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Road to the Leave vote & Renegotiations

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Brexit: Politics, Policies and Processes



Commitment to a Referendum

- **David Cameron:** more substantial imprint upon the British relationship with the EU than any previous British Prime Minister since the UK joined the European Community in 1973.
- **Leader of the CP since 2005.**
- **Prime minister since 2010.**
- “Britain needs to be in the EU – it is not in Britain’s interest to leave the EU” (2011).





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Commitment to a Referendum

- **Bloomberg Speech (23 January 2013)**
- DC discusses the future of the European Union and declares commitment to renegotiate a better settlement for the UK's membership in the EU and hold an in/out EU referendum, should the Conservative Party win the 2015 general election.
- **Three Rs': reform, renegotiation, referendum**
- It is time to settle this European question



Commitment to a Referendum

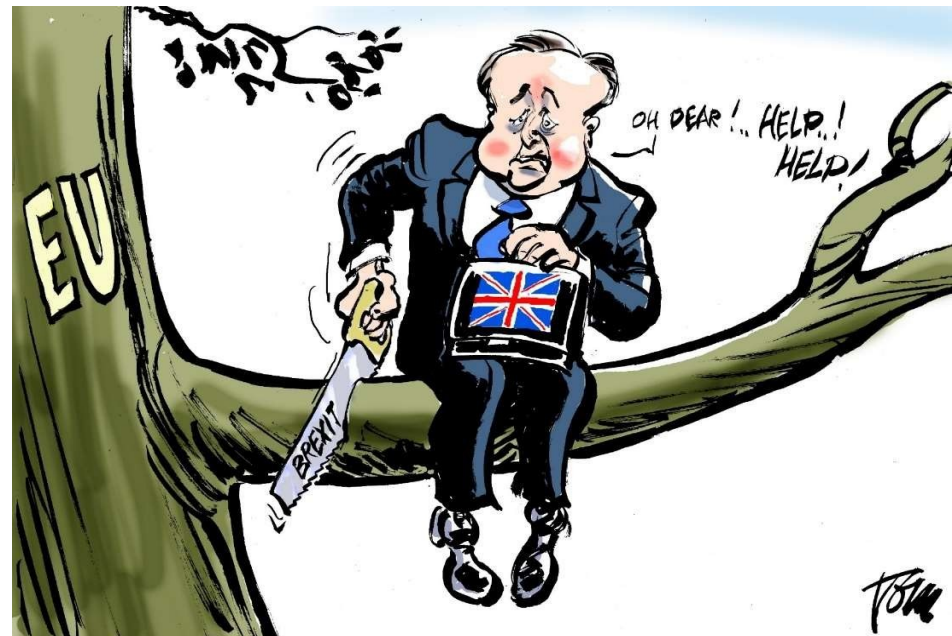
- **Other parts of the Bloomberg speech**
 - **Connections between UK and Europe**
 - **Tensions that have long been present** (+ identification of some of the causes)
 - **Lack of public support**
- **DC prone to taking political gambles**



Commitment to a Referendum

– Referenda in UK politics

- UK-wide referenda still rare.
- **No direct provision for REFs under UK's uncodified constitution** → govt has a large say over their timing, question, subject etc.



Commitment to a Referendum

Reasons behind the referendum commitment

Tensions within the Conservative Party

- → **REF as a tool to hold the party together**
- Issue of Europe = long a source of tension within CP
- A series of concessions to placate the Eurosceptics.
 - Decision (2005) to take Conservative MEPs out of the group of the European People's Party → DC did so in 2009
 - Commitment to holding a referendum on Lisbon Treaty (impossible to deliver on)



Commitment to a Referendum

- **Referendum Lock (2011)**

Any future amendments to the EU Treaties transferring additional “significant” powers to the European level be subject to a national referendum.

- **Review of the Balance of Competences (2012): an audit of what the EU does and how it affects the UK.**

The 32-volume Review completed in autumn 2014 was to form the basis for the Government’s proposed reform of the UK’s relationship with the EU.



Commitment to a Referendum

– Changing UK political landscape

- Reality of the coalition government (2010-2015)

– Steady rise of UKIP

- UKIP widely identified as a populist right-wing single-issue party.
- Voters disenchanted with mainstream politics.
- An uphill battle to get noticed.
- May 2014: a record 26% of the vote in European elections (the UK's biggest party in the European Parliament)
- Party's message: combination of Euroscepticism, anti-immigration policies and populism.
 - Campaign for Britain's departure from the EU = party's raison d'être.

– Role of media

– Role of public opinion

– Changing EU (especially in a sense of developments within Eurozone)



Renegotiations

Timeline

- 14 April 2015: Launch of the Conservative Party Manifesto for the 2015 General Election (Pledge: “Real change in our relationship with the European Union” and commits to “hold an in-out referendum on our membership of the EU before the end of 2017”).
- May 7, 2015: Conservatives win a general election
- 10 November 2015
 - David Cameron delivers a speech on Europe to Chatham House, setting out the case for EU reform and reaffirming his commitment to an EU referendum before the end of 2017.
 - In a letter to Donald Tusk the Prime Minister sets out the four areas where he is seeking reform as part of negotiations on the UK’s membership of the EU



Renegotiations

- December 2015: The European Union Referendum Act receives Royal Assent (provides for the holding of a referendum in the UK and Gibraltar on whether the UK should remain a member of the EU).
- 2 February 2016: Donald Tusk writes to Members of the European Council on his proposal for a new settlement for the UK within the EU. The European Council publishes its Draft Decision concerning a ‘New Settlement for the United Kingdom within the European Union’.
- 3 February 2016: The Prime Minister gives a statement to the House of Commons on the progress made regarding the UK-EU renegotiation.
- 18-19 February 2016: European Council meeting.
- 22 February 2016: The Prime Minister announces the EU referendum date – 23 June 2016 – after securing a deal on Britain's membership of the EU.



Renegotiations

- **Difficult renegotiations**
- **A three-level game (party, country, EU)**
- **Problematic timing (reduced his leverage + meaningful reform of the EU dropped off the agenda)**
- **Asked Tory parliamentarians not to declare support for remain or leave until after he had completed his negotiations**
- **January 5, 2016: Ministers free to campaign on either side**





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Renegotiations

- **Four clusters or ‘baskets’ or demands:**
 - economic governance
 - competitiveness
 - sovereignty
 - Immigration
- → outcome offered little to placate those concerned about sovereignty, immigration or benefits payments.

- **Deal reached in February 2016 (“special status” within the EU)**
 - Immediately dismissed by hardline Eurosceptics as weak and not going far enough
 - The press was very strong in its dismissal of the deal.



– Research Briefings

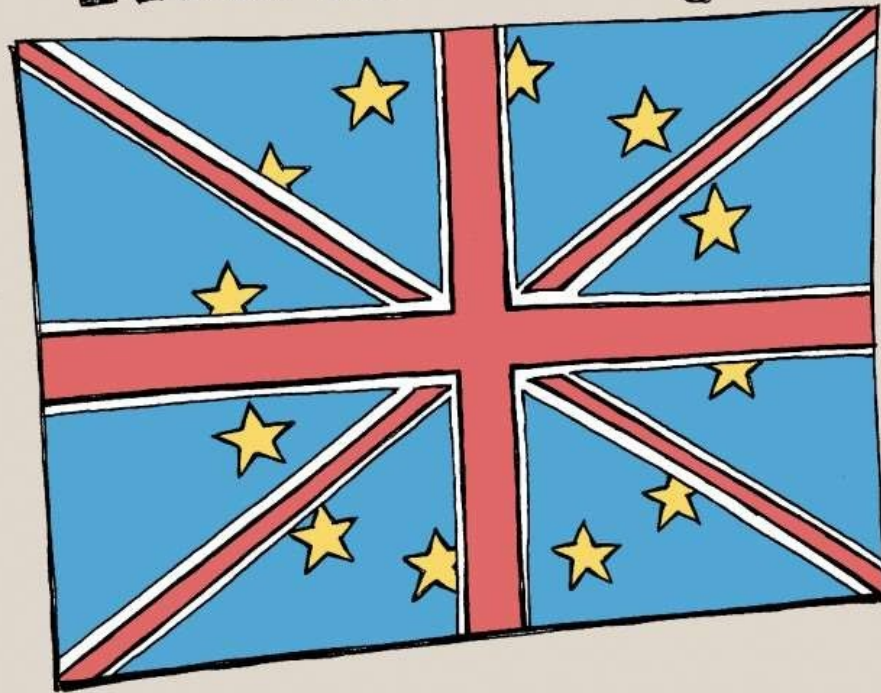
– <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/category/brexit/>

– Brexitcasts

– <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05299nl/episodes/player>



New E.U. Flag:



NOT
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CONCESSIONS
...



CHAPPATTE

International New York Times

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Thank you very much for your attention

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