

Brexit & preventing identity-based violence at home: Why is no one talking about bringing the country together?

Whether the UK does or does not withdraw from the European Union, and under what terms, is of immense significance. The manner in which the Brexit impasse is overcome is as important to the UK's success and cohesion as the outcome.

The country feels more divided than ever before. Our polling shows that a majority of both Leave and Remain voters see 'the other side' as a threat to the success and prosperity of the UK.

Despite acknowledgement throughout the election campaign from all parties that the issue of Brexit has created new and exacerbated new social divisions across the country, no party sets out a vision to bridge this cleavage.

Protection Approaches judges that it would be a mistake to wait for social tensions to escalate further. Social cohesion is not a 'nice to have' but must be a fundamental tenet of contemporary British stability and security.

The Brexit Party and the Conservatives are campaigning to leave the EU as a matter of priority. The Brexit Party believe acting on what they refer to as the 'biggest popular mandate in British history' is essential to the restoration of faith in British democracy. The Conservatives believe 'getting Brexit done' will 'unleash the potential of our whole country'.

Neither party acknowledge those who wish to remain in the EU, nor do they set out a vision for bringing the country together. The Conservatives do promise to support activities, traditions and events that 'bring communities together'.

Labour is committed to giving the electorate 'the final say' on Brexit through a second referendum on whether to accept their re-negotiated withdrawal agreement or remain in the EU. While the Labour Party sets out a comprehensive strategy for tackling and preventing prejudice of BAME, LGBT+, women, disabled people, and newcomers to the UK, it presents no strategy for healing Brexit divisions or tackling the online and offline harms that stem from political polarisation.

Stopping Brexit is front and centre of the Liberal Democrat manifesto and election campaign. However, social and political divisions that were exposed and fuelled by the 2016 referendum - as well as those that have emerged since - are not discussed. No strategy to unite the country or mitigate anxieties felt by those who still wish to leave the EU are set out.

The Green Party believes the outcome of the Brexit referendum has been 'difficult, dangerous, and divisive'. They have committed themselves to a vision of 'international bridges, not walls' as well as the formation of a democratic EU that 'delivers on social rights and opportunities for all its citizens'. However, they do not set out a domestic vision to bridge the Brexit divide.

Plaid Cymru believe 'Brexit is not merely an economic problem – it is ripping away rights from millions of people' They seek to stop Brexit on the basis that many jobs in Wales and the country's place in Europe depends on EU membership. While noting the uncertainty the Brexit deadlock is having on the thousands of EU citizens living in Wales, Plaid set out no strategy to address social and political divisions in Wales or within the Union.

The SNP believe Brexit is responsible for 'destroying the idea of the United Kingdom as a partnership of equals', has exposed 'Westminster's dysfunctionality', and that Scotland's overwhelming vote to 'remain' has been ignored. The SNP do not set out a vision to address divisions within the Union but set out a vision for an independent Scotland.