imposed all sorts of economic, trade and tourism restrictions on the island. It has barred other countries from having diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Only 18 countries recognize it as a self-governing nation. They have displayed military threats by having military vessels and aircrafts cruise around the vicinity of the island and banned Chinese tourists from visiting the island.

But the threat of Chinese interference swung the vote in Ms. Ing-wen's favor. The agitation in Hong Kong has further worried Taiwanese people. President Tsai promises peaceful ties with China and has promised to protect Taiwanese freedom.

How does this ambiguous legal status affect Taiwan? Taiwan has its own constitution, army, and elected government. Over the years it has developed in a technology and manufacturing hub and the 19th largest economy in the world. Taiwan

has most of the characteristics of an independent state even though its legal status is questionable.

#Megxit! What is it?!



Hot off the press! Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, Duke and Duchess of Sussex, are stepping down as ‘senior royals.’

He abdicated??? No no. Abdication is only when a King or a Queen give up the throne. Like when Prince Harry’s great-granduncle, Edward, abdicated the throne in 1936 to marry American divorcee, Wallis Simpson. This sort of ‘stepping down’ has been done before – recently his uncle, Prince Andrew, also ‘withdrew’ from public life for personal reasons.

But why did they do it? They haven't actually given a particular reason. The glare of the media may have had a role to play. Harry has seen his mother, the late Princess Diana, and his wife being ruthlessly targeted by the media. He was furious with the British tabloid for being racist and sexist towards Meghan.

Did Her Royal Highness know about this? The Queen? No. In fact, no one did. Harry's father, Prince Charles and his brother, Prince William, both heard of the decision like the rest of us did, on Instagram.

Uh oh. That must not have gone down well? A royal source has been quoted saying, "There is a lot of hurt about this." The official response from Buckingham Palace was short: "Discussions with The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are at an early stage. We understand their desire to take a different approach, but these are complicated issues that will take time to work through."

Seems very British. Guess it was. It was quite a shock to the royal family.

So what's next? Well, Harry and Meghan have said that they want to live between the UK and North America. Meghan is known to love Canada, and her mother lives in the US in California. They have also said that they are working towards being financially independent and are focussing on a new charitable entity, but have not revealed any details about that.

How do the Royals support their lifestyle anyway? Last year, Prince Harry got 5% of the Sovereign Grant - the amount of money that The Queen gets every year from the Government to support her official duties. Harry and his brother also received around £5 million from his father, Prince Charles. This is all public money and many citizens wonder if they should be paying so much. The flip side is that the royals brings in about £1.8 billion to the UK economy every year, mainly through tourism.

So they have to give up their cute cottage too? Luckily for them, no. They can continue to live at Frogmore Cottage in Windsor when they are in the UK.

Do they keep their royal titles? As we said, he has not left the family - he's just taking a back seat of sorts. So yes, they will keep their titles. They have also been very clear that they continue to support the Monarchy, and the different charities they are associated with. They will "carry out their duties on behalf of the monarchy when called upon", though that may not be as often as before for sure.

What about their adorable son Archie? And any other children they may have? They will be just that, lovely children. Nothing really will change for them. Many of his father's cousins like Princesses Eugenie and Beatrice, are not working royals and carry out no royal duties. So all's well that ends well!



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Carlos Ghosn snuck away from Japan! Who is he and why did he do this?



Who is Carlos Ghosn? Carlos Ghosn was the Chairman of the alliance of car companies Nissan, Mitsubishi, and Renault SA. Nissan and Mitsubishi are Japanese car manufacturers, while Renault is a French company. He is credited with turning around these companies, by cutting costs, forming an alliance between the three companies, and sharing costs and purchases across the alliance. Under him, the alliance reached the number 2 spot globally, in terms of sales, behind Volkswagen AG of Germany.

Got it. So what happened? He was arrested in November 2018, as the Japanese accused him of reporting only half of what he earned, and therefore, paying less in taxes. After spending about 100 days in jail, he was released on bail, and has

been under investigation ever since. Like on a crime show, he has been tailed by policemen in plain clothes, his every movement being reported on. Magically though, on December 29, 2019, he escaped from Japan with help from private security officers, and public transportation, a desperately daring adventure using planes, trains and automobiles! As an illustration of the drastic nature of this escapade, the last leg of his journey was in a black box from a car to a private airplane in Japan, as cargo. The black box wasn't x-rayed as it was too large to fit into the machine, and no one opened it up and looked inside!

Where is he now? He is in Lebanon.

What happens next? He is wanted by the Japanese authorities. He issued a statement yesterday, saying, 'I did not flee justice. I fled injustice and persecution'. He says he wants a fair trial and was not going to get that in Japan.



Written by: Sunaina Murthy. Sunaina is a biotechnologist, greedy reader, and amateur photographer.

Protests across the country greet the Citizenship Amendment Act



What happened to the Citizenship Amendment Bill? The Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) has now become an Act (CAA). A Bill is a draft law proposal that is introduced to the Parliament of India. It has to be passed by both houses (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) and signed off by the President of the country. It then becomes an Act of Parliament. After that, there has to be a mention of it in the Gazette (a public journal where the Government prints official notices) notification, mentioning the date from when it would take effect.

How did India respond? [People all over the country are protesting the new law. They think that it discriminates against Muslims.](#) People from all walks of life, from senior citizens to students, all across the country, came out in large numbers to speak out against the Act. Some State Governments like Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal implement the CAA. The Kerala Assembly even passed a resolution asking the central Government to repeal, or rollback, the Act. Though these are more 'symbolic' rather than being legal (citizenship is something only the Government of India can decide), it definitely shows what people across the country are feeling. While some protests turned violent, especially in Uttar Pradesh, on the whole, the protests have all been peaceful and democratic.

On the other hand, in Assam, there were protests of a different kind. The people of the region believe that thousands who have fled since Bangladesh Independence in 1971 and continue to leave will come into the state. These large numbers will put pressure on state resources and, they believe, could threaten local culture.

What happens next? The Government has taken a strong stand and has said that it will not roll back the law. It is confident that it will be implemented. However, there are over 20 petitions in the Supreme Court that are challenging the Act, saying that it is against the Constitution. The petitions say that the Act is against Article 13 (right to equality), Article 15 (which prohibits discrimination) and Article 21 (right to life and liberty) of the Indian Constitution. The Court has asked the Government to give their response to the petitions by January 22, the date for the next hearing.



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What just happened with the US and Iran?



Credit: worldatlas.com

2019 saw some significant flare ups between the US and Iran. But an operation on 3rd January 2020 greatly accelerated the conflict between the two countries. Early that morning, the US killed Iran's chief security and intelligence officer, and leader of the elite Quds Force, Major General Qassim Soleimani. This happened in a drone attack near the Baghdad airport in Iraq. Shockwaves from this event are likely to be felt all over the world. Let's take a look at what happened and why.

The Attack: Major General Soleimani's convoy (a group of vehicles travelling together) was attacked on a road near Baghdad's international airport. Amongst others killed in the blast were Soleimani's brother in-law and the formidable Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of the pro-Iran Popular Mobilisation Forces (an Iraqi organization comprising of 40 militias groups).

Who was Major General Soleimani? The Major General was the 62-year-old leader of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, a position he held since 1998. The Quds Force is in charge of Iranian missions in other countries. These include covert (undercover or secret) operations as well. For over 20 years, Soleimani had steadily increased Iran's influence across the region, in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. He was also involved in training fighters to combat the terrorist group ISIS. The Major General was known to be extremely close to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and was often referred to as the unofficial second-in-command.

Why was he targeted? President Trump told the media that "Soleimani was plotting imminent and sinister attacks on American diplomats and military personnel [in the Middle East], but we caught him in the act and terminated him." and "We took action last night to stop a war. We did not take action to start a war." Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated that killing Soleimani was a necessary act of self-defence.

Why did the US feel threatened? Tensions between the US and Iran have run high, with the [US pulling out of the nuclear agreement with Iran](#), and [imposing very high sanctions on the country](#). Iran has been retaliating with some drone strikes and some attacks on US bases in the region.

Iran's reaction: Unsurprisingly, Iran had an extreme and loud reaction to the killing. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed harsh revenge for the 'criminals' who killed Soleimani. Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif defined the attack as an act of "international terrorism." Iran shot off a letter to the United Nations stating that it reserved the right under international law to self-defence and that it would also take legal action against America. In response, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for "maximum restraint" to de-escalate tensions.

In Iran's capital Tehran, massive demonstrations were taken out over the killing. In Soleimani's hometown of Kerman, people wearing black gathered outside his home in sympathy and protest.

How did the world react? The Prime Minister of Iraq, Adel Abdul-Mahdi, on whose territory the attack took place, said the killing was an "aggression against Iraq." Many felt that the roughly 5,000 US troops stationed in the country should be expelled immediately. If this were to happen, it would severely affect the US influence in the region. The Iraqis had no knowledge that the US was planning the attack and feel that they are being drawn into a conflict that they are not involved in.

In an expected reaction, Israel, the US's long-time ally praised President Trump's decision to act against Soleimani. Conversely, Syria called the attack "a treacherous American criminal aggression". China, India, Russia and most European countries expressed extreme concern on any further aggressions between the two countries and advised both to proceed with caution and restraint.

In the US, Democrats noted that President Trump had not consulted Congress before the airstrike and they are concerned that it has increased chances of a full-blown war.

What could the fallout be? With Iran promising revenge, there is great tension in the region and around the world. Iran could respond with force as there are several US troops (more than 40,000 are stationed in bases around the Middle East) and targets (warships and military aircraft) in the Persian Gulf area. The US has also said that the plans Soleimani had in place could still be carried out by others and the country is on high alert and is sending 3,000 more troops to the Middle East. They have ordered the US embassy in Iraq to shut and told all its citizens to evacuate as soon as possible.

Economically, because the Middle East is the most significant oil-producing region, any such event immediately affects the price of oil which increase by \$3 a barrel. This hike can affect the prices of goods all over the world as it increases transport costs.

What next? There are no certainties. As we write this article, there were new airstrikes that targeted a medical convoy of the Popular Mobilization Forces near Taji, Iraq. The group said none leaders were killed and the US deny involvement in this strike.



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What's in a name? Is it the Netherlands or Holland?



Credit: worldatlas.com

Holland and the Netherlands: The two names have been used interchangeably for as long as we can remember, but the Netherlands is cracking down on this! Why? North and South Holland are actually two provinces out of the twelve provinces in the Netherlands. They are the financial and economic centers of the country. Because they are so important to the country, Holland became the nickname of the Netherlands.

The country has decided to take its name back now, though, and from January 2020, wants to be called the Netherlands. Officials think that this will help to promote tourism to other parts of the country, and free up visitors' focus from just the popular cities like Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague.

Adapted from an article in Quartz by Sunaina Murthy

Top Political Moments of 2019!

Here are some important political developments in 2019!