# How Brexit tore apart Sarah Vine and Michael Gove's marriage and friendships



Brexit fundamentally altered the landscape of British politics, but for Sarah Vine, it did much more—it marked the disintegration of her 20-year marriage to Michael Gove. In a candid memoir extract, Vine illustrates how the contentious referendum radically transformed their personal lives, fracturing long-standing friendships and creating an environment fraught with tension.

Vine recalls her social circle—once comprised of old friends, many from university days—fragmenting as political allegiances intensified. The fallout from Brexit not only estranged old friends but also initiated a deep divide within her family. She writes about the anguish of watching children from previously close families become non-speaking acquaintances, highlighting how intertwined personal relations and politics can be. Despite being prepared for differing opinions, what Vine did not expect was the inability of her friends to disentangle political views from their friendships.

Within this chaos, she experienced explicit social ostracism. The pressure from former allies like David Cameron added a layer of distress, as she felt specifically targeted to be shunned, culminating in a rapid and painful unraveling of her social life. Surprisingly, only George Osborne and his then-wife Frances maintained neutrality throughout this upheaval, offering solace in a turbulent time. Their gesture, while welcome, served to underline the radical changes in Vine's support system.

The historical backdrop of Gove's political career serves as a crucial context to Vine's narrative. It was during the chaotic aftermath of the Brexit vote in 2016 that the couple's marriage began to suffer irreparably. Michael, under immense pressure after the resignation of Prime Minister David Cameron, found himself thrust into a leadership contest that further strained their relationship. Vine provides detailed accounts of their conversations, revealing her husband's conflicted mindset as he navigated turbulent political waters.

At a critical juncture, Gove expressed to Boris Johnson his flexibility regarding leadership support, only to find himself overlooked, deepening both personal and political conflicts. The parallels between Gove’s political ambitions and the personal struggles Vine was experiencing create a poignant picture of how intertwined their lives had become. The contrast between Gove’s political frenzy and Johnson's laid-back approach during pivotal meetings exacerbated Vine's worries about their future.

As the political storm intensified, Vine shared her frustrations with the media portrayal of her as a manipulative figure orchestrating her husband's actions. Through her reminiscences, she challenges the sexist framing often affixed to women in politics, asserting that her support for Gove should not be misconstrued as undue influence. This dismissal of her contributions—viewing her as a ‘Lady Macbeth’ figure—mirrored the broader challenges women face in gaining recognition for their intellectual and emotional labour in male-dominated spheres.

The couple's separation took on a more pronounced narrative as Vine began to reject the innate political fervour that Gove embodied. Despite a substantial marriage rooted in shared values and ambitions, she began to feel alienated as political dynamics began to overshadow their personal connection. Amidst a climate of increasing insecurity, including threats directed towards their family in the wake of Brexit, the burden escalated. The harrowing experiences during this period only served to underscore the emotional toll that the political landscape exerted on their relationship.

After Gove and Johnson completed the negotiations for Brexit, Vine felt an unsettling distance creep into their lives. This was compounded by an alarming incident that reminded her of the dangers surrounding her husband’s political choices, illustrating how personal and political safety often intersect in unpredictable ways. Gove's re-entry into government post-election only intensified these tensions, as Vine became acutely aware that their priorities and desires were no longer aligned.

By the time of their eventual separation announcement, Vine felt resigned to the inevitability of their fractured bond, liberated from the pressures of maintaining a union that had long ceased to fulfil her needs. The calm nature of their split surprised their children, who sensed the long-standing rift that had preceded the formal announcement.

As both Vine and Gove navigate their new lives apart, the impact of Brexit continues to reverberate, not only in the political arena but deeply within their personal lives as well. She concludes with a reflective tone, pondering the gentle erosion of their marriage and the formidable yet unsustainable intersection of love and politics, underscoring that sometimes, the personal cost of political ambition can prove too great to bear.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769847/Michael-Gove-politics-extract-memoir-SARAH-VINE-Brexit.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1545561/sarah-vine-michael-gove-divorce-brexit-politics-tatler-interview)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769847/Michael-Gove-politics-extract-memoir-SARAH-VINE-Brexit.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.thelondoneconomic.com/politics/sarah-vine-says-brexit-put-huge-strain-on-marriage-to-michael-gove-307341/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769847/Michael-Gove-politics-extract-memoir-SARAH-VINE-Brexit.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.tatler.com/article/sarah-vine-interview-michael-gove-divorce), [[5]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2022/01/05/michael-goves-mistress-politics-says-estranged-wife-sarah-vine/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769847/Michael-Gove-politics-extract-memoir-SARAH-VINE-Brexit.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/sarah-vine-tatler-michael-gove-divorce-affair-prime-minister-b975114.html), [[7]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/michael-gove-vine-prime-minister-b1987904.html)
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* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769847/Michael-Gove-politics-extract-memoir-SARAH-VINE-Brexit.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.thelondoneconomic.com/politics/sarah-vine-says-brexit-put-huge-strain-on-marriage-to-michael-gove-307341/), [[2]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1545561/sarah-vine-michael-gove-divorce-brexit-politics-tatler-interview)
* Paragraph 7 – [[3]](https://www.tatler.com/article/sarah-vine-interview-michael-gove-divorce), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/sarah-vine-tatler-michael-gove-divorce-affair-prime-minister-b975114.html)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769847/Michael-Gove-politics-extract-memoir-SARAH-VINE-Brexit.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/michael-gove-vine-prime-minister-b1987904.html)

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1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769847/Michael-Gove-politics-extract-memoir-SARAH-VINE-Brexit.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1545561/sarah-vine-michael-gove-divorce-brexit-politics-tatler-interview> - In an interview with Tatler magazine, Sarah Vine, estranged wife of Michael Gove, discussed the impact of Brexit on their marriage. She stated that politics, particularly Gove's involvement in the Vote Leave campaign, was a significant strain, leading to their separation after 20 years of marriage. Vine also denied affair rumours, emphasising that Gove's 'only mistress was politics'.
3. <https://www.tatler.com/article/sarah-vine-interview-michael-gove-divorce> - Sarah Vine, in an exclusive interview with Tatler, opened up about her divorce from Michael Gove. She revealed that her 'ulterior motive' was to prevent him from becoming Prime Minister, expressing that she couldn't think of anything worse. Vine also discussed the challenges of being married to a politician and the personal toll of the Brexit campaign on their relationship.
4. <https://www.thelondoneconomic.com/politics/sarah-vine-says-brexit-put-huge-strain-on-marriage-to-michael-gove-307341/> - Sarah Vine, in an interview with Tatler, discussed the strain Brexit placed on her marriage to Michael Gove. She mentioned that the campaign led to her losing touch with close friends, adding significant pressure to their relationship. Vine also expressed her desire to prevent Gove from becoming Prime Minister, stating it was her 'ulterior motive' throughout their marriage.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2022/01/05/michael-goves-mistress-politics-says-estranged-wife-sarah-vine/> - Sarah Vine, estranged wife of Michael Gove, addressed speculation about their divorce in an interview with The Telegraph. She stated that Gove's 'only mistress was politics', denying affair rumours. Vine also discussed the impact of Brexit on their marriage, describing it as a significant strain that led to their separation after nearly 20 years together.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/sarah-vine-tatler-michael-gove-divorce-affair-prime-minister-b975114.html> - In an interview with Tatler magazine, Sarah Vine, estranged wife of Michael Gove, discussed the impact of Brexit on their marriage. She stated that politics, particularly Gove's involvement in the Vote Leave campaign, was a significant strain, leading to their separation after 20 years of marriage. Vine also denied affair rumours, emphasising that Gove's 'only mistress was politics'.
7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/michael-gove-vine-prime-minister-b1987904.html> - Sarah Vine, estranged wife of Michael Gove, discussed their divorce and the role of politics in their separation. She revealed that her 'ulterior motive' was to prevent Gove from becoming Prime Minister, expressing that she couldn't think of anything worse. Vine also denied affair rumours, stating that Gove's 'only mistress was politics'.