



**Trinity College Dublin**  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

# The Brexit Debate – EU Integration or Disintegration?

School of Social Sciences and Philosophy

Date 9<sup>th</sup> June 2016



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# **No Better Alternative to EU Identified: The Fatal Flaw in the Brexit Debate**

**Professor John O'Hagan**

Date 9<sup>th</sup> June 2016



## Outline of Talk

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1. Dangers in debate: perception v reality, and lateness in putting pro-EU case in UK
2. Warning: am very committed to European integration!
3. Back to basics, but maybe much too late!  
Interdependency between individuals and states
4. Individual freedom and state regulation
5. National freedom and pooled-decision making
6. Four main messages

# Danger 1: people decide on perception, not reality

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## Danger 2: Mr Cameron now wants to play 'ball' but is it too late?

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## The Case for Shared Decision Making

*Man is a social animal who defines himself in his relationship with others. Interdependence is intrinsic to our being – between people, nations, polities of all kinds.*

*Irish Times Editorial, 2013*



## TWO KEY QUESTIONS

1. Given this interdependence, do international treaties, like those of the EU, enhance freedom, security and general economic well-being for member states?
2. If yes, what is the alternative to the EU: not just for Britain but for all member states?

These questions **should** be at the core of the Brexit debate

## FREEDOM AND THE STATE: NOT A NEW DEBATE!

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*‘State action that is a hindrance to freedom can, when properly directed, support and maintain freedom if the state action is aimed at hindering actions which themselves would hinder the freedom of others....**Such state coercion does not reduce freedom but instead provides the necessary background conditions needed to secure freedom.**’ (Kant, 1724-1804)*

He did not use the term spill-over effects but that is what he was talking about!





## Spill-over Effects: Across Individuals

### Traffic signals example



### Burning rubbish in back garden



- **Football analogy: need rules of engagement and rule of law for play to take place**
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## **Spill-over Effects: Across Nations**

- **Once there is free movement of goods, capital, people and services , exact same logic applies across nations.**
- **The European Single Market cannot take place without European-wide regulations: neither can European football.**



# What applies at national therefore also applies at international level

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- Movement of goods, services and people **within a nation** requires thousands of rule books, plus a judiciary to enforce, plus an administration to implement
- Similar movements **across** EU member states require same: detailed rule books, ECJ and European Commission
- All decided by democratically-elected Councils of Ministers, NOT by Commission





## Message 1

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‘(Even) the largest and most powerful states cannot achieve their principal purposes without help and cooperation of many other participants in the system.... **Sovereignty no longer consists in the freedom of states to act independently, in their perceived self-interest, but in membership in good standing in the regimes that make up the substance of international life.’**

(Chayes and Chayes, 1995)



## Message 2

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his interdependency, not just in the economics/finance area but also in terms of climate change, illegal immigration and trafficking of people, and most seriously the threat of terrorism or military aggression, **will not go away by forsaking the objective of extensive European co-operation and integration.**



## Messages 3 and 4

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- The challenge therefore is for the UK and the other member states to make the European Union work, **not** to abandon it and thereby possibly return to the Europe of the first half of the 20th century.
- **The fatal flaw in the Brexit case is the absence of a clearly articulated and viable alternative to the EU**



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