Brexit and its potential consequences

By Dorice Ahmed

In January 2013 the then British Prime Minister David Cameron promised his electorate that there would be a referendum to decide whether Britain's future would be inside or outside the EU. This was deemed to be a shrewd political manoeuvre designed to appease the rising ranks of Eurosceptics within the Conservative Party and to quell the increasing popularity of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) ahead of the next general election.

Somebody should have warned him about the law of unintended consequences.

The opinion polls predicted a comfortable majority would vote to remain in the EU and it is not doubted that David Cameron as a staunch Pro-European anticipated that his decision would stifle his country's anti-European movement for the foreseeable future. However, the eventual result plunged the nation into a condition of abject political chaos.

Arguably the most extraordinary aspect of the referendum was that so little was done to properly inform the electorate of the implications of this monumental decision. Furthermore, any prior community awareness or open discourse process that could have increased the public's knowledge of the issues was completely absent. An extensive consultation period leading to a comprehensive analysis of the potential effects of the vote would have enabled the people to make an informed choice. Instead, in the run-up to the poll, the electorate was bombarded with a cacophony of sound bites from ambitious politicians and tub-thumping scaremonger tactics from both sides of the debate. In hindsight, these clearly had more to do with the Machiavellian machinations of those with vested interests than they did with any sort of sober consideration of the ramifications.

As the time available for closing a deal for Britain's exit from the EU becomes ever shorter, British negotiators are faced with the terrifying task of resolving more than 750 treaties and agreements on subjects as diverse as nuclear power, fisheries, agriculture and transport. The archive of rules and regulations was devised over a period of 46 years and runs into hundreds of thousands of pages. These detailed political accords involve 168 non-EU countries and cover almost every external function of a modern economy, ranging from the trade in bull semen with Iceland to flying planes to America. Britain is in the difficult position of having to broker a deal that is acceptable to all 27 EU member states, the majority of which are determined to deliver a bloody nose to the United Kingdom for having the temerity to leave the European club.

Brexit has many potential consequences for Europe and the rest of the world. No one knows what the eventual outcomes will be but it is certain that there will be a massive impact on global trade and political and military alliances. A dramatic downturn in British prosperity is just one predicted possibility, a new and flourishing Sino-British trade agreement that forces an end to the 'special relationship' with America is another.

Will Brexit prove to be a good thing for Britain? That 'remains' to be seen.