

Brexit Handbook

Management of Civil Society
for Embassies and Diplomats

Jeannette Viens
Talyn Rahman-Figueroa

GRASSROOT
DIPLOMAT

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In honour of
Helen Joanne Cox
defender of the people, who believed in a fairer,
kinder and more tolerant world.

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A trained diplomat, Talyn produces several podcast shows including *Grassroot Diplomat Talks* and *Diplomacy Engage*. She is the lead consultant for all digital diplomacy projects, and coaches clients on creating a personal brand, finding the right balance between managing personal ethics and conflicting national interests. She is the author of *Women in Diplomacy* and the *Diplomatic Planner*, a 12-month career development toolkit to help professionals overcome ethical dilemmas and conflicts of interests. Talyn holds a Master's degree in Diplomacy and a Bachelor's in Japanese and Management, including credentials from Seton Hall University and McGill University.

Born and raised in London, Talyn has lived in Japan, Morocco, parts of Europe, and North America.

FOREWORD

The *Grassroot Diplomat* raison d'être is 'the individual matters'. We focus on the ethos of the 'civil society.' That is: consumers, voters, expatriates, immigrants, students and small local businesses, just to name a few. Invariably they lack the wherewithal to lobby enough to be heard.

The Brexit vote has brought about significant civil angst. There's much concern about whether UK citizens will be easily able to work abroad. Accordingly, EU citizens suffer anxieties about working in the UK. And what will become of holidays traditionally spent abroad? What about EU Health and Safety provisions? And it gets worse. Lately there are unprecedented xenophobic undertones. Of intolerance to others, and a sinister distrust. The outcome of the vote has been social tensions that have aggravated attacks on those from other EU countries who work and live in the UK.

A marriage of over 40 years between the UK and Europe is perilously coming undone. The United Kingdom faces one of its biggest challenges in living memory. So does Europe and the wider economic world. Anyone who has experienced the breakup caused by Brexit is familiar with the avalanche of arguments. Who owns what? Who bought that? Well, if you want that, you will have to pay me!

Because of this disturbing upheaval, the rules of engagement with mutual friends and colleagues must be re-visited.

In today's globalised world, it's common for us to have parents who emanated from different countries with us, as their babies, on their laps. We're raised on a continent not of our births, and as adults, we may end up working in yet another country, and may even meet our 'life partner' over there. All of this means that for us, events such as Brexit have far reaching, complicated, and perhaps even dangerous consequences.

Any of this sound familiar? It should. Unrest has been the backdrop to daily UK life since 22 June 2016, the day of the referendum on whether the UK should continue its membership in the EU. The EU and the other 27 member states are feeling the pressure as well, and it doesn't end there. There are rumblings in trade relationships, working arrangements, and communities across the globe.

No matter what new order may impose, individuals, families and communities create a country together, and beyond that, countries rely on each other, entwined in myriad ways. The impact of Brexit upon people and many people like us must be recognised by the machinery of government and reflected in the strategies behind every governmental decision and event.

Following the trigger of Article 50, two years of discussions and negotiations have dragged on. The trust of the UK people in government and politicians has seriously plummeted. The causes are claims that the government is 'selling out to Brussels', or not seeking the 'best deal', or being too willing to find a 'middle way' which is not the desired outcome.

The overriding interest of *Grassroot Diplomat* is to manage the resulting social tensions. A crisis on the scale of Brexit not only brings destruction to bilateral relations and negotiations, but hurts the individual as well. Therefore, diplomats must understand the trickle-down consequences to people, and be able to affect them head on. This handbook provides a robust guide to resolving the relevant issues. It focuses solely on the civil society demographic. Why do we concentrate there? Because help for the individual is the focus of *Grassroot Diplomat*, and because we believe all people can make a difference within their operational sphere.

Innovations are needed to integrate each citizen and government, and ultimately, each society and government. To develop that vast stream of talent and harness it for the public good, a strong consultancy platform is required for ‘grassroots diplomacy’.

With regard to the arguments for and against Brexit, *Grassroot Diplomat* maintains complete neutrality. Our goal is relief of uncertainty in individuals, businesses, and institutions caused by the Brexit process.

We can only achieve this by focusing on the interests of the people, and by gaining a better understanding of and connection to small businesses, trade, and free movement of people. Deeply fixative diplomatic strategies are badly needed here, and have inspired *Grassroot Diplomat* to embark on this timely piece of work.

We aim to showcase how better representation of civil society would benefit at numerous levels, all of which have fundamental ties to the work of the embassies. Diplomatic professionals must be equipped to serve a modern community closely aligned with

their interests, while responding to the needs of the people as well. Those wishing to be effective leaders for today's world must understand the multinational and multicultural diversity of contemporary citizens. Their expertise must include sensitivity to people's lifestyles, beliefs, sense of belonging and sense of self. In these times, they need to be particularly sensitive to the instability, fear and uncertainty provoked by the Brexit alternative. In order to protect and preserve civil society, this dilemma must be addressed.

For thirteen years I had the honour and privilege to be a UK Member of Parliament. During that time I held a number of posts which included working alongside the then-deputy Prime Minister Tony Blair when he had responsibility, inter alia, for regeneration and communities. I also worked with Government Whip Transport Minister and Parliamentary Private Secretary Ed Balls as the Secretary of State for Children, Families and Schools.

My stints with them and in the Palace of Westminster made it abundantly clear to me that misconceptions and misunderstandings abound. They can lead to situations which escalate to unnecessary proportions and even cause serious threats. They destabilise the world around us.

With regard to the European Union referendum campaigns – both the Remain and Leave campaigns – claims and counterclaims have been made, many of which have proved to be unfounded. The human result has been fear within our communities, and direct attacks on certain groups. During negotiations for acceptable agreements to implement the majority decision, the UK government has been condemned by many factions for failing to get the 'best deal' – the 'best' being hotly debated on both sides

of the fence. From our point of view at *Grassroot Diplomat*, we see in that division an impending windfall of interpersonal harm.

Understanding the power at the heart of banded people is reflected in our name, 'Grassroot Diplomat'. Some of the best work I was involved in was grassroots activism, communities coming together with appropriate leadership to make lasting and sustainable change. The late Jo Cox MP said, "We are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us". I have seen the truth of those words. As she went about her tasks as a good constituency MP, Jo was the Member of Parliament who was murdered during the referendum campaign.

The Jo Cox Foundation was set up to honour Jo's values, and endeavours to ensure that grassroots action always counts. Diverse issues are routinely looked into, such as loneliness, protection of civilians in conflict, ways to strengthen communities and support for women who want to enter public life.

We never forget that differences of opinion can be fiercely held, but must never be allowed to generate distress, uncertainty and fear in our homes. Thomas Mair, who held extreme right-wing views, created such terror when he murdered Jo Cox. In the tremulous aftermath, our diplomats must confront this potential for tragedy and help to prevent its repetition, and help to instil a sense of calm in individuals, neighbourhoods, local leaders and businesses.

We live in fast-changing times. News is instantaneous. Headlines and stories reach us globally, often within seconds of events taking place. Amazing advantages can be generated in knowing so much so fast... but dangers can quickly develop as well.

Misinterpretations, misunderstandings, deliberate manipulations, half-truths...that's the daily process we are used to. But then comes along a decision like Brexit – bringing heaps of opportunities but also negativities with momentous potential for harm.

So if you are trying to make sense of Brexit, and you are a local community leader or business owner or politician or diplomat, then you need to reach out to different communities and form new alliances with the counterparts on whatever 'other side' you perceive.

Such is the Brexit-era mission of the career diplomat: grassroots diplomacy responding to the current social crises. If you're a student of international relations, politics, or the wider social sciences, then you're studying and living through historic times. As I write this foreword, and 2019 draws to a close, Parliament seems determined to vote down the government's negotiated deal. As the extended leaving date of 31 January 2020 (which may likely change again) looms ever closer, the outcome is unknown.

I would urge all of you to pick up this *Brexit Handbook* – that comes with no political agenda – to take yourself on the journey that prepares you to make a difference.



Dr Paul Clark

Chair, Grassroot Diplomat
Former British politician and Secretary of State for Transport

FOREWORD FROM EUROPEAN DIPLOMATS

You may be reading the *Brexit Handbook* because you and your business, whether in the first, second or third sector, is being battered around by the global winds of change.

Individuals and organisations such as yourself and including us at *European Diplomats*, have realised that global trade and investment patterns, as well as ways of doing business and creating value - whether for shareholders or for social good - will never be the same again. In fact, the pace of change will never be as slow again either. It will get ever faster, according to most analyses.

It is therefore imperative upon all of us, whether talking about individual meaningful livelihoods and lifestyles, or organisational success, that we stay one step ahead of the game. Keeping abreast, or staying ahead of the curve, makes all the difference when it comes to being ready, and mitigating against the risks that political uncertainty brings with it.

Regulatory changes, framework changes, total root and branch changes to entire sectors, are all possible consequences of the radical switching of policies from one end of the spectrum to the other, or even from the middle to one end.

But there is hope! This *Brexit Handbook* will give you plenty of expert tips and pointers, some thoughtful analysis, and ways forward - so that you can pragmatically grab the bull by the horns and tackle political and governmental change as it happens to you and your environment.

Our team at *European Diplomats* is proud to be associated with *Grassroot Diplomat*, in the production of this handbook, and we urge you to dive in and take a look.

Then, get in touch to discuss how best we can help you drive your business forward in a practical and purposeful way towards your commercial or social goals.

Happy reading and we very much look forward to meeting you in person soon!

Michal Gawryl & Alistair Starling

Co-founders & Managing Directors
European Diplomats

