A Conversation with Charles Clarke[1]:

Former British Home Secretary

A Brexit Discussion Using the Six Elements of Decision Quality

Interview Starts:

Ali Abbas: Welcome to LA Charles.

Charles Clarke: Thank you, Ali . Glad to be hear.

Ali Abbas: In the field of decision analysis, we talk about the six elements of a decision: the alternatives, information, the preferences, the criteria for making the decision, the stakeholders, and the frame of the decision. Let's have a conversation about how these elements relate to the Brexit decision.

Charles Clarke:	00:00	Well, unlike for example, the risk analysis in transportation security, which is pretty firm in the rational field, here, you've got some irrational elements. There's people who are worried about things. I had to take the identity card legislation through Parliament in the UK, and there were people with lots of worries about ID cards, some of them justified, some not, some rational, some irrational. You've got a set of questions of that type in any of these difficult decisions.
Charles Clarke:	00:31	But I say Brexit is in a different league in terms of the extent to which irrationality is part of the process and people's feelings are part of the process. And I'd say one of the big stories about politics today is we're moving away from a more rational way of looking at the choices facing society or an individual and organization and towards decisions which are driven very much by passion, often ill-informed passion.
Ali Abbas:	01:03	You know, it's interesting because we say some companies, and I give some examples in my classes, that if they have a process then it must be a good process. But actually you can have a

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process, and it could be a very bad process and it could lead to bad decisions.

Charles Clarke:	01:19	Like holding a referendum.
Ali Abbas:	01:20	Yeah, yeah, exactly. Or even sometimes pair wise vote to exclude candidates.
Charles Clarke:	01:25	Yes, exactly.
Ali Abbas:	01:26	So in football, for example, depending on the leagues, the teams are going to play in each group first. You can, by putting certain strong groups together, you can eliminate some groups that they would have had a chance to go up to semifinals if they were started off in a different group. And so there is a rationality in that.
Charles Clarke:	01:43	Exactly. But I mean all decisions, game theory, decision theory, a whole set of mathematical issues arise. But you try and put that into the political arena and it gets to be very controversial. That's all I'm saying really.
Ali Abbas:	01:58	Yeah. Yeah, I agree. And because of the emotion. So in terms of Brexit. What are the alternatives, I mean is it only Brexit or no Brexit? Is there a middle ground? Is there anything else, we can consider?
Charles Clarke:	02:10	I read something that Leo Varadkar, the Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) said about a couple of days ago. He set out the options very clearly in terms of the Irish dimension to it. He said there are five ways to avoid a hard border, at least four of which would be acceptable to the Irish government. These include a United Ireland, Ireland re-joining the UK, the UK staying in the EU, the UK staying in a single market and customs union or the backstop, which is where we currently are. Now he says those are the five options rationally. I think it's widely agreed that's correct. They are the five options that you're looking at. Now you go through those five options. In the case of a united Ireland you're talking about a hundred years of violent history, not to mention the centuries beforehand. Last time we had a United Ireland was about a hundred years ago and then – precisely because of the armed conflicts - Ireland was partitioned and so we had the border.
Charles Clarke:	03:12	The Good Friday agreements set up a process by which a United Ireland could be agreed in principle by a democratic process, but we are a very, very, long way from having a United Ireland,

whatever the merits. I'm not arguing the merits or demerits of the case at the moment. The only thing to say about that is the way Boris has handled the process is that it makes a United Ireland more likely. His second option, he says, is Ireland rejoining the UK. Now that's the one of the five the Irish government would never accept. Somehow we would go back a hundred years and say let's go back to how it was before. We would become the old UK with Great Britain and Ireland becoming one country again. Again, I think that's fanciful. I think it's unimaginable. You can see rationality for it, funnily enough. And there are a number of all Ireland, UK institutions as a ministerial level conference takes regularly.

Charles Clarke: 04:10 There're discussions about the common interests. There's the so-called common travel area in between the Island of Ireland and the UK. There's a set of things which reflect the common shared heritage, let's put it like that. But getting to the state of saying that Ireland somehow became part of the UK, presumably with one government over the whole of Ireland and Great Britain, presumably with members of parliament elected to the Westminster parliament as they were in the 19th century. It's just, the way you're laughing correctly sums up the possibility that you're talking about here. So this was the second option and obviously the Irish government wouldn't have it.

Charles Clarke: 04:49 The third is the UK staying in the EU. I would say that is a rational way through this process and I still don't exclude that. My personal prediction is I think it's now 80% likely that Britain will stay in the European Union. I think when we met six months ago, I thought it's about 60%, but I think the way that Boris Johnson has conducted himself makes it now 80% likely that we'll stay in EU.

Charles Clarke: 05:16 The fourth option, the UK staying in the single market and in the customs union was the most rational way to implement the Brexit referendum decision. I wrote an article to that effect before the 2017 general election arguing that Labour should adopt that policy. And what could have happened, and in my opinion should have happened, is that the new prime minister after David Cameron, Theresa May, would've said, "Well, we've had a 52-48 vote here. We have to honour that vote by leaving the European Union. But we want to do it in a way that keeps our countries across Europe as united as possible and that does the least possible economic damage to our country, but acknowledges it will no longer be part of the EU political institutions." And the best way to do that is to stay in the single market and stay in the customs union whilst leaving the EU.

| Charles Clarke: | 06:11 | Why should we stay in the single market? Because if we're not in a single market, then all the economic integration, which has been very beneficial, whether you're talking about making cars and pharmaceuticals or financial markets or whatever, is broken. If we're not in the customs union there are the same kind of issues. The problem from Theresa May's point of view of doing that was the UK requirement to stay in single market is you have to continue to allow free movement of labour within the European Union. That's a condition that they've laid down and which we, until the referendum, went along with. She believed that the main reason why people voted as they did in the referendum was concerns about immigration and therefore she thought that the mandate of the referendum was to stop that kind of free movement of labor and so to keep out from Britain the Romanians, the Greeks, whoever it might be, who was coming in. So she couldn't accept that the UK should stay in the single market or customs union.

And of course a further major downside of staying in the single market and customs union without being part of the EU's political institutions was that the UK would have lost control over the rules that governed our economic life. |
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| Charles Clarke: | 07:09 | There were other aspects of EU membership that we didn't have to accept. We might have decided not to be part of the common agricultural policy, not to be part of the common fisheries policy, various other things, but that fourth option, that Varadkar set out, UK staying in the single market and customs union, would have worked. It certainly would've dealt with the Northern Ireland border problem because the Northern Ireland border problem is simply a symptom of the UK-EU border problem. If you are going to have different economic regimes, different customs regimes, that means there has to be a border between the areas where that arises. And there are only three borders between the UK and the EU which really exist. The first is basically irrelevant. It's in Cyprus between our sovereign basis in Cyprus and the rest of the EU and Cyprus. It's in Gibraltar where there is a border where sometimes there are quite serious dramas there if the Spanish close their border or whatever, but it's not got any of the wider emotional package. |
| Charles Clarke: | 08:05 | And then you've got thirdly the Irish border. |
| Ali Abbas: | 08:07 | Yeah. |
| Charles Clarke: | 08:08 | Which obviously has had massive emotional baggage, all kinds of issues. And the Good Friday agreement stopped the |

problems that the border had created. So staying in the single market and customs union was an option. It's still argued for by a number of people in the British parliament. I still wouldn't exclude it. It's not that far from the Theresa May deal, which was on the table. And it's something that you could rationally see your way towards. I think Theresa May was very mistaken not to take that as an option immediately after the referendum, but she didn't. So we're in that course of action now. And finally the backstop. Well, the backstop was a device that was set up to ensure that there can never be a solution that brought the border back. It basically says that we keep everybody inside the single market and customs union until there's an agreement that somehow solves the border.

Charles Clarke:	09:05	Nobody believes there is an agreement which solves the border. So the backstop goes on forever and that's what you've got. Now, reason I brought it Varadkar's analysis into this discussion is because I thought that in terms of your decision-taking tree point, the way that he sets out these choices with these five options seems to be correct. But it's technically correct and as I've tried to describe in looking at each of the options, most of the actual scenarios simply aren't real possibilities.
Ali Abbas:	09:39	Yeah.
Charles Clarke:	09:41	Of the options the two most likely are the UK staying in the EU or somehow staying in the single market and customs union, but that would be extremely divisive. Sorry for the lengthy response-
Ali Abbas:	09:52	No no, this is a great answer and really provides a lot of detail.
Charles Clarke:	09:55	
Charles Clarke:	09:59	This analysis sets out what the position is. The tragedy of British politics in the last three years really has been that this fundamental reality, which he spelled out very clearly simply has not been even understood by the leadership of the British Conservative party and Boris Johnson. I mean, Boris Johnson had a conversation yesterday with the Finnish prime minister, Finland's in the chair of the EU in this period, and after which the Finnish prime minister said that Boris Johnson is only just coming to understand the dilemmas which he's in and those dilemmas are those set out by this choice. And the British government - sorry, final point then I'll stop – is that the rules of leaving the European Union state that a letter under so-called article 50 has to be sent.

Charles Clarke:	10:59	Once that letter is sent, there's then a two year timescale to actually expedite the departure from the European union. That letter was sent on 29th of March, 2017, and Theresa May is widely and I would say rightly criticized for not being clear what the British answer to this dilemma was before sending the letter. Because we then went into a time limited negotiation process where the UK didn't have a clear position as to what we were trying to go for. We had had it within our power to decide what we were going to go for and then send the letter for the negotiation. But we didn't do that. We sent the letter and then tried to work out what we were going for. And that's one of the recent incoherent actions that we've had.
Ali Abbas:	11:50	Yes. In terms of the rationality in the decision making. So you know there are many ways those five alternatives for example, in choosing between them. And as you said, and I agree, many of them are not viable. How do you make the decision? In other words, do you leave it to the people to vote? If there was a crystal ball you could look at, and see in the future and to explore, and then you say, "Okay, this happened. Therefore this is what I would like to do." What would it be? How do you choose and what can be resolved? I mean, if there are some things you can look into the future-
Charles Clarke:	12:28	The first question is who's choosing, which is a precondition for how do you choose?
Ali Abbas:	12:34	Yeah.
Charles Clarke:	12:35	Is it the British government? Is it the British parliament? Is it the British people? Is it the Conservative party? Between these choices that I've summarized here, they're perfectly rational and reasonable differences of opinion that people will have for all kinds of reasons. And that's politics. That's democracy, that's life. If people say, actually our solution is for Ireland to become part of Britain again, maybe very few people would support it, but it's a legitimate point of view to have.
Ali Abbas:	13:11	Yeah.
Charles Clarke:	13:11	Or whatever. So you firstly got to decide who is really taking the decision in this area. Now, traditionally in the UK, it's been the UK government subject to the UK parliament. No question of a referendum in all of this. A referendum was supposed to be advisory. The referendum that took place in 1975, which confirmed our membership of the European Union was a referendum that was called by the then prime minister Harold Wilson in order to confirm the decision that has already been

taken. The British parliament had already decided to join the European Union and there'd been controversial votes in parliament.

Charles Clarke: 13:54   A third of Labour MPs had voted with the Conservative Prime Minister Ted Heath, to join the European Union. The Labour Party was divided. Wilson thought the way to resolve that was to have a referendum which would confirm the decision. It was possible that the referendum might have not confirmed the decision, but it wasn't really putting it in the terms of your decision taking and thinking. It wasn't really putting the decision really in front of the British people. It was basically saying, do you agree with this decision that was previously taken? That was carried by two thirds to a third and was regarded as decisive. Though many people didn't like the referendum but they thought that if it went the right way. It's all right. There we are. That's okay. This referendum in 2016 took place on a different kind of basis. It was simply saying, do you want to leave or do you want to stay?

Charles Clarke: 14:50   It became a vehicle as many referenda do, where the people could express their dissatisfaction or uncertainty with many aspects of the government, the political culture, the life. I would say that it followed the general problems of globalization which left large numbers of people feeling that they were losers out of globalization. And you saw the nationalist responses here in the States with the Tea Party and then with Trump. In Britain, you saw it with the UKIP party, the Brexit campaign. In France, you saw it with the Front National and Marine Le Pen, and similar manifestations in different countries. But they were all different manifestations of the same thing, a dissatisfaction with the state of affairs that has happened as a result of globalization. I wouldn't myself say it was a specific thing about the European Union., The decision, by making it a referendum, took it almost outside the rational framework which you're constantly trying to pull me back to here.

Ali Abbas: 16:07   Exactly.

Charles Clarke: 16:10   Yeah. And so, if it's the people, then you can't redo it other than through a referendum. But then the question is, "What are the rules of the referendum, how does it operate?" And so on. If it's not the people, but it's the parliament, which has always been sovereign in Britain, then that depends on having a government which has the confidence of Parliament. And the problem we are in at the moment in the UK and it's where we have been since the 2017 general election, is that we haven't had a

		government which has the confidence of Parliament. And that's essentially been the core problem. I'll pause there.
Ali Abbas:	16:41	No, that's good. So, a decision like this, with all the sophistication involved, do you think that people, even if there were a referendum, would have enough knowledge to now all the implications? Do they even know what they want?
Charles Clarke:	16:57	I think this is a very tough problem. Elitists from what you would call the beltway or the Westminster bubble, of whom I'm by definition one having been a Member of Parliament and so on. If you start going down the line, "The people don't know enough to vote," you get to very dangerous territory. A territory where I wouldn't like to be. Would I argue that? I mean I'm not a classical philosopher, but the Athenians had lots of discussions about this kind of thing about where did perfect information lie? Who had the perfect information? Even if they had it, did they deploy it in a rational way? But I think it's very dangerous to say that people really don't know. There's another subset of issues, which are that the referendum itself was very badly conducted. And the way the media operated, the way it was regulated, allow quote, fake news, unquote, to become very powerful in forming people's views and so on.
Charles Clarke:	18:00	So I have to say that I do doubt that everybody has the capacity to decide, but you get to-
Ali Abbas:	18:10	Understand the consequences-
Charles Clarke:	18:12	Understand the consequences. Absolutely. But you get into... The logical consequence of that state of view is almost to stop democracy. But that then raises the question of, "Who does have the knowledge to do it?" In Britain, we had an aristocratic system where if you had the right parents, you were considered that you did have the knowledge and if you didn't it was thought that you didn't. So the whole campaign for democracy over the centuries has been to say that everybody has a right to have a voice in the decisions of society which affect them. And I don't dissent from that. I think I'm of that view.
Ali Abbas:	18:52	Yeah.
Charles Clarke:	18:52	And if you look at places in the world today, which don't have democracy on the grounds that people don't know, it's a very dangerous thing. I remember when we fought against apartheid when I was a young man, the argument used to be made quite seriously by people - I heard it made by people - that the blacks

simply didn't have the capacity to take decisions about their lives. It was something that only white people in South Africa could do and that was believed by people who believed that, but I never could believe it. And so I'm very, very loth to go down a line of saying that some people don't know what's best and so shouldn't have a say-

Ali Abbas:	19:29	"Do people know what's best or not?"
Charles Clarke:	19:31	You then have the more sophisticated point you then raise of, "Can you predict the consequences in the future?" Not just, "Can you not know now?" I want to be inside the European Union or not.
Ali Abbas:	19:42	Yeah.
Charles Clarke:	19:43	But also the capacity to restrain the referendum decision above all other considerations like giving David Cameron a bloody nose to actually focus their decisions on that referendum question.
Charles Clarke:	19:55	Thirdly, "Can you predict the consequences of your vote?" Well, yeah. In fact, there was a big effort made by the Cameron government to predict the consequences of the vote. There are all kinds of economic analyses that were published, which were then characterized by Nigel Farage Brexiteers as Project Fear. And they successfully labelled the economic future analyses of a no vote as quote, Project Fear unquote. It was characterised as just propaganda being pumped out by people who want to stay in the European Union, completely untrue, lies, et cetera, et cetera. And of course if you're talking about projections, economic projections in the future, saying they're true in some sense is very difficult. You then had leading Brexiteers, the most notable was Michael Gove, who's still a member of the government today, publicly condemning what he called, his words, experts and saying we shouldn't listen to experts who claim to know what was going to happen in this situation.
Charles Clarke:	20:54	Now of course that's appalling and I would say here we are in a lovely university, but in universities throughout the world, I would say trying to help people think about the consequences of what the world is, what we're doing, even in difficult areas of human psychology or of political movements, and notably problematic areas like economics.
Ali Abbas:	21:18	Yeah.

Charles Clarke:	21:19	You probably remember that story when the Queen went to London School of Economics in 2009 after the 2008 financial crisis, she said to all the economists there, "Why was nobody able to predict that?" And there was no answer, of course. And finally they produced an answer in 2012, three years later, following the usual academic timetable. The point I'm trying to get at is the problem of this question of predicting consequences. There isn't a determinism about this in these areas of public policy that there might be in pure physics, for example.
Ali Abbas:	21:53	Yeah. And it's a lot of subjectivity. Might be both cognitive biases might get involved in-
Charles Clarke:	21:58	All of those things.
Ali Abbas:	21:58	Yeah. What do you think, if we surveyed a sample of people of the population, what do they want? I mean, is it jobs? You're talking about migration. What do people want?
Charles Clarke:	22:09	Well, of course they want different things. And any politician who tells you what the people want is almost certainly wrong. Either they're fooling themselves or in extreme cases they might actually be telling lies because at the end of the day, people want a whole set of different things. Most of the analyses suggest that what people want ahead of anything else is economic security, so that does mean a job for the family or jobs for the family or for their children to be able to have jobs for the future.
Charles Clarke:	22:45	It means having a reasonable standard of living, hopefully a reasonably increasing prosperity and that was the story of the whole period from 1950, say, through to 2000. There was a steady sense of growth but then came globalization and that meant that the relative prosperity of the quote, West, unquote, was undermined in that process. But I'd say that's what people want. And then I'd say a second one I would always say is high quality public services. That's health, education, good schools for the children, and so on.
Ali Abbas:	23:20	Maybe security?
Charles Clarke:	23:22	Security. That takes you to pensions and the whole welfare system.
Ali Abbas:	23:25	Yeah. Yeah. The White House published in 2014 a strategic memo talking about the values. One of them was indeed, and

we've touched on it, the economic growth prosperity. One was security in all forms, whether also Homeland security, and another one was liberties that people have the ability to maintain their free speech, living their values, and then there was a fourth one because I like to differentiate direct or indirect values. A means to an ends or direct was international order. In other words, do we really care about international order or we care about international order because it could impact the United States?

| Charles Clarke: | 24:07 | Well, of those four, I'd say the first two are definitely correct. The general sense of prosperity, general sense of security, including as you say, Homeland security. People do want that. There's no question about it. Sometimes I used to be asked the question, "Why are you so worried about terrorism?" Many more people lose their lives in road accidents in a year than the number of people died in terrorism. Shouldn't you put your efforts into- |

| Ali Abbas: | 24:35 | Roads and highways? |

| Charles Clarke: | 24:36 | Now I said, well, no, because there is an existential issue here that people want to feel that their society is one which is secure. The third one, liberty, is more complicated. I think people do want liberties and they certainly to be able to kick out the bosses who are in government on a regular basis. But I think it's quite an interesting question. I thought of writing a book about it actually about what people want when they want democracy. |

| Charles Clarke: | 25:05 | There's a whole set of different measures. There's the right to kick out the government. There's the right to have certain core human rights including freedom of speech, freedom of economic activity, freedom for women and so on. There's the rule of law, quote unquote, whatever that means. It's a very, very important concept that people are not subject to the vagaries of an individual or group of individuals pursuing their own interests rather than the overall law that's determined by society. So I think that third one is a much more sophisticated question than is widely conceived of and requires more careful analysis. |

| Charles Clarke: | 25:47 | And I say that's also true of the fourth one, international order. Because as you rightly said, that one plays back into the number two, security. |

| Ali Abbas: | 25:56 | Yeah. |

Charles Clarke:	25:56	And in a sense you remember Neville Chamberlain's classic remark in 1938 about Czechoslovakia when the Germans took over Czechoslovakia: "It's a faraway country of which we know little." And he has been excoriated for that remark. History showed it as the symbol of not being ready to stop fascist expansionism.
Charles Clarke:	26:18	I obviously think it was a silly thing to say, but it had its origins in a whole generation which had lost their families and lives in the Great War, 1914 to 1919, and they didn't want to go back into war again and so he was doing all he could to avoid war and when compared with the devastating losses of 1914 to 1918 where families had been wiped out, whole generations of young men had been killed in appalling scenes.
Ali Abbas:	26:46	Yeah.
Charles Clarke:	26:46	Did we want to do all this again for quote, a faraway country, of which we know little, in those circumstances. And so he was trying to stop Hitler attacking Britain, but he didn't care about the rest, essentially. Now international order is, again, a much more sophisticated thing and I would say very interesting. An illustration of that is the EU referendum in Britain, because of course the EU was established to sustain international order.
Charles Clarke:	27:16	Its fundamental cause of existence in 1956 was to stop the Franco-German conflict, which had led to three wars, 1870, 1914, 1939, destroying the continent, coming again, and to create peacemaking structures meant to ensure that couldn't happen again. And at the end of the day, people had lost faith in the EU's ability or didn't believe anymore that that was the reason that it had been there. And so they said, okay, we'll leave the European Union. International order isn't the preoccupation it once was.
Charles Clarke:	27:52	So I think that international one, I personally of course think it's exceptionally important and I think stopping wars is exceptionally important. How do you stop wars? Having international rule of law in some sense is very important. But to take a controversial example, if you look at the 2008 financial crisis, one of the reasons that happened was we didn't have an international economic regime under the UN institutions, the IMF, the World Bank, and so on, which prevented the kind of behaviour of the international institutions that led to that collapse. So in a sense, the international order was not strong enough to prevent this happening. Did people lose their lives as a result? Not directly, perhaps, in the conflicts, but indirectly you could certainly say large numbers of people did.

Ali Abbas:	28:46	No, no, this is a very good discussion. You know, generally there is always this lag where things happen unintended and then the government comes later to add more things. So when you think of the privacy laws with Facebook and the whole internet, it took the Cambridge Analytica thing. And then after that governments said, "Oh, what's going on? Now we need to enforce some things like this." We need to add one more thing-
Charles Clarke:	29:10	They don't have a means of doing so. I mean, they're relying on the goodwill of Facebook and so on. And the question of establishing even a national regime, let alone an international regime which keeps these things under some degree of control is very difficult.
Ali Abbas:	29:26	Yeah.
Charles Clarke:	29:27	And therefore controversial.
Ali Abbas:	29:29	I think technology has become so advanced and so detailed. I think it's hard to expect policymakers to know the full details of what is involved in a technology for them to able even to legislate about as I said, and so therefore I think there's going to be a tendency to rely on the goodwill of-
Charles Clarke:	29:49	That's a very big question. David Runciman, a professor of politics at Cambridge University, ran a session which I went to in Cambridge, UK, in April this year, on exactly this question about technology and democracy and the question of whether the democratic politicians, the state in some sense understood enough about this way the world worked in order to be able to establish a regulatory regime which would keep things under control. And he in fact argues, I think, over-pessimistically, that democracy is ending because technology is now so strong that democracy doesn't have the means of controlling it because the level of knowledge in the democratic institutions of technology is so low that whatever the governments do, the technology companies will run rings around them. I'm don't think that pessimistic view is correct. Though it's certainly correct or to say most democratic policy makers have a very low idea of what the technology is, I don't think it's impossible to imagine that that works in a better way.
Ali Abbas:	31:08	Okay. Talking about behavioural economics now. You know there's a big phenomenon in Oxford that it's called the winner's curse or buyer's remorse. So when you buy something or if you win an auction and you win, and you say, "Well, maybe I should have bid lower." Is some of that happening in this Brexit thing? In other words, so it's happened, it will fest at the beginning.

		Then there was the memo as you said to the European Union saying, "Okay, and now it's kind of suddenly lost momentum." Is there some of this kind of-
Charles Clarke:	31:38	If you look at the opinion polls in Britain, I would not say buyer remorse has really set in. Though there's been a little shift of opinion towards remain away from leave.
Ali Abbas:	31:54	Yeah.
Charles Clarke:	31:54	It hasn't been vast and that's largely because the issues are so complex that people aren't really in a position to do that.
Ali Abbas:	32:06	You know, like regret. They say regret is stronger on the short term, but on the long term you regret not doing something. On the short term you regret doing it.
Charles Clarke:	32:16	I've just been reading about Mountbatten, who was commander of the Southeast Asian region in the Second World War and he had the terrible job of being the last Viceroy of India at the partitioning of India in 1947 which led to millions of people losing their lives. And he was widely criticized for holding to the deadline of August 15th, 1947 when the new boundary was established. And it's argued that if he hadn't done that in that way, maybe millions of people wouldn't have lost their lives. His defence on that would have been that You can't say it would have been better on any other route, whatever happened. You just had to go down that route-
Ali Abbas:	33:02	True.
Charles Clarke:	33:02	And try and deal with-
Ali Abbas:	33:03	the counterfactual, it's hard to predict what would have happened-
Charles Clarke:	33:09	That's the key point. That point about the counterfactuals, exactly the core point-
Ali Abbas:	33:10	Yeah.
Charles Clarke:	33:11	In all of that, as far as Brexit's concerned, I would say more and more people are worried about Brexit and they were very worried about the so-called no deal Brexit, which we would of been the fact that the UK was leaving on a certain date without there having been an agreement. There're all kinds of problems which would have arisen which would have been very serious.

And everybody had believed throughout that there wouldn't be a no-deal Brexit. But that ignores the fact there was a body of people who were determined to get Britain out of the European Union and their ambition shifted right at the beginning. Leaving the EU was fine. We can stay in the single market and stay in the customs union. And gradually that became not 'real Brexit' and it hardened and hardened and hardened as time went on.

Charles Clarke: 34:03 So it is true that as time moves forward, the decision framework changes as to what might or might not be acceptable. And I think it's pretty clear now, but if we knew then what we know now, as they say, a) it's quite possible the referendum decision would have gone the other way-

Ali Abbas: 34:21 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Charles Clarke: 34:22 But b) it's quite possible that we would have got the stay in single market, stay in the customs union version of Brexit agreed at a much earlier point. But the whole point is you can't know then what we know now.

Ali Abbas: 34:35 Yeah.

Charles Clarke: 34:36 And that's one of the problems about the rational decision tree because the rational decision tree-

Ali Abbas: 34:43 It's that instant in time where you're making [crosstalk 00:00:34:47].

Charles Clarke: 34:47 That's the time factor. Precisely. Having time there.

Ali Abbas: 34:48 Yeah. And sometimes you know when you reflect back, decisions change. One good decision at one instant in time as time changes you have to make it again, it might be, you might make a different decision when you have more information or different situations and circumstances and things like this. You know that as I was telling, I was in Scotland last week, probably sat in 10 cab drivers and they start talking. So this is my survey of cab drivers. Many of them would say, we just want a decision and get on with it. It doesn't matter what decision it is at this point.

Charles Clarke: 35:18 Yeah.

Ali Abbas: 35:19 That was a sentiment. I can't generalize. This is just talking to... What are your thoughts on that? In other words, is it a stalemate? Are you in a situation where-

Charles Clarke:	35:29	Well first remember that you were in Scotland which voted to stay in the European Union by quite a big majority.
Ali Abbas:	35:35	Yes.
Charles Clarke:	35:36	And so I don't know how the cabdrivers voted but they did that. Second, there's a good piece in the papers this morning, trying to dig out, about precisely this question. We just want to get on with it. There's a lot of evidence that it's certainly true. Everybody wants to get on with it. But you don't attach to that the decision that's actually taken.
Ali Abbas:	36:00	Yeah.
Charles Clarke:	36:00	And a lot of people say we just want to get on with it, but not if it means we stay in the European Union or leave the European Union. And it's a sentiment which everybody feels. I mean, I'm sure the whole popu/lation feels, let's just get on with it. But actually a that's absent a decision about what you're getting on with it to do.
Charles Clarke:	36:24	Because it may vary-
Ali Abbas:	36:25	You might as well toss a coin and-
Charles Clarke:	36:26	And it may very well be that people are worried about what actually happens. And then you've got the very real other aspect of it that history doesn't stop when you've taken the decision. If for example, we somehow decided we're leaving the European Union, that doesn't mean there are no future decisions-
Ali Abbas:	36:50	Or consequences-
Charles Clarke:	36:50	Consequences or whatever. And then people say, "Why did we do that?" And I understand the emotion. I feel the emotion. Everybody's fed up with it. It's all terrible, but it doesn't really take you very far.
Ali Abbas:	37:05	Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. Well, what are your thoughts or hopes for the future or the ideal scenario for you personally? What would you like?
Charles Clarke:	37:14	I think the best scenario now would be for the deadline to be extended again from October 31st to January or February next year. For there then to be a general election in Britain and for the parties which think we should have another referendum to

win. And for there then, which is quite likely, I mean everybody except the Conservatives believes that. And then for the referendum to take place and for us to decide with a stable majority, say, 60-40, 65-35, to stay in the European Union.

| Ali Abbas: | 37:53 | Yeah. |

| Charles Clarke: | 37:54 | And start again. Now, some people say that what I've just said is terrible, because that would take democracy away from the position of the people who, quote won, unquote, on the referendum. I don't accept that because you would have had a democratic process both through a general election and then another referendum, which would have gone back over that process. And I think what I've just described would be the best way to get to a reasonably stable future. |

| Ali Abbas: | 38:21 | Great. Thank you. This is a great. 38 minutes. |