cases handle reports sensitively, checking they are not malicious or misguided, and those referred won't know unless their case is taken up, says Mr Baldet.

The work is similar to programmes that deal with sexual abuse or gang membership, says Sean Arbuthnot, a former police officer who had local responsibility for Prevent. Officers can educate people who make inappropriate referrals, he says. And "I would rather have 99 rubbish referrals than have one child who ends up in Syria."

Those who are taken on can leave the programme at any time. Some are helped to find a job or to reconnect with their family; others are gradually talked out of their beliefs. And although Channel focuses on Islamist radicals, in 2012-13 one in five of those referred was not a Muslim (most concerned far-right extremism).

Still, some Muslim parents now advise their children not to discuss politics or religion in public in case it is taken the wrong way. Teachers are similarly nervous, says Kenny Frederick, a former head teacher in Tower Hamlets in London. That is a shame, she says, as it stifles debate, which is the best way to change minds. Worse relations between the state and Muslim communities could undermine all of these efforts.

In many ways it is odd that the most moderate of Britain's counter-terror efforts provokes the most opposition. Prevent's supporters wish the Home Office would trumpet its achievements. Yet it is not that easy. Much of the programme involves vulnerable people; other parts would be less effective if state support were broadcast. As a result, Prevent is shrouded in secrecy. Perhaps the biggest secret, though, is that it is not as nasty as it seems. ■

The Brexit trigger

To pull or not to pull

The case for delaying the start of the Brexit process

THERESA MAY knew from the moment she became prime minister last month that Brexit would be her biggest test. Nobody has ever before tried to disentangle a large and sophisticated economy like Britain's from as intricate and regulated a body as the European Union, after it has been a member for 43 years. Before the June referendum, David Cameron's government noted that Brexit would be the start, not the end, of a process and warned that it could last up to a decade.

The administrative challenge alone is vast. Mrs May has passed much of it to pro-Brexit ministers known, inevitably, as the three Brexiteers: David Davis, Liam Fox and Boris Johnson. Just setting up a new Department for Exiting the EU under Mr Davis is taking time. The department is now 150-strong, but it will have to expand to more like 400 (including officials in Brussels). Mr Fox's Department for International Trade needs 1,000 staff, including hundreds of trade negotiators. Relations between the two, and with Mr Johnson's Foreign Office, can be strained. Already Mr Fox and Mr Johnson have clashed over who runs economic diplomacy. Mr Fox and Mr Davis are hardly best friends.

May with a mountain to climb

Given all this, it is not surprising that there should be speculation about when to trigger the Brexit process under Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty. Brexiteers have always disliked Article 50: it sets a two-year deadline that can be extended only unanimously, and its voting rules exclude the exiting country. Moreover, it is meant to cover mainly administrative issues such as sorting out pensions, relocating EU agencies based in Britain and safeguarding multi-year projects (the Treasury has promised recipients of EU money that it will guarantee their funds, including paying farm subsidies until 2020).

But Article 50 also promises to take account of future relations with the EU. That means, above all, trade arrangements. Yet experienced negotiators say trade deals take far more than two years to negotiate: the Canada-EU agreement has taken seven and has still not been ratified. Brexit will require many such deals, including one with the EU and others with some 58 third countries such as South Korea that have free-trade deals with the EU. Mr Fox has talked grandly of "scoping out" free-trade agreements that Britain might make with America and Australia. But these cannot be pursued seriously until there is more clarity over Britain's trade relations with the EU.

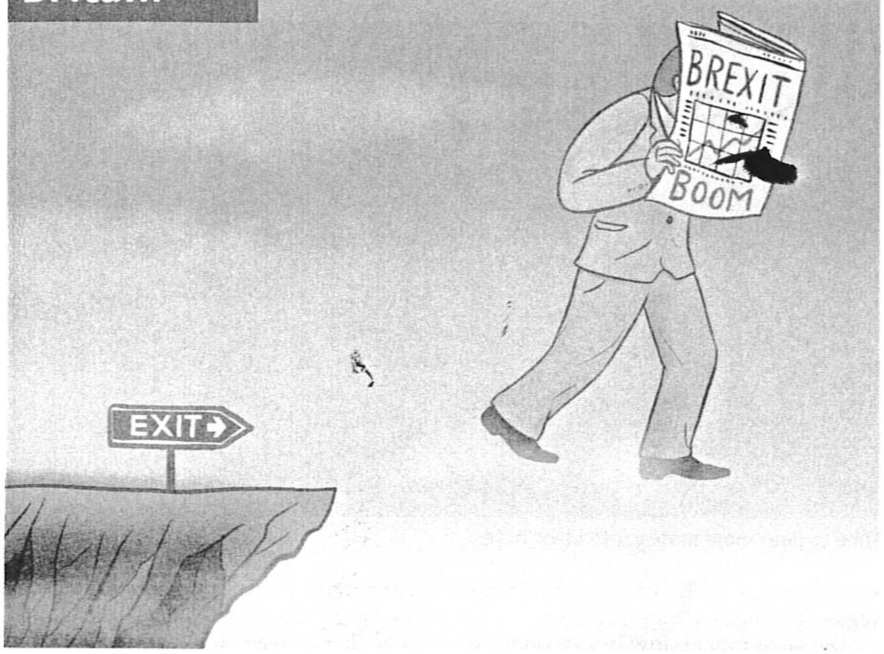
Some Brexiteers say the simplest course would be to revert to the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), of which Britain is a member. But this would imply tariffs on some goods, and would not cover most services, including financial services. Nor is falling back on the WTO as easy as it sounds. Britain's membership is linked to the EU: to rejoin independently, it must agree on a new tariff schedule, which would be hard in areas with shared import quotas, like agriculture. The WTO's director-general, Roberto Azevedo, likens this to accession—and it needs unanimous approval, including from countries that are not always friends of Britain.

Could the Brexit process be delayed to allow several years of trade talks? Mrs May has said only that she will not trigger Article 50 this year. But letting the start date drift far into next year or even into 2018 could be testing. Tory Brexiteers (and voters) know that Mrs May was a Remainer, so they will pounce on any hints of backsliding. It may be tempting to wait for elections in other EU countries, notably the French presidential election next spring. But putting off Article 50 further might mean its two-year expiry clashes with the European elections and a new EU budget round, both due in 2019. And delays could irritate Britain's EU partners, who might refuse to negotiate seriously until the government shows that it really means to leave.

One alternative proposed by some in London is to seek prior political agreement to extend the Article 50 process beyond two years. But since the treaty requires unanimous approval at the end of the two years, it may not be possible to secure a guarantee that binds future EU leaders.

Another possibility is an interim arrangement to take effect during the hiatus after Article 50 expires, but before the final shape of future trade deals is clear. This would probably be an off-the-shelf model, such as temporary membership of the European Economic Area that includes Norway. This would preserve full access to the EU's single market. But it would have two drawbacks. One is that, in trade, the temporary often becomes near-permanent. The other is that, against Brexiteers' fervent wishes, it would imply continuing to accept free migration from the EU, make payments into the EU budget and abide by all single-market rules.

Life is clearly possible outside the EU. But the process of getting there is full of pitfalls and problems. It is no wonder that Mrs May, contemplating the future from her walking holiday in Switzerland, has said little more than that "Brexit means Brexit". And it is no wonder that she has dumped the responsibility for delivering it into the laps of the three Brexiteers. ■



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The economy since the Brexit referendum

Fact and fiction

The dire prophecies of doom have not come true—yet. But the economy is slowing

AFTER Britain voted to leave the European Union on June 23rd, financial markets took fright. Sterling lost one-tenth of its value in two days of trading. The FTSE 250, an index of domestically focused firms, fell by 14%. Remainers predicted that Leave voters would soon suffer from an acute case of buyer's remorse. Yet as the summer has worn on, the mood has changed. Companies have not fled Britain en masse. The pound has stabilised and the FTSE 250 is up on its pre-referendum level. Polls suggest that few Brexiteers regret their vote: indeed, many of them now argue that the pre-referendum doom-mongering was overblown, and some even detect the beginning of a "Brexit boom". What is the reality?

Some of the gloomier pre-referendum forecasts ignored the possibility that the authorities would respond to a Leave vote by propping up the economy. In the event, the Bank of England loosened monetary policy six weeks after the referendum, a widely anticipated move that nonetheless boosted confidence. The new government of Theresa May quickly made clear that it would tone down the fiscal austerity of its predecessor.

Nor did wonks foresee that Brexit would take so long to get under way. During the referendum campaign David Cameron implied that Britain would begin the process of withdrawal from the EU immediately, in the case of a Leave vote. Instead he left the job to his successor. Mrs May has said negotiations will not begin until 2017; only on August 31st did she convene a cabinet meeting to discuss the broad shape of Brexit. Bookmakers reckon there is a 40% chance that Britain will not leave the EU before 2020. Those who are pleasantly surprised by Brexit's consequences should bear in mind that it has not yet happened.

Still, in the short term the economy seems to be faring better than some economists had predicted. Consumer spending appears to be healthy. In July retail sales rose by 4% compared with the year before. But the fact that they grew by the same amount in September 2008, the month that Lehman Brothers collapsed and thus precipitated the global financial crisis, should give pause for thought. Consumers do not immediately internalise bad economic news: the man on the street is not thinking about Article 50 of the EU treaty as he enters a shopping centre. And more than half of Britons clearly never saw Brexit as bad news in the first place.

For a better gauge of the future of the economy, look at the behaviour of companies. Before the referendum, economists' main worry was that firms would hold back on expensive, hard-to-reverse decisions while Britain's future relationship with the EU was sorted out. The two big questions concern jobs and investment.

Growth in business credit has markedly slowed. The Bank of England's latest survey of business confidence indicates that planned investment is being reined in. In July the value of contracts in the infrastructure industry fell by 20% compared with June, based on a three-month rolling average, according to Barbour ABI, a consultancy. As businesses hold back on investment, productivity will slow and, with it, wages.

Data from Adzuna, a job-search firm, show that in July wages and vacancies fell compared with June. (A higher rate of inflation linked to the weak pound is eating further into real earnings.) The number of advertised low-paid and contract roles has grown, as employers seek to plug gaps without committing to permanent hires. *The Economist*'s model analysing Google searches for "jobseekers", which is correlated with official unemployment back to 2004, suggests that unemployment is now around 5.3%, higher than the official rate of 4.9% last recorded for April-June.

What of exports, which Brexiteers forecast would soar following a fall in the pound? A survey of manufacturing firms on September 1st showed strong growth in sales to places like America and China. Yet hopes of an export boom should be tempered. A high proportion of exports' content is made up of imports, which are now pricier. And British exports compete mainly on "non-price" factors, such as quality and customer service, making them insensitive to currency fluctuations. When sterling fell by a similar amount in 2008-09, net exports barely responded.

Britain now hopes to avoid entering recession, as many, including the Treasury, forecast before the vote. It partly depends on what Philip Hammond, the chancellor, announces in his autumn statement, a mini-budget due later in the year. To sup- ▸▸

port the economy he will have to loosen the current fiscal plans considerably. His predecessor, George Osborne, pencilled in a reduction in the cyclically adjusted budget deficit in 2017 of about 1% of GDP, a sharp contraction even by the standards of recent years. Mr Hammond could help by cancelling this austerity. He is likely to announce a round of spending on infrastructure (see next story).

Such policy decisions may yet fend off recession. But deploying a fiscal boost would not be costless, with Britain's public-debt-to-GDP ratio already running at 84%. Nor is ever-looser monetary policy, given the damage it does to pension funds. And consider the counterfactual. Before the referendum many economists had predicted a boost to growth in the event of a vote for Remain, as a big source of uncertainty was removed. The Bank of England had forecast growth of 2.3% in 2017, but now expects just 0.8%. Following the vote to Leave, the government and the bank have been forced to use monetary and fiscal policy just to try to keep growth in positive territory. And Brexit itself, of course, is still to come. ■

Infrastructure

Ropy roads, rail and runways

Britain needs to hurry up with transport projects—both large and small

Time to pour more money into black holes

TO LOOK down from the air-traffic control tower at Heathrow airport—Europe's busiest—is to see a hive of activity. Crammed between the two runways to the west is the gleaming Terminal 5. To the east is Terminal 2, newer still, alongside a labyrinth of older terminals that are being refurbished or rebuilt. Yet despite its ongoing makeover, Heathrow is groaning. Operating at 99% of capacity and in need of new runways and terminals, the congested London airport is testament to politicians' decades-long dithering about where to build new infrastructure. With Britain now flirting with a Brexit-induced recession, it is a habit the new government needs to break.

The problem does not lie with builders. Terminal 5 was built on budget and on time; the Elizabeth line in London, a £15 billion ($20 billion) underground railway due to open in 2018, is also on track. A lack of planning by successive governments is instead to blame. Since the 1960s, decisions about where to put a new runway near London have been delayed repeatedly. Procrastination has left Britain lagging behind Europe and Asia on high-speed rail. Apart from the Channel Tunnel link, no new main lines have been built in Britain since the 1890s. And pothole-pocked roads suggest the highways are no better.

The government now has an opportunity to make up for lost time. Since the vote in June to leave the EU, political support for more infrastructure spending has grown. Last November the Treasury announced that investment in transport projects would double by 2020. The new chancellor, Philip Hammond, is likely to expand this much further later this year. This would help soften the economic blow from Brexit and boost long-term growth.

There is no shortage of potential projects lying in the government's in-tray. Work on the Thames Tideway Tunnel, a £4.2 billion super-sewer under London, will start by November. And construction of the £28 billion HS2 railway, initially between London and Birmingham, will start early next year if, as expected, it is approved by Parliament in the autumn, says David Higgins, its chairman.

Yet their fiscal impact will be only modest in the near term. Phase one of HS2 will pump at most £2 billion into the economy each year, says Mr Higgins, and it would be difficult to accelerate construction even if the chancellor wanted him to.

The same applies to Crossrail 2, another planned railway in London, and to competing proposals to build new runways at Heathrow and Gatwick. Work would probably not begin on the runways before 2020, even if they got the go-ahead tomorrow. Although an independent commission last year backed Heathrow's proposed runway as the option that would most improve London's connections to other cities, academic research suggests that building runway capacity boosts a city's economy much more than increasing the number of places to which it has direct flights.

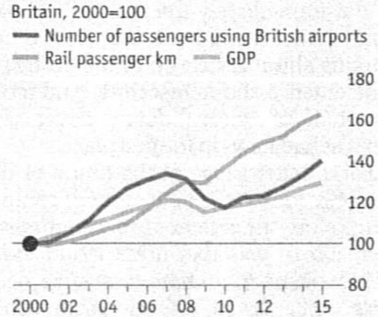
Smaller projects could get going quicker. Over the next four years around £20 billion of roadworks and £50 billion of rail contracts are in the pipeline, says Michael Dall of Barbour ABI, a consultancy. Some could be accelerated. County surveyors have reams of shelved road-resurfacing plans that could be quickly dusted down. It would cost £11.8 billion to repair Britain's roads to a good standard, according to a recent survey of local authorities.

Little improvements often have strong business cases, because they allow existing infrastructure to be used more intensively. The government calculated that the cost-benefit ratio for expanding rail capacity on existing lines was almost 50% higher than for building HS2. For some improvements the benefits were eight times greater than the costs. Smaller projects can also help to revive "left behind" regions—a stated priority of the government—which are literally bypassed by the likes of HS2.

And without the small transport projects, passengers find it harder to use the big ones. "You have to do both," Mr Higgins admits, or "you'll have massive car parks everywhere." For example, although a £6.5 billion investment in Thameslink has helped to reduce train journey times from London to Luton airport to just 24 minutes, the last mile from station to terminal, by bus transfer, can take an hour because of congestion on local roads. Although the government should get on with its big projects, the tiddlers are just as important. ■

Steaming ahead

Britain, 2000=100



Sources: ONS; Civil Aviation Authority; Office of Rail and Road

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Britain and the European Union

So what will Brexit really mean?

Theresa May's ministers are carefully avoiding specific answers. But she is systematically disowning many of the Brexiteers' promises

SOME 77 days have passed since Britain voted on June 23rd to leave the European Union. Yet this period has been strangely reminiscent of 77 years ago, after Neville Chamberlain declared war on Nazi Germany: a phoney war. Theresa May, the prime minister, has created a new Department for Exiting the EU and put three leading Brexiteers (pictured) in charge of the process. But little else has happened. Article 50 of the EU treaty, which would kick off negotiations, has not been invoked. And Mrs May's mantra, "Brexit means Brexit", has become a tired cliché.

David Davis, secretary of state for the new department, had another go in Parliament on September 5th. Brexit, he explained helpfully, meant leaving the EU. He added that this implied taking back control of borders, laws and taxpayers' money. He brimmed with cheer about the opportunities it would bring. Yet when asked specific questions—Would Britain quit the EU's single market? What migration controls would it seek? Would it stay in Europol? When would negotiations start?—he gave only vague answers.

That may be quite sensible, for a reason he also offered: that it is more important to get Brexit right than to do it quickly. His department is a work in progress. He has 180 officials and a further 120 in Brussels, but he needs more. As he spoke, he was flanked by his two Brexiteer colleagues, Boris Johnson as foreign secretary and Liam Fox at the Department for International Trade. The three men have been having the usual turf wars and squabbles over exactly what Brexit should entail.

Tellingly, two hints at answers emerged this week in Asia, not Westminster. In China for the G20 summit, Mrs May disavowed several pledges made by Brexiteers before the referendum. She said she was against an Australian-style "points" system for EU migrants (though mainly because it might let in too many, not too few). She refused to back Leavers' promises to transfer saved EU budget payments to the National Health Service or scrap VAT on fuel bills. The not-so-subtle message was that, though the three Brexiteers may be nominally in charge, the real decisions will be taken by her and by Philip Hammond, her chancellor, both of them Remainers.

A tip from Tokyo

These two may have welcomed a second Asian intervention: the unusual publication by Japan's foreign ministry of a Brexit paper. Japanese companies, it said, were huge employers in Britain, which took almost half of Japan's investment in the EU last year. Most of that came because Britain is a gateway to Europe. The paper advised Mrs May to try to retain full access to the single market, to avoid customs controls on exports, to preserve the "passport" that allows banks based in London to trade across Europe and to let employers freely hire EU nationals.

These interventions worry Tory Brexiteers, who fret that having won a famous victory in June, they could lose the war. Their fear is that, given the choice, Mrs May and Mr Hammond will lean more to staying in the single market than to taking back full control of migration, money and laws. Mr Davis said this week that having access to the single market was not the same as being a member of it, and added that giving up border control to secure membership was an "improbable" outcome. But he was slapped down when Mrs May's spokeswoman said the remark was only Mr Davis's personal opinion. He also talked of retaining as much of the status quo as possible, not least in areas like security and foreign-policy co-operation.

The case for staying in the single market is simple: economists say this will minimise the economic damage from Brexit. A "hard" Brexit that involves leaving the single market without comprehensive free-trade deals with the EU and third countries would mean a bigger drop in investment and output. Brexiteers claim that many countries want free-trade deals and the economy is proving more robust than Remainers forecast. Michael Gove, a leading Brexiteer and former justice secretary, scoffed that *soi-disant* experts predicting economic doom had "*oeuf* on their face".

Yet Mrs May is less complacent, acknowledging that it will not be "plain sailing" for the economy. Domestic business and financial lobbies are pressing to stay in the single market. As for trade deals, although she won warm words at the G20 summit from Australia's prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, she was told firmly by Barack Obama and others that bilateral ▸▸

deals with Britain would not be a priority. The climate for free-trade deals is not propitious these days, and Mr Fox's department is bereft of experienced trade negotiators.

Mrs May has ruled out an early election and a second referendum. She refuses to provide a "running commentary" on her Brexit plans. And she insists she can invoke Article 50 without a parliamentary vote. Yet she is being urged by some to delay, since it would set a two-year deadline for Brexit that can be extended only by unanimity among EU leaders. In a thoughtful paper for the think-tank Open Europe, Andrew Tyrie, chairman of the Treasury committee, says the government should first decide what sort of Brexit it wants, adding that its leverage is greater before it pulls the trigger. He suggests waiting until the French election in the spring or even the German one in September.

Yet Mrs May might not be allowed to wait by her own party, let alone by fellow EU leaders eager to get Brexit out of the way before the European elections in mid-2019. The phoney war may soon turn hotter. ■

The National Health Service

Accident and emergency

BIRMINGHAM, CASTLE CARY AND SALFORD

The NHS is in a mess. But reformers believe that new models of health care, many pioneered in other countries, can fix it

SALLY EVANS is 75 years old. She lives on her own in a bungalow in Castle Cary, a market town in Somerset, where she loves to knit and tend her garden. Both hobbies are harder than they were; Mrs Evans has a bad back and, like two-thirds of British adults, she is overweight. She also has diabetes, high cholesterol, chronic heart failure, high blood pressure, hyperthyroidism, incontinence and gout. All of which are made worse by a waning memory.

Like health-care systems around the world, the National Health Service (NHS) is struggling to provide good care at low cost for patients such as Mrs Evans (not her real name). Its business model has not kept up with the changing burden of disease. For as more people enter and live longer in their dotage, demand increases for two costly types of care. The first is looking after the dying. About 25% of all hospital inpatient spending during a person's lifetime occurs in the final three months. The second is caring for those with more than one chronic condition. About 70% of NHS spending goes on long-term illnesses. More than half of over-70s have at least two and a quarter have at least three. In south Somerset 50% of health and social-care funding is spent on 4% of people.

The same pattern is found across the NHS, and it is struggling to cope. The pressures on the service once felt only in winter are now present throughout the year (see chart 1 on next page). Performance against waiting-times targets for cancer treatment and emergency care has deteriorated. The British Medical Association, a doctors' trade union, is threatening strikes in October, November and December as part of a year-long dispute over a new contract. Jim Mackey, chief executive of NHS Improvement, a health regulator, puts it bluntly: "The NHS is in a mess."

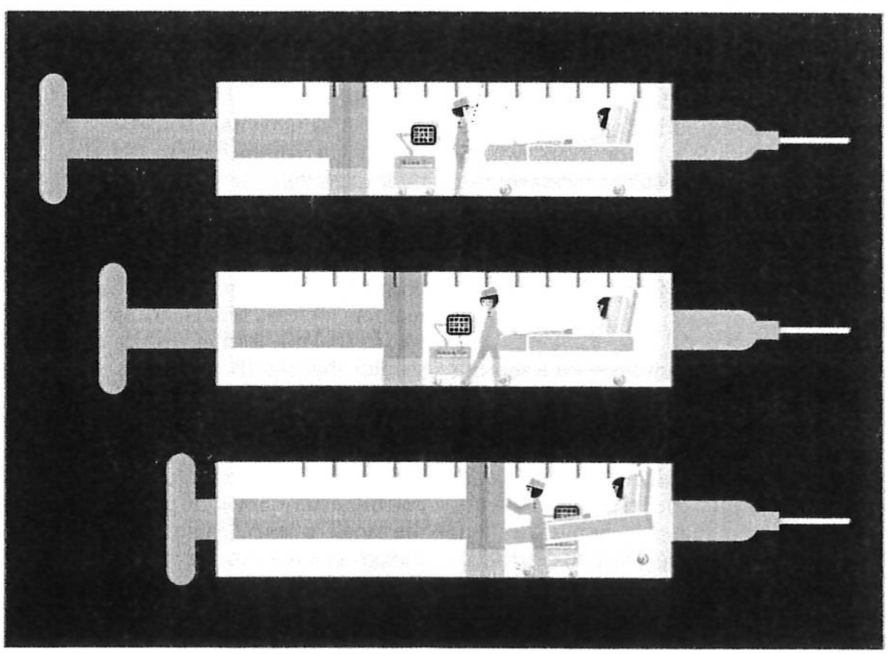
When it was established in 1948, the NHS was the first universal health-care system free at the point of use. It is the institution of which Britons are most proud. No other country's health service would have had a slot in the opening ceremony of an Olympic games, as the NHS did in 2012 in London. And yet it is of middling quality. England has a few world-leading hospitals. It vaccinates more people against influenza and screens more women for cancers than most rich countries. But its performance on standard measures of quality—such as survival rates from cancers, strokes and heart attacks—compares badly.

If one fallacy about the NHS is that it is the envy of the world, as its devotees claim, another is that it is a single organisation. In fact it is a series of interlocking systems. Public health, hospitals, general practitioners (or GPs, the family doctors who provide basic care outside hospitals) and mental-health services all have separate funding and incentives. Social care, which includes old-folks' homes and the like, is run by local councils, not the NHS.

Governments have relentlessly tinkered with this complex system. Since 1974 there has been a reorganisation of the English NHS about once every two years. (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own autonomous services.) The most important was in 1990 when the Conservative government introduced an "internal market". Before the change, regional health authorities had been responsible for almost every aspect of running hospitals. The reform divided the bureaucracy in two. Henceforth one part of the NHS would be responsible for buying services from hospitals and another would be in charge of running them. The subsequent Labour government encouraged more competition and made it easier for private hospitals to provide NHS treatment. It also unleashed a tsunami of targets.

The Health and Social Care Act, passed by the Conservative-led coalition in 2012, was described by a former head of the NHS as a reform so big it could be seen from space. But it has changed little on Earth. Today 209 "Clinical Commissioning Groups" are simply the latest parts of the NHS to purchase services from providers of care, usually hospitals. Paul Corrigan, a former adviser to Tony Blair, says the NHS is still a system set up to fix acute problems, not to treat long-term conditions. He compares recent reformers to someone "trying to connect their iPhone to a landline".

One aim of the 2012 act was to prevent ministers from micromanaging the NHS. But the reality is closer to the ideal of Aneu-



Anti-Mafia

Dead dogs and dirty tricks

ROME

Some of those battling the mob are less than squeaky clean themselves

FOR decades the police have tirelessly attempted to crush organised crime in southern Italy. In 1963 Italy's parliament acquired a dedicated, all-party anti-Mafia commission. But the fight against Italy's four big Mafia groups also has a vast unofficial component: of businesspeople publicly refusing to pay for protection, investigative journalists and, above all, civil-society movements. The management of the mobsters' seized wealth is a huge enterprise: in the 12 months to August 2015, €678m ($793m) was taken from them.

Over the past year, however, a string of scandals has blurred the line between the Mafia and their opponents. Indeed, the parliamentary anti-Mafia commission's latest investigation, which began taking evidence in December, is aimed at the anti-Mafia itself, especially the unofficial parts of it, such as civil-society groups. Rosy Bindi, the commission's president, says she aims to cut through the anti-Mafia's "opaqueness and ambiguities".

In the most blatant instances, standing up to the mobsters became its own route to personal enrichment. A woman who was a symbol of the fight against the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta was found guilty of pocketing funds she received for a women's support group. Sometimes, individuals celebrated for their anti-Mafia stance were found to have adopted the criminals' methods, such as the case of a leading Sicilian businessman convicted last year of extorting a €100,000 bribe. In other cases, running an anti-Mafia group was a source of power in a society infused with a culture of favours.

The latest scandal concerns the campaigning head of a TV station in Sicily, Pino Maniaci. When in 2014 Mr Maniaci's pet dogs were found hanging dead near his workplace Matteo Renzi, the prime minister, called him to express admiration for his courage. But in April it emerged that Mr Maniaci is under investigation, suspected of extortion. Prosecutors allege he obtained cash and favours by threatening to use his media clout against local mayors. Among the alleged beneficiaries was his married lover. The dogs, say the investigators, were killed not by Cosa Nostra (the Sicilian Mafia) but by her husband.

Mr Maniaci, who has not been indicted, denies wrongdoing. He claims the allegations are in retaliation for his station's role in exposing potentially the most serious case, involving a judge, Silvana Saguto. Last year Ms Saguto, who presided over the court in Palermo which rules on the administration of property confiscated from Cosa Nostra, was suspended after being placed under investigation on suspicion of corruption. (Ms Saguto denies the accusation and has yet to be indicted.)

In May Antonino Di Matteo, a deputy chief prosecutor of Palermo, stressed that the cases which had come to light were isolated ones. He expressed concern that the entire anti-Mafia movement was being sullied. But ignoring the shortcomings of the anti-Mafia will only make battling the gangsters and their friends even harder. The godfathers are no doubt delighted by the recent scandals—and the attention they deflect from their own dirty business. ■

Britain and Europe

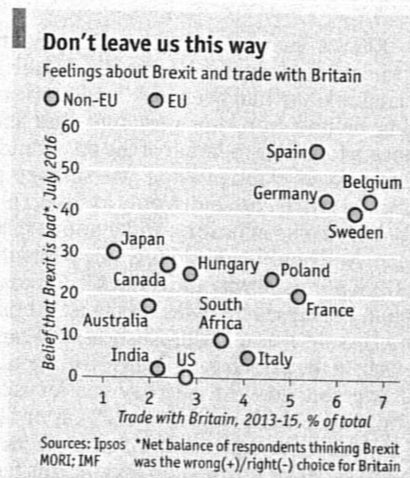
The start of the break-up

What do other countries make of Brexit?

MUCH of the European Union is still smarting from Britain's vote to leave the club on June 23rd, according to data released on August 4th by Ipsos Mori, a pollster. In the nine member states surveyed, 55% think an exit vote was a bad choice for Britain, while 58% think it was also bad for the EU as a whole. Outside the Union feelings are slightly more sanguine. Only 35% of those polled in seven countries with big economies think Britain made a mistake.

Of all the countries surveyed, Russia is by far the happiest. Only 10% believe it was the wrong decision for Britain. By contrast, the Swedes are the most overwrought: 68% think it will be bad for Europe. These two extreme reactions may well be connected. Swedes fear Brexit could lead to the dissolution of the EU. This would leave them even more exposed to the whims of the Kremlin, which routinely makes aggressive gestures in their direction, such as sending submarines into Swedish waters. By contrast Russia is delighted by the prospect of a weaker Europe.

Another reason the Swedes may be anguished is trade. Britain is their fourth-biggest trading partner. As with the other countries surveyed, that factor seems to sway respondents' feelings about Brexit. Broadly speaking, the more a country exports to Britain, the more upset are its citizens by the split (see chart).



In almost every country surveyed the better educated are more likely to think Brexit was unwise. On average 42% of people who did not finish secondary school thought it was the wrong choice, compared with 58% of those who had been to university. Moving up the income ladder also tends to lower the likelihood of backing Brexit.

Slightly more Europeans want the EU to be tough with Britain (28%) than those who want a softer approach (26%). France is harshest: 39% of its people want Britain to be clobbered. Britons, unsurprisingly, are the most eager for generous terms.

Britons diverge from continental thinking in another regard. They are more likely than those in any other EU state to believe their departure will spur others to leave. Fully 64% of them also reckon that Brexit will leave the EU economy weaker, the joint-highest estimate among all the countries asked. Breaking up a relationship is never easy, but when one side thinks it is God's gift to political unions it becomes tougher still.