

Nick Clegg speech extracts

- Nick Clegg will say the stakes during the EU Referendum “could not be higher” with “not just one, but two, unions now hang in the balance”.
- The former Deputy Prime Minister will warn the “SNP will gleefully grab the opportunity to persuade the people of Scotland to leave the UK as well” in the event of a *Brexit*.
- His speech comes as new Liberal Democrat Leader Tim Farron launches the party’s campaign to stay in the EU.
- The former Deputy Prime Minister will also say Britain will turn into “Little England” – “drifting friendlessly in the mid-Atlantic” in the event of an EU exit.
- Nick will also directly warn Jeremy Corbyn that the “referendum is simply too important for ambivalence”.
- He will say: “That is why we must strain every sinew to fight – and win – the referendum”.

The stakes could not be higher: not just one, but two, unions now hang in the balance.

If we vote to leave the EU, I have no doubt that the SNP will gleefully grab the opportunity to persuade the people of Scotland to leave the UK as well.

Then what?

Do we want our children and grandchildren to live in a once great country now pulled apart?

A Great Britain turned into a Little England, drifting ‘friendlessly’ somewhere in the mid-Atlantic?

I have no doubt that David Cameron’s referendum will be contested on the issue of jobs, economic security, the terms of any renegotiation and so on.

But there’s a big, enduring question which hangs over all of this: what kind of country do we want to be, what is our role, in this globalized world of ours?

Open or closed?

Leading in our own European backyard or isolated from our nearest neighbours?

Because let’s be clear: for all the huffing and puffing we’re going to hear from those who want to leave the EU, they have no answer to that fundamental strategic question.

Is America, Uncle Sam, going to help us out when we’ve cut ourselves off from our own European backyard?

Of course not – we may share history and language, but the Americans have been unsentimentally clear that we are of less relevance to them if we are less important in Brussels, Berlin or Paris.

The Chinese and Indians simply can’t understand why we’re even contemplating relinquishing our leadership role in Europe in the first place.

That is why the ambivalence of the new Labour party leadership is so utterly perplexing. Over the years we’ve all got used to the isolationism of the Conservative party.

But Labour?

On a number of occasions in recent years I’ve seen the Labour Party abandon its progressive principles to score short term tactical points: failing to support House of Lords reform; barely lifting a finger in the AV referendum; blocking party funding reform.

But I say to Jeremy Corbyn: the EU referendum is simply too important for ambivalence.

Whether we remain in or out of Europe is an existential question for Britain – if we leave we face an uncertain and isolated future; if we stay in we can lead as a strong European power.

That is why we must strain every sinew to fight – and win – the referendum.