



## **Is it time for us to consider an Amexit?**

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The British are voting today on whether to leave the European Union. Americans should follow the British in reconsidering the wisdom of living under a centralized Leviathan in a distant capital – that is, Washington.

The vote on “Brexit” looks to be close. The two sides disagree vehemently over the economic impact of leaving.

There’s also a lively debate over the effect of EU membership on social policy. Some folks – generally more leftish in orientation – like being able to appeal to Europe to override the stodgy British parliament at home. But the majority of Britons are not so happy.

After all, that sacrifices sovereignty. It doesn’t matter who people are. Almost everyone prefers to control their own lives. Yet the British government figures about half of economically significant laws originate in EU legislation.

That’s a major transfer of authority to a body which that from a “democratic deficit.” The EU has a top-heavy but fragmented – and unelected – executive. The European Parliament is elected, but only rarely do voters choose representatives based on European issues. So it’s not surprising that many Britons, as well as citizens of most other European countries, feel alienated from Brussels.

The issue shouldn’t matter much to America. But Americans should ponder the principles at stake. Washington operates much the same as Brussels, as an overbearing Leviathan more interested in regulating and dictating than in liberating and empowering. If the U.K. would do better outside the European Union, might not individual and groups of states do better outside the American union?

On a wide range of issues, there’s no reason to impose a national standard. The denizens of Washington, D.C., seem almost uniquely unqualified to decide how people across the nation should live.

Yet over the last century, in particular, power and authority have inexorably flowed into Washington. As a result, people’s liberties and states’ responsibilities have shrunk dramatically.

At the same time, a small bipartisan ruling party has protected its own, profiting mightily irrespective of who formally governs.

But Washington is more like ancient Rome than Brussels in one important way. Today, America's capital acts like the old imperial city. The national government maintains hundreds of foreign bases, deploys hundreds of thousands of troops overseas and fights endless wars to impose its authority on distant lands. There is no sense of limits, no hint of humility, no belief in restraint.

At the same time, Washington has developed its own democratic deficit. The president is elected but most chief executives are re-elected almost irrespective of performance, and claim extraordinary authority in between electoral contests.

Congress also is elected, but most House members have guaranteed themselves near-certain re-election by manipulating the reapportionment process. The Senate re-election rate is only slightly lower. There is only a veneer of democratic accountability.

Indeed, the ability of the bipartisan ruling class to insulate itself from popular sentiment has led to the rise of sometimes ugly populism in both Europe and America. When the mainstream parties refuse to consider public concerns, voters turn to alternative voices.

In the U.S., there are Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders. In Europe, right- and left-wing parties campaign against immigration, liberalism, globalization, centralization, capitalism and more.

Americans should learn from the British. If the U.K. can break free from continental rule, then U.S. states can do likewise. Americans would be better off if they slew their Leviathan and started over. It's time for a vote on Amexit.

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