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Why the UK voted Leave

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Why did the UK vote to leave the EU?

Cameron's negotiations failed to convince **three important groups in particular:**

- Conservative parliamentary party (138 out of 330 backed Leave)
- Conservative-backing media
- Public and Conservative voters
- **Renegotiation** = time wasted?
- Exposed tensions within the Remain camp
- The Leave campaign had **stronger messages**
- Cameron not a leading asset for Remain (unlike 2011 AV referendum)
 - 2016: damaged reputation (austerity, govt cuts, Panama papers affair)



Why did the UK vote to leave the EU?

- **Lib Dem** electorally tarnished
- **Labour/Corbyn**: lack of enthusiasm, poor portrayal in the press
- **Leave campaign: mix of messengers at the UK level**
 - Boris Johnson: strong, charismatic figurehead
 - Backing of other members of the Cabinet (govt in waiting)



Why did the UK vote to leave the EU?

The Leave campaign better organised and run

– Leave campaign:

- more professional
- long history of Eurosceptic groups
- advantage of the many factions (different messages targeted at different groups of voters)
- not without tensions, of course (Cummings versus Farage)
- ruthless campaigning



Why did the UK vote to leave the EU?

Economic arguments proved insufficient to win the referendum

- Remain: too much focus on economic costs (reliability of the figures questioned)
- Business divided (contrast with 1975)
- “That’s your bloody GDP. Not ours“.



Why did the UK vote to leave the EU?

Remain had no answer to arguments about immigration

- Immigration took over economy as a number-one concern.
- Remain hobbled by Cameron's 2010 commitment to bring down net immigration to under 100,000 a year (UK never came close to achieving this).
- Problems of Labour with focusing on immigration.



Why did the UK vote to leave the EU?

The media campaign was won by Leave

- British printed press traditionally Eurosceptic.
- Cameron surprised by the campaigning might of British Right-leaning press.
- Broadcast media more impartial (by law)
- Online and social media dominated by Leave.
- Take back control: great slogan





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Why did the UK vote to leave the EU?

The EU was difficult to sell

- 2016 EU = faced with a series of crises (Eurozone, migration, Russia, Euroscepticism)
- Not helped by the UK's low level of knowledge about the EU (ill-prepared to assess the claims made by either side)
- Cameron & Co: reaping what they had sown (inconsistency appeared patronising)
- Intervention by Obama



Why did the UK vote to leave the EU?

The electoral franchise benefited Leave

- 16- and 17-year olds, EU nationals residents in the UK and British citizens who had lived abroad for longer than 15 years unable to vote
- Inaccurate polling



Why did the UK vote to leave the EU?

Campaign connected to matters not directly about EU-UK relations

- Diverse matters
- Anti-politics and anti-austerity
- Ill-defined targets such as distant and elitist London
- Challenges of globalisation



