

Transcript of BBC Radio 4, 'How to Make a Brexit', 5 January 2016, 8pm

CAROYN QUINN: Welcome to political time travel.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: I'm definitely going to vote one big no.

CQ: We've gone back forty years to 1975, and Britain's first referendum on whether to stay or leave what was then the European Economic Community.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: How will it affect the housewives, it's the food prices that we're worried about.

HAROLD WILSON: So the political argument in Britain is over. Every Democrat will accept the result. You and all.

CAROLYN QUINN: The vote back then went in favour of staying in the EEC but what happens if there's a different verdict when the next referendum takes place sometime this year or next? In this program we'll be traveling into the future to imagine what might happen should the majority of voters in the forthcoming referendum decide they want to leave the EU. How would the days, the weeks, the months after the result shape up? How would Britain go about the process of unwinding a trading and political relationship which has lasted for four decades? In essence, how exactly would Britain make a Brexit?

RUTH LEA: Given a 'no' vote, or a 'leave' vote or whatever it is, then the British government (*word or words unclear*) it'll be all hands to the pump, let's be honest about this, and they'd have to get on with it.

CQ: This is the largest scale legislation and policy exercise that has possibly been carried out ever.

GUS O'DONNELL: I think of this as like a couple who've been married, this is sorting out your divorce.

CQ: Over the next half hour I'll attempt to map a route through the tangled web of treaties, laws and directives which currently bind us to the European Union. I'll ask what Brexit would mean for EU citizens in Britain and UK nationals in the other member states, and how would our ministers in the European Council, our commissioners and elected members of the European Parliament spend their remaining time in office? Let's start at the beginning then, let's imagine for a moment that the UK has voted to leave the EU what happens next?

STEVE PUNT: Can we actually leave?

HUGH DENNIS: Well, yes we can, er, because Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon provides for just such an eventuality. It says:

ANNOUNCER: If you're not entirely happy with your membership of the European Community, just return it to Brussels with two years' notice and we'll cancel it with no questions asked.

CQ: That's how Radio Four's The Now Show recently paraphrased Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty which sets out the steps to be followed should a member state wish to leave the EU. It's not quite as much of a parody as you might imagine. Jean Claude-Piris was for twenty three years one of the EU's top legal brains, director general of legal services to the Council of Ministers. I asked him to explain what would happen if Article 50 were to be invoked.

JEAN-CLAUDE PIRIS: So, the first step will be for the British government to send a letter to the president of the European Council to the partners, the other member States and saying we intend to leave the EU. And this letter has not to be justified or explain it's the . . . (*word unclear, 'brunt'?*) decision of the British state to leave.

CQ: So, the Prime Minister's first task would be to decide exactly when to send that letter to his European counterparts as Article 50 makes clear that the negotiations can only get underway once that's happened. As Charles Grant, who leads the pro-EU think-tank the Centre for European Reform explains.

CHARLES GRANT: The treaties lay down a procedure whereby the British negotiate a withdrawal treaty with the other member states over a two year period which can be extended if necessary. That withdrawal treaty has to be approved only by a qualified majority of the other member States and doesn't have to be ratified by their Parliament, so it's quite an easy treaty to negotiate – that's if all goes well.

CQ: If all goes well, but as we'll discover there would be all sorts of things that would need to be finally negotiated. The trade options alone are staggering and then there's what to do with EU legislation, citizenship, even devolution. Is there a precedent for this? Well, no nation state has ever left the EU but there is one part of one country which has gone through the process of getting out. The country is Denmark but the part that left is one of its overseas territories, much closer to Canada than to Copenhagen. I'm heading to the Arctic, we're flying north at the moment over Iceland, and our destination is the world's biggest island that's not a continent – Greenland – one of the most sparsely populated places on the planet. We really do feel a long way from Europe now, I'm looking down on the Greenland coastline with its miles of jagged, frozen white fingers.

PILOT: Ladies and gentlemen, from the cockpit, we are approaching (*word or words unclear*) we should be landing within 30 minutes. The weather is very nice for landing, light (*words unclear*) good visibility, and sky clear, temperature -29°C.

CQ: Yes, he really did say -29. Greenland entered the Common Market in 1973, as part of the Kingdom of Denmark, although the majority of Greenlanders had said that they were opposed to the move. Six years later, they achieved home-rule, and the new Greenlandic government set about extracting their homeland from the then EEC. In a referendum in 1982 the voters issued an emphatic 'no' to Europe. Walking around the edge of the fjord, it seems strange to be crunching through snow while the water is lapping just a few yards away. I'm on my way to meet Kaj Kleist, who was one of the big movers and shakers in Greenland's bid to leave the EU back in the 1980s.

KAJ KLEIST: I cried. Cried. At that moment. And when we win the referendum in '82, I remember that the chairman of the Commission, Jacques Delors, he said, after have heard (*sic*) that Greenland said 'no' to be member of EU, 'Tonight we just lost 60% of the EU's territory.' – 60%.

CQ: I met Kaj Kliest and his son Mininnguaq, who's now a senior figure in the Prime Minister's office over coffee at a luxury hotel in the capital Nuuk. Why did you feel it so important for Greenland to leave Europe?

MINNINGUAQ KLIEST: I was a boy then, but I remember . . . the campaign, and I remember the demonstrations, and the speeches, and the march here in Nuuk. But it's not . . . that we dislike the EU, we just don't see why we should be part of it being Greenland, er, being three or four thousand kilometres away.

CQ: Unlike some of the more isolated settlements in Greenland, Nuuk is pretty up-to-date, with blocks of modern, non-descript houses and flats, good Internet connections and a 10 story shopping and office complex. But, you know, you don't have to wander very far to find traditional Greenlandic art and music. They're making a real effort to keep the Inuit culture alive.

(Greenlandic music)

CQ: Hello.

IVAN ELSNOR: Hello.

CQ: Are you the owner of Atlantic music that I've just stepped into, and it's nice and warm?

IE: Yes I am.

CQ: What's your name?

IE: Ivan Elsnor.

CQ: And what sort of music do you produce here?

IE: We produce all kinds of music, traditional, rock, pop and er . . . we have this traditional music with the old drum and, and stuff like that. Really, Inuit drums. And, and . . .

CQ: That's an Inuit drum?

IE: Yeah.

CQ: What sort of skin is that?

IE: I think this is a reindeer stomach. I don't like to use the polar bear stomach, because there are not a lot of them left, so, so they have big problems with surviving in the nature, so we're using other skin now.

(drumming sounds)

CQ: Did you vote in the referendum in 1982?

IE: Yes.

CQ: And how did you vote?

IE: No.

VOX POP FEMALE: Of course, I voted to stay, yes. Yes I did.

VOX POP MALE: I don't.

CQ: And your husband voted to leave.

VPF: Oh, he did?

VPM: Yeah.

CQ: And so how did you feel when the result was 'leave'.

VPF: Well, I thought they were stupid (*laughs*) Yeah, that's . . . the right answer.

VPM: I think it's really dependent on the, the heart I think, a lot of Europeans vote because of the money.

VPF: Yeah.

VPM: But I think a lot of Greenlandic vote because of heart feeling. That, that can be a . . . (*coughs*) a very different thing.

CQ: Distance, culture, economics, finance, they all played a part in Greenland's exit from the European Community, but when it came to Greenland's future prosperity, there was only one issue that matter to most people: fish. 8 o'clock in the morning, and their snow on the ground, and er . . . I'm just making my way now to meet Henrik Leth, who runs the biggest privately run fishing company here in Greenland, and fishing obviously hugely important to the Greenland economy. Hello Henrik. I can smell the fish already.

HENRIK LETH: Yeah

CQ: Not far from the factory is the harbour, where of course all your boats are moored.

HL: Yeah, well we are the next trawler that comes from the north west, which has been up catching Greenland halibut. And then there are all the smaller ones over there that goes mainly for cod and snow crab, and some of them Greenland halibut, but they, they are smaller boats, this one is a factory trawler which produces everything on board.

CQ: So, what do you hear people saying about 1982, and the time of the referendum in Greenland and whether to stay or leave the EU?

HL: You know the thing, the problem was that Greenland never said yes to the union, they were just dragged in by Denmark, so, from the very beginning people were against joining the union. Normally, the fisheries policy was done here, before that it probably was done in Copenhagen, but now everything was moved down to Brussels, and that was quite a problem for people, to feel that they were not able to develop their own industry, but they only had to sit and wait what was left over from what the European Union wants to take.

CQ: So, what happened after Greenland left the EU? Was there a noticeable change for the fishing industry?

HL: Yes there was, because we were able to develop the industry. Actually, the two biggest fishing companies from the kingdom of Denmark is actually Greenlandic, it's Royal Greenland, which is the government owned, and then it's our company, Polar Seafood which is, that the two biggest fishing companies in the kingdom of Denmark. And we are actually also quite big compared to the rest of the companies in Europe, so we probably are top 10 in Europe.

CQ: It took almost 3 years before Greenland was able to leave the European Community with a satisfactory deal on fishing. As a part of Denmark, the talks were led by Danish negotiators. Paul Kristoffersen is a former Danish ambassador to the EU in Brussels.

PAUL KRISTOFFERSEN: One of the reasons why it took such a long time was that the EU was also trying to define its own fisheries policy. But this happens all the time that the EU is changing, is moving, in the coming years there probably will be very important negotiations on how to create a capital market union, or how to . . . create a real digital internal market, so . . . the EU will be changing at the same time as you would be trying to establish a new relationship with the European Union.

CQ: Back here in Westminster if, on that notional day after the EU referendum a majority of voters have decided that Britain should leave, how ready would the government to be? Is there any kind of model for the post-referendum new relationship they'd like to build with our European neighbours?

MARTIN HOWE: What I fear is that waking up on the day after the referendum, if there is a vote to leave, that there will not have been preparation that should have been done in Whitehall for the eventuality and you'll find the civil service running round like headless chickens, wondering what to do.

CQ: That's Martin Howe QC, he's a constitutional lawyer who says he'd rather not see the UK stay in an unreformed EU.

MH: My belief is that whatever the government's view on the result of the referendum, whether it's campaigning to leave to stay, it really ought to be doing some serious contingency work on what would happen if there is a 'leave' vote, in order to pave the way.

CQ: He's given a lot of thought to how the UK might leave. But are his fears about the government's lack of preparation well founded? Hello Gus, hi, hello, we've just come back from Greenland actually.

GUS O'DONNELL: Welcome to Frontier Economics, it's rather warmer here.

CQ: To find out, I've come to visit Gus, now Lord O'Donnell, a former head of the civil service who also served as Cabinet Secretary to three prime ministers, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Cameron. How prepared does he think the civil service would be for Brexit?

GO: Obviously, every single civil servant will be thinking 'what if?' What are the different possibilities, different scenarios, and I will be absolutely sure that they will be hoovering up all of the work that's been done by the outside world, and the Foreign Office you know, this is something that they'll think about, their lawyers will be thinking about, the economists will be going through, we know they'll have to do work on trade, migration and all the rest of it so I think there'll be a lot of work going on mentally, how much they write down is a different question. That's one of the potential drawbacks of the world of Freedom of Information we live in, that actually, if the Chancellor doesn't want anything written down, then . . . that's the way it will be.

CQ: When Martin Howe suggests, well, he fears that Whitehall mandarins will be running around like headless chickens the day after the referendum, is that a fair representation do you think?

GO: Absolutely not. The point is, we need to be like Boy Scouts, you know, prepared for all possible eventualities, 'Be prepared' is the key. So I think they'll be thinking through the various scenarios, and of course, they've got some time, you know, I think a lot of people think that when the referendum comes out and if it's a vote to leave, then suddenly the clock starts our two-year clock under Article 50, and it's all happening. That isn't the case, there is time, the government can decide when it starts that clock ticking, and in that time there'll be some preparation done, I'm sure. Some of those thoughts that are in people's heads will be transferred to paper, and will be given as advice to ministers, and they'll go into what will be a two-year period of renegotiation, and with detailed briefs about what the pros and cons of the different options are.

CQ: Remember as well that the Europe of today is very different to that of the 1980s when Greenland left. 10 members then, now the EU has expanded greatly in terms of membership and response abilities. That makes Britain's negotiations to leave much more complex than those of Greenland. But there has been one notable attempt to try to anticipate what might happen. Hello Stephen, Carolyn Quinn from the BBC.

STEPHEN BOOTH: Hi there.

CQ: So this is where you're war-gaming exercise took place.

SB: Yeah it is, yeah, yeah, yeah.

CQ: Of course, we are in the lobby now of the QE2 Centre in Westminster, but . . . take us to where it all happened then. I'm with Stephen Booth, who heads Open Europe, a think tank that supports reforming the European Union and which organised its own war-games, a sort of dry run, if you like for Brexit negotiations.

SB: So, this is the room, we're overlooking Parliament Square, the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, the Supreme Court. We had 70 to 80 participants and guests, watching our nine or ten wargamers, discussing this hugely important issue about how would you leave the European Union if the British public voted to leave in a referendum.

CQ: So war games, but big negotiations as well?

SB: Yeah, people did try to address the issues and it was quite interesting, the difference between the French willingness to do a deal on goods versus services came through very

clearly, I think that's something that you would, you would probably see in real life scenario. It's going to be a hugely complicated process, there's so many different elements that you'd have to deal with, there's obviously a trading relationship, there is at the border issues, there's the migration issues, there's at the issues of UK citizens already in the EU, EU citizens here, how would you deal with the social security and the welfare arrangements, and then trade with third countries outside the European Union, so all of these things would be up for grabs if you like, or would have to be settled as part of the process.

CQ: A huge in-tray, certainly, for any British government faced with finding its way to Brexit. And one of the most pressing issues would be sorting out trade relationships with our soon-to-be ex-EU partners. As Charles Grant, of the pro-EU think tank, the Centre for European Reform explains.

CG: All the different options whether it's the European Economic Area, Switzerland is bilateral agreements, the free trade agreements, the World Trade Organisation rules, there's a basic trade-off that Britain will face. If Britain wants to have . . . significant access to the single market, it has to accept the rules and standards of that market without having a vote on it, which is the Norwegian option. If it wants to maintain regulatory sovereignty and not have to adopt all the rules and standards of the EU, that's the WTO option, the World Trade Organisation option, that's fine, but then it has much less access to the single market. So, there is a trade-off that Britain will have to decide upon, when it leaves the EU, if it does, which is how much access do you want to the market, and if so, how much are you prepared to accept all rules and regulations made by the EU without having a vote on them?

CQ: So, could the UK manage without an EU trade agreement? I asked Ruth Lea, an economist working with Business for Britain, a group campaigning to leave the EU.

RUTH LEA: The first thing that would happen is that trade under the World Trade Organisation, the WTO rules would then be the default position. You trade with any country in the world, but it's got to be non-discriminatory, because that's the fundamental thing about the WTO rules. And moreover, there are a lot of countries that basically do most of their trade now under the WTO rules. China does, for example, it has very few preferential trade agreements at the moment. Trade economists estimate that about a third of all international trade is probably under the beauty of rules and it can thrive and it can flourish and of course, in the case of China because of its rocket-like growth in recent years, it can actually do extraordinarily well.

CQ: You say, erm, it would be a reasonable option, but of course the arguments will range far and wide between the various trade options on offer, how do you think the British negotiators and the European negotiators will actually pick their way through the various options?

RL: Well, I think in addition to that Britain and the rest of the European Union would be very sensible, and I think it would be very likely that they would sit down and negotiate some sort of free trade agreement. After all, you would have the common external tariff between Britain and the EU if we didn't arrange that sort of thing now, on the whole, the common external tariff is trivial, it's about 1% on average, and that just applies to goods. But there are some industries, some sectors that would actually be quite affected by it, for example, the common external tariff, that's the EU's common external tariff is nearly 10% in the car industry, and obviously we export a lot of cars to the continent of Europe, we would preferably not want that.

CQ: So, if only to prevent our motor industry from being clobbered by tariffs some sort of trade deal with the EU would presumably be sought. But there would still be conundrums for the negotiators, according to Charles Grant.

CG: Something that all these options have in common, which is very important for the British is that none of these options, Norway, WTO, Switzerland, whatever keep Britain in the free trade agreements that the EU has negotiated with other parts of the world. There are some 200 trade agreements, but from the day we leave the EU these trade agreements no longer apply to the United Kingdom, so Britain would have to start from scratch to negotiate separate, bilateral agreements with other countries like South Korea, Canada, Singapore whatever, to catch up and maintain the access that it enjoys. But there is a very important practical difficulty here: since 1973 when we joined the EU, we haven't had any trade negotiators. We handed over that competence to the European Union and the European Commission, so Whitehall doesn't have any, and I can tell you, they're going to have to negotiate dozens and dozens and dozens very, very quickly so they're going to be in the market for people who know how to do a trade deal, they're going to have to hire people from other member states, they'll use the consultancies, they'll maybe get some old men out of retirement to help, it will be difficult.

RL: I'm not worried about that, because we're very good at sort of importing talent if we want to.

CQ: Ruth Lea again.

RL: We have a Governor of the Bank of England at the moment who's Canadian and he's taken on two members of the Monetary Policy Committee who are Americans, and one of them actually, was born in Egypt. And indeed, as I say, there probably are British people who have still been involved in the EU trade negotiations, but, you know, we could buy the talent in, if it happened to be inadequate.

CQ: In our imaginary scenario then, once the negotiators have been put in place and start picking their way through an increasingly crowded agenda, what would Brexit entail on the other side of the Channel?

(Eurostar announcement in Brussels)

CQ: I'm here in Brussels and this is where the letter from the British government invoking Article 50 would arrive, it'll come to the European Council building which houses the heads of state. They've got a new building under construction in fact, to replace the current elderly glass box.

JCP: This ugly building *(laughs)*

CQ: So where are we now? Where is this?

JCP: Well, this building is huge, several buildings together with three courtyards in the middle, and you have then the rooms where all councils of ministers meet, except three months a year when we meet in Luxembourg *(laughs)* and *(fades out)*

CQ: My guide is Jean-Claude Piris. If anyone knows the ways of the European Union then he does. He spent 23 years as head of legal services to the Council of Ministers, he's taken

part in many treaty negotiations himself, and points out one of the other big considerations beside trade.

JCP: The big problem will be for Britons leaving, which are around 2 million in countries of the European Union now. So they will be not any more EU citizens, they will lose the citizenship of the EU, which gives the right to move, to establish, to have a lot of benefits and so on, that will disappear. And then if the UK tries to negotiate to the EU on that, will the UK accept that Eastern European members of the EU have free access? I don't think so, because that's one of the problems. And if there are some barriers to this movement, the same will be applied to Britons going in the EU countries. So there'll be a lot of problems for EU citizens living in the UK as well, because you have 2 million there, working and living or studying in the UK.

CQ: Immigration and movement of citizens than among the host of issues that would need to be unravelled. But we mustn't forget about legislation. What would happen to the mass of EU regulations, thousands of directives which have been incorporated into UK law since 1973? Daniel Greenberg was a parliamentary lawyer heavily involved in a number of EU-related bills. He drafted the Amendment act, which brought the Lisbon Treaty into UK law in 2008.

DANIEL GREENBERG: This is the largest-scale legislation and policy exercise that has possibly been carried out ever. It's certainly bigger than the exercise that had to be carried out in 1972, when we joined, because it's more complicated unravelling 40 years of combined European and domestic policy and literally every one of those thousands of pieces of our law that rests on European Union law will have to be examined to see how you and pick it, how much you want to throw away, how much you want to keep and for different reasons. And the extent of the exercise is just staggering.

CQ: And it wouldn't just be Whitehall civil servants and policymakers affected - the constitutional lawyer, Martin Howe believes the return of agriculture and fisheries policy to the UK would have implications for the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well.

MH: You have a common agricultural policy which is very tightly controlled at European Union level, but within the United Kingdom, agriculture is divided between, in England it's Westminster that controls it and in Scotland it's the Scottish Parliament and government that controls it. So you'd need to replace the common agricultural policy, with a UK common agricultural policy, you wouldn't want to have say, Scotland subsidising . . . beef farmers who then undercut English beef farmers, etc. So, you'd have to have a degree of central policy, but within that you'd obviously retain the existing characteristics of the devolved legislatures and governments having their own local powers and their local implementation of the policy.

CQ: So while the policymakers and lawmakers set to work at Westminster, and in the devolved governments, what would be happening to the UK's small army of ministers, MEPs, commissioners and civil servants working within the institutions of the European Union? On this, says Jean-Claude Piris, the Lisbon Treaty is very clear.

JCP: Nothing happens, everything continues as usual including the UK remains a full member of the European Union and his ministers and civil servants, diplomats continue to participate to all negotiations except that they don't participate on the EU side for the

negotiation with the UK of course. That's the legal position, but politically, you may understand, that the influence of the United Kingdom within the institutions on the decision-making will be less comfortable. When you have your hand on the door to go out, then you know that you are negotiating a thing, and it will not probably apply to [*the*] UK, if you are German or a Spaniard maybe you listen with less (*laughs*) attention to the arguments of your British counterpart.

CQ: Here in the heart of the European Parliament is a bar called the Mickey Mouse bar, apparently because there's a photo just at the entrance which has a little picture of Mickey Mouse in it, but it's got lots of colourful chairs, and here I find Diane James from UKIP, one of UKIP's MEPs. If UK people vote to leave the EU . . . and you and your other 72 British MEPs are here at the European Parliament, are you just going to be floating around like zombies, you know, without much to do? Maybe you'll be spending more time here in the Mickey Mouse bar, waiting for something to happen?

DIANE JAMES: Nothing changes. We are here representing a member state and until that member state's membership is fully, finally terminated then we are here to serve our country's needs and to deliver our representation here.

CQ: But wouldn't colleagues from other member states object to British MEPs like yourself framing legislation that won't apply to you?

DJ: I don't actually think you will hear that. There might be mutterings, you know, I don't disagree with you from that point of view, but quite frankly there is effectively a process and a procedure which has to be gone through which all the member states have agreed to as part of the Lisbon Treaty and it's no good suddenly saying, or mumbling, muttering, that were not very keen on the United Kingdom now having a presence if they're going to leave, because, you know, that aspect is in place. They can't change that.

CQ: But some of Diane James's fellow British MEPs at the European Parliament believe that far from being ostracised, the UK could face pleas to think again.

EMMA MCCLARKIN: Well, my name's Emma McClarkin, and I'm a British Conservative member of the European Parliament for the East Midlands region. I think that it is highly possible that if we, as the UK votes to leave the European Union, but they would not accept that as a final offer, I think they would use that two-year notice period to try and improve an offer. I don't think the European Union has ever accepted a 'no' on a referendum, and it's been the final say. So there is a possibility that we could have another referendum.

CQ: Most of the people that I spoke to this programme say there is no provision in the exit clauses of the Lisbon Treaty for a second referendum, should Britain vote to leave. They see Article 50 as a one-way ticket out of the EU. But 30 years ago in Greenland, the home-rule government did have to ask voters a second time to confirm their wish to go.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Just turn around here and there you can see a painting, and this our Speaker Lars Emil Johansen, you will meet him later today. And he is one of the most experienced politicians we have in Greenland.

CQ: During a guided tour of the Greenlandic Parliament with its 31 members, I'm introduced to the Speaker, Lars Emil Johansen, or at least a rather imposing portrait of him.

The man himself is a former Greenlandic prime Minister, he was trade minister when Greenland broke away from the EEC in 1985.

LARS EMIL JOHANSEN: We have . . . referendum first time in 1982, and that time we get a large majority against membership. And again we had to, to make referendum number two, we had to do it to confirm that we're standing by our decision from 1982. And we also get in this time a smaller majority, you know, we were fighting against . . . 500 millions and was only 50,000 so erm, very proud of this result.

CQ: But 30 years on Henrik Leth, we heard from him earlier, he's head of Polar Seafood and also chairs the Greenland Employers Organisation. He thinks it might be time to apply to rejoin the EU.

HL: I think it should be considered and analysed whether it would be a good thing for Greenland. The good thing would be that we will be part of these new free trade agreement that the European Union makes, and it's not only Canada and the US, but it's also Japan and other places, there will be more and more free trade and that means a small country like Greenland will not be able to make the same kinds of agreements, so we'll actually a disadvantage in industry. So that's one thing that could be very important. There's also another thing where I think it could be good for Greenland and that's there's a lot of development funds in the European Union, and we have very complex infrastructure and I think that could be very helpful and I think we could actually get more support from the European Union if we actually joined the union instead of staying out of it.

CQ: But wouldn't that cause embarrassment to contemplate going back in?

HL: It has to be analysed, and it will be a bitter pill to swallow to come back and say, 'Well, could we join in again', but on the other hand now we have our fishing industry, they will not be able to take that away from us and say, 'Well, we'll go back to what was before 1985' or something like that. So I think actually that could be a good thing for Greenland. But we have to look into it.

CQ: Let's leave Greenland and Henrik Leth, contemplating a possible return to the EU and come back to Westminster, and the topic of this programme: imagining how Britain could exit the European Union on the best possible terms. As we've heard, there'd be so many questions to answer about trade, immigration, legislation, even devolution might be affected. And we haven't even touched on the question of whether EU negotiators might seek compensation for lost income as a result of the UK's departure, or whether judgements of the European Court would be heeded in Britain during the exit process. And, after all those negotiations, to final hurdles to cross: any withdrawal treaty would have to be agreed by Parliament here in Westminster as well as in Brussels. So would add to or possibly three-year negotiating timetable really be enough to sort this all out?

MH: I think the problem is once you start extending a time limit like that, all the extra time will then get used up in bogged-down negotiations. And experience shows the only way you achieve a result negotiations is when they're up against a deadline.

CQ: The constitutional lawyer, Martin Howe. He believes there are sound practical reasons why the UK should be prepared to walk away without a deal after two years.

MH: If the referendum were in 2017, then the two-year time limit would allow the negotiation process to be completed and concluded within the current Parliament. Whereas if it's extended you're then going across into a new Parliament with a general election in the meantime in which there might be a change of government or at minimum, the negotiation process then gets tangled up in the general election campaign.

CQ: I'll leave you to contemplate the possibility of Brexit rumbling on into the 2020s. But let's not make that our final thought. Look at it like this: Lord O'Donnell the former cabinet secretary sees Britain and the EU as like an old married couple, who have decided to go their separate ways. It doesn't have to be messy.

GO: When you trigger the Article 50, you then start the negotiations, and I think of this is like a couple who have been married, this is sorting out your divorce, you know, the splitting of assets, because there'll be liabilities that need to be shared out, all sorts of things like that. That's one set of negotiations. The other set is of course life post-divorce, how are you going to live together. And there are various ways you can live together, you know, you're going to be sharing the same global trading world, are we going to be sharing it more like a Norway or a Switzerland or a New Zealand or a Japan? So there are, there are lots of different scenarios so, but once you've got through the divorce proceedings, let's hope that they can be done in a nice amicable way, so that we have an amicable, friendly divorce, and then we get on to, as it were, cohabitation, how are we going to live together in this world and trade together in this world.