Voting for Brexit and the Radical Right
Examining new data in the United Kingdom
The Result

421 of 574 seats in Eng & Wales voted to Leave, as did nearly 70% Lab seats, while 479 MPs backed Remain.
Another bad night for pollsters?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pollster</th>
<th>Remain</th>
<th>Leave</th>
<th>Error on Remain</th>
<th>Method</th>
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<td>Result</td>
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<td><strong>Avg error</strong></td>
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<td><strong>+4.3</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

“This is obviously a disappointing result for the pollsters ... especially because every single poll, even those within sampling error, overstated the Remain vote share” – British Polling Council
WHO CARES ABOUT UKIP ANYWAY?!
What data are we using?

• British Election Studies since 1964
• British Social Attitudes survey since 1983
• BES Continuous Monitoring Surveys, 2004-2013
• Overall sample of 124,000 voters
• 5,593 UKIP intended voters
• Extensive interviews with activists
Decline of the British Working Class, 1964-2012

Source: BES 1964-83; BSA 1984-12; class measured using Goldthorpe–Heath 5-category class schema
Rise of the Educated Middle Class, 1964-2012

Source: British Election Studies 1964-1983; British Social Attitudes 1984-2012
Support for leaving the EU by social class and education

Source: British Social Attitudes 1993-2012
There is also a sharp generational divide in EU views

Source: British Social Attitudes 1993-2012
The divide on immigration: Immigration as main problem facing Britain, 2004-2013

Source: British Election Study Continuous Monitoring Survey 2004-13
And in how we think about our politics:
“People Like Me Have No Say in Government” 1986-2012

Source: British Social Attitudes 1986-2012
UKIP’s core base: male, pale, stale, and struggling
The Brussels Plus: Not just single-issue Eurosceptics..

- Euroscepticism: strongly Eurosceptic
- Populism: very dissatisfied with British democracy
- Immigration: asylum very important
- Economic pessimism: 9 or 10/10

Bar chart showing percentages for different political parties:
- UKIP
- Cons
- Labour
- Lib Dem
They are very unhappy about how immigration is (and was!)
Why it’s not just Dave: UKIP voters dislike the entire Westminster elite

![Bar chart showing sentiment towards political figures.](chart.png)
Theoretical Perspectives

• Studies of attitudes towards the EU starting in 1990s – e.g., Gabel and Whitten, 1997.

• Sizable literature on voting in EU and other referendums – see, Butler and Kitzinger, 1976; e.g., LeDuc, 2003; Clarke, Elliott and Stewart, 2016.

• Calculation, Community and Cues – Hooghe and Marks, 2005. – Benefits-costs, identities, heuristics

• Risk aversion – LeDuc, 2003

• Heuristics x political knowledge interactions – e.g., Clarke, Elliott and Stewart, 2016

• Emotional Reactions – e.g., Markus, Neumann and MacKuen, 2000
Studying Brexit – note about data

• 3-wave representative national survey
• Fieldwork by YouGov, plc.
• Wave 1 – March - May 2016
• Wave 2 – Pre-Referendum June 19\textsuperscript{th}-20\textsuperscript{th}
• Wave 3 – Post-Referendum June 29\textsuperscript{th}-July 1\textsuperscript{st}
• Sample Sizes:
  • Wave 1, N = 5429
  • Wave 2, N = 2213
  • Wave 3, N = 2174
  • Wave 2, Wave 3 Panel, N = 1987
Back to where it all began

Trends in Support for Remain and Leave Options in Referendum on UK Membership in European Union, 256 Polls, September 8, 2010 - June 22, 2016

Note: trends estimated using Hodrick-Prescott filter

Harold Clarke, Matthew Goodwin & Paul Whiteley (2017) Brexit! Why Britain Voted to Leave the EU, Cambridge University Press
What did people think about the campaign?

![Bar chart showing opinions on campaign words and emotions.]

- **Strong** remains the most positive emotion with 64% for Remain and 52% for Leave.
- **Weak** is the least positive with 18% for Remain and 12% for Leave.
- **Informative** is significantly higher for Remain at 52% compared to 15% for Leave.
- **Not Informative** is lower for Remain at 23% compared to 37% for Leave.
- **One or More Positive Words** is higher for Remain at 37% compared to 23% for Leave.
- **One or More Negative Words** is lower for Remain at 27% compared to 30% for Leave.

**World Leaders Say We’re Stronger IN Europe:**

- Bill Clinton, Angela Merkel, Barack Obama, Narendra Modi, Hillary Clinton, Matteo Renzi, John Key, Xi Jinping, Shinzo Abe, Malcolm Turnbull.
Who did the campaigns represent?

Most people tended to feel that Brexit would be bad for the economy and their own finances but would help the country reduce immigration and reclaim national sovereignty, although many were unsure of the consequences or thought it would make no difference.
Emotional reactions to EU membership

Words Selected to Describe Feelings About EU Membership

Select up to four words. Harold Clarke, Matthew Goodwin & Paul Whiteley (2017) *Brexit! Why Britain Voted to Leave the EU*, Cambridge University Press
Perceptions of the risks of Brexit

Harold Clarke, Matthew Goodwin & Paul Whiteley (2017) Brexit! Why Britain Voted to Leave the EU, Cambridge University Press
Who voted Brexit? Socio-demographics

- **Age-66+**: 66%
- **56-65**: 57%
- **46-55**: 57%
- **36-45**: 44%
- **26-35**: 38%
- **18-25**: 25%

- **Ethnicity-Minority**: 23%
- **White British**: 53%
- **Gender-Woman**: 51%
- **Man**: 51%

- **Education-University**: 37%
- **Less Than University**: 60%

- **Social Grade-A/B**: 35%
- **C1**: 48%
- **C2**: 63%
- **D/E**: 64%
Drivers of the Leave vote

The relative explanatory power that statistically significant drivers of the referendum vote have
Figure 8. Explanatory Power of Rival Models of Voting in EU Referendum
But what influenced perceptions of costs & benefits?

Findings from OLS

• Feeling positively toward Cameron (less so Corbyn) nudged people toward thinking that Brexit would bring fewer benefits and more costs

• Feeling positively toward Boris and Farage were more likely to see the benefits of Brexit and less likely to think there were costs

• Feeling negative about immigration = more likely to extol benefits of Brexit and minimize costs, both in immigration and economy

• Feeling as though EU controlled UK economy also significant – both dampened perceptions of risk

• National identity played a role – “English” more likely than “British” to see benefits than costs, opposite true for “Scots” and “Europeans”

• Left behind less likely to feel Brexit was a risk

• Conservative ID weak because the party was divided (as was Labour)
Some other data - deeper culture divide

Figure 2: Support for leave among social liberals and conservatives

Source: British Election Study (EU Referendum Study) Internet Panel Wave 8. N = 29,000.

- Gender equality: 33% For, 80% Against
- Gay equality: 25% For, 79% Against
- Stiff sentences: 19% For, 73% Against
- Death penalty: 20% For, 76% Against

Brexit – an expression of a deeper culture divide

- Nearly 90% of people who thought immigration was bad for the economy supported leave, compared with under 10% who thought immigration was good for economy.

- 88% of people who thought the country should have fewer immigrants supported Brexit while just 21% who favoured status quo backed Brexit.

- People who feel ‘very strongly’ English were much more likely to say they would vote leave than anybody else (71 vs 36%).

- People who felt disillusioned with politics – agreed with the statement that ‘politicians don’t care what people like me think’ were more likely to support leave than people who disagreed (70 vs 30%).

- Also clear that identity angst dominated open-ended questions…
What did Leave voters care about the most?

“The clear picture we get from this analysis is that leavers are concerned primarily about sovereignty and immigration. In fact reading responses shows that many respondents mention both sovereignty and immigration together, showing that these two issues were closely linked in the minds of British voters”

Source: www.BritishElectionStudy.com
And Remainers...
So... where now for UK and EU?
Support for a second referendum?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
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<td>YouGov</td>
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<td>56</td>
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</table>
What does Brexit mean to voters?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of voters who prefer different outcomes for Brexit]

- Pay into EU Budget: 19% Brexit, 81% Not Brexit
- Continued Freedom of Movement: 21% Brexit, 79% Not Brexit
- Current EU Migrants Stay: 77% Brexit, 23% Not Brexit
- Stay in Single Market: 61% Brexit, 39% Not Brexit

Source: Ashcroft 11-22.8.16
Free Movement is the real stickler…

Should the EU offer a free trade deal?

- No deal: 5
- Only if freedom of movement: 32
- Not require FoM: 43
- Don't Know: 20

Source: YouGov 28-29.7.16
Since the referendum – is there evidence of ‘Bregret’?

In hindsight do you think Britain was right or wrong to vote to leave the European Union?

Harold Clarke, Matthew Goodwin & Paul Whiteley (2017) Brexit! Why Britain Voted to Leave the EU, Cambridge University Press
Je ne regrette rien, by age

Bregret across different age groups - Jan 2017

- Right to leave
- Wrong to leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Right to Leave</th>
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<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>64</td>
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Somebody always asks it (!)

Source: estimates by Tom Chivers
## What Brexit model? Free trade vs Free movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
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<th>Limit Immigration</th>
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Source: John Curtice/What UK Thinks/UK In a Changing Europe
The “Brexit Speech” - PM May is still on honeymoon
Are we heading for a new era of Conservative dominance? Yep.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Con lead over Labour</th>
<th>Con seats</th>
<th>Lab seats</th>
<th>Others</th>
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<td>12.5</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>95</td>
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Source: Pre boundary change projections via John Curtice @whatukthinks
Forecast Labour Performance

Source: Labour Party electoral data + Electoral Calculus forecast based on latest polls for next (2020?) general election
Growth of Euroscepticism in EU

Source: 2004 & 2015 ESS
Conclusions I

• Benefit-cost calculations, risk assessments and emotional reactions to EU membership very strong predictors of referendum voting
• Also, sizable direct and indirect effects associated with leader images
• No Boris, No Brexit? – can’t be sure but he was influential. A plausible counterfactual!
• Partisan cues weaker, largely indirect effects.
• Strong indirect effects of negative attitudes towards immigration, loss of economic sovereignty and national identities.
• Direct effects of socio-demographics very weak
@GoodwinMJ

www.matthewjgoodwin.org