



# BREXIT: THE 'LEAVE' NARRATIVE

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## Introduction

The publication of Prime Minister Cameron's letter to the President of the European Council on 10 November 2015, setting out the UK case for reform of the European Union has moved the prospect of the 'in-out' referendum from academic debate to active political campaign. Cameron's four themes are already the subject of intensive consultation between the EU Institutions and the twenty-seven other Member States, which must agree to any changes of policy and practice.

Preparatory work in Westminster for the holding of the referendum has already involved a significant change in the wording of the referendum question which will now ask voters to opt to 'remain' in the EU or to 'leave'. This development has led to the renaming of the main groupings on the 'out'/'leave' side. But, while their titles may be of some interest, their positions on the key issues and their campaign strategies are now of critical importance.

The fundamental question relates to the four Cameron themes. To what extent will the outcome of the negotiation on these issues constitute a basis for debate and decision? Is there another agenda – in the realms of emotion and cynicism about politics – which must be acknowledged and addressed? Does the 'Leave' camp possess ideas and arguments which meet the specific concerns of communities, interest groups and regions within the United Kingdom? Is there a 'Leave' constituency among farmers, trade unionists, hedge fund managers and in Scotland? Does the opposing 'Remain' campaign effectively address these questions?

## Opinion Polls

Opinion polling may have suffered a reputational set-back in the UK General Election but survey results continue to have significance.

A survey of 2,000 voters by ORB, for *The Independent*, on 18 November 2015 saw 52% say that Britain should leave the EU, with 48% in favour of remaining in the Union. This was the first time in this monthly survey that a majority had emerged for 'Brexit'. Responding to the same question in June, July and August a clear majority – 55% - wanted to remain. This figure fell to 53% in October, as the migrant crisis in Europe attained headline status across the media, before the significant shift to a negative position in November as the full impact of the

Paris terrorist attacks was felt.

A majority of those polled in six of the nine English regions indicated support for leaving the EU, including both London and the South East. The highest 'Leave' figure was in the Eastern region (57%) and the highest 'Remain' support in the North West (54%). No more than 40% of voters in the South West of England opted to remain

A significant finding was that support for EU membership was highest in Scotland (60%) and Wales (56%). No separate figures for Northern Ireland were included.

The ORB survey revealed a remarkable divide between the generations, with 69% of 18-24 year-olds in favour of continued EU membership as opposed to only 38% of those aged 65 and over. A class divide on the issue saw a majority of the top two social groups in favour of staying in the Union, while a majority of those in the two bottom groups favoured exit. As many as 54% of those who had voted for the Conservatives at the General Election indicated support for leaving the EU and, unsurprisingly, 93% of UKIP voters held the same position while a majority of supporters of all other parties maintained support for continued UK membership.

Studies carried out by the National Centre for Social Research bring together the results of polling by a number of organisations. A review of 20 UK-wide polls shows a national majority in favour of remaining of 53% to 47% but points to the likelihood of a narrow majority for one side or the other in the eventual national vote. The review indicates that a relatively small swing in England towards voting to leave could produce a result at variance with the views of a majority in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. "At the same time, were Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to vote as the polls currently predict, collectively they could overturn a narrow majority in England in favour of leaving the EU." A 'tipping point' may exist somewhere around 47-48% of the vote in England.

This NCSR research included evidence from a small number of surveys in Northern Ireland. Opinion appears to be split along traditional lines – with a majority for leaving the EU among Unionists but an overwhelming (91%) preference for staying in the EU among nationalist and republican voters. As many as 25% of Unionists are undecided.

Of interest, a national survey in Ireland at about the same moment, for *Irish Times/Ipsos MRBI*, found that the

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vast majority – 75% - wanted the UK to remain in the EU and as many insisted that Ireland should remain in the Union if Britain were to decide to leave. The survey also covered the four key UK policy issues and found considerable sympathy and support for the Cameron position, with particular backing for the ending of child benefit to migrants whose children remained in their home country. As many as 59% of respondents agreed that Member States should have the right to opt out of further integration.

### The Bloomberg Speech

In his speech to the Bloomberg Conference on 23 January 2013, David Cameron stated:

*I want the European Union to be a success. And I want a relationship between Britain and the EU that keeps us in it. Let me set out my vision for a new European Union, fit for the 21st Century. It is built on five principles: The first: competitiveness; the second principle should be flexibility; my third principle is that power must be able to flow back to Member States, not just away from them; my fourth principle is democratic accountability; my fifth principle is fairness.*

*People feel that the EU is heading in a direction that they never signed up to. They resent the interference in our national life by what they see as unnecessary rules and regulation. And they wonder what the point of it all is.*

He then made the linked promises of renegotiation and referendum and this was reflected in the Conservative Party election manifesto: “It will be a fundamental principle of a future Conservative Government that membership of the European Union depends on the consent of the British people – and in recent years that consent has worn wafer-thin. That’s why, after the election, we will negotiate a new settlement for Britain in Europe, and then ask the British people whether they want to stay in the EU on this reformed basis or leave. David Cameron has committed that he will only lead a government that offers an in-out referendum. We will hold that in-out referendum before the end of 2017 and respect the outcome.”

The Bloomberg speech was welcomed by many Conservatives on both sides of the ‘in-out’ debate. Richard Ashworth, a eurosceptic Conservative MEP, described it as “a very Tory speech. One many in the party have been hoping for years he would make. Ask for a mandate for

total renegotiation, and if we don't get it – a straight in/out referendum. Maximum leverage on the Eurocrats. Canny Tories will take this and run with it. There is no huge appetite to walk out of the EU right now. Taking our powers back or we quit; that’s what voters want”

Following the May 2015 General Election David Cameron was in a position to form a single party Conservative administration. He immediately began the process of honouring the promises, commencing talks with other EU leaders, establishing formal links with the Brussels Institutions and introducing the legislative provisions required for the holding of the referendum in the promised timescale, with a final deadline of the end of 2017. These developments led to the emergence of political and civil society groups committed to promotion of the referendum options – Remain or Leave.

### The ‘Out’ / ‘Leave’ Camp

As 2015 progressed, a number of groups supporting the ‘out’ or ‘leave’ option emerged or formalised their positions. Three such groups have established themselves as significant players.

In due course, the UK elections watchdog, the Electoral Commission, will designate the official ‘Leave’ campaign. The chosen group (as well as the official ‘Remain’ campaign) will benefit from increased spending limits of £7m during the campaign period, access to campaign broadcasts and a free mail-out to households. They will get access to public meeting rooms and to the electoral register, and will be entitled to public grants of up to £600,000.

The threemost significant pro-Brexit groups are, **Vote Leave**, **Leave.EU** and **Labour Leave**, and are described below.

#### Vote Leave

Set up by former TaxPayers’ Alliance chief Matthew Elliott and is backed by Eurosceptic business leaders, a number of Tory and Labour MPs and peers and UKIP’s only MP, Douglas Carswell. Elliott ran the successful No2AV campaign against electoral reform and has established a team of experienced campaigners. Vote Leave has hired staff, moved into new offices and has established a high level parliamentary planning committee. The Vote Leave campaign director, is the highly controversial Dominic Cummings, who made headlines when two young supporters of his movement infiltrated a CBI conference

to disrupt a David Cameron speech.

Vote Leave is working with many organisations and people. For example, Business for Britain which represents over 1,000 business leaders, and Labour Leave, which is the Labour campaign for a 'leave' vote. Conservatives for Britain supports David Cameron's attempt to negotiate a fundamentally different relationship with the EU and supports the creation of a professional, cross-party campaign that can fight the referendum if the EU fails to allow fundamental change. Conservatives for Britain is led by such notable figures as former Chancellors, Lord Lawson and Lord Lamont, Bill Cash MP, Liam Fox MP, John Redwood MP and Owen Paterson MP. Lord Trimble, the former Ulster Unionist party leader, supports the group.

Vote Leave's policy platform may be summarised as follows:

*Technological and economic forces are changing the world fast. EU institutions cannot cope. We have lost control of vital policies. This is damaging. We need a new relationship. What happens if we vote 'leave'?*

*We should negotiate a new UK-EU deal based on free trade and friendly cooperation. We end the supremacy of EU law. We regain control. We stop sending £350 million every week to Brussels and instead spend it on our priorities, like the NHS and science research.*

*We regain our seats on international institutions like the World Trade Organisation so we are a more influential force for free trade and international cooperation.*

*A vote to 'leave' and a better, friendlier relationship with the EU is much safer than giving Brussels more power and money every year.*

Vote Leave argues that "This campaign cannot be won from a London headquarters. It will be won by building an unprecedented national movement. We are building a national network combining traditional grassroots with new technology."

One of the key components of Vote Leave - Business for Britain - is already establishing new regional councils across the country. "These councils will ensure that business leaders up and down the UK are able to contribute to this important debate, one that is too often not reflective of the wide range of views that exist in the current business debate. The councils are part of our commitment to deliver an effective 'Change, or go' campaign across the United Kingdom."

## Leave.EU

The Leave.EU referendum campaign started by leading businessmen Arron Banks and Richard Tice has set out to be the "peoples' campaign" and has already secured over 300,000 registered supporters from across the U.K. political spectrum. The campaign has secured the backing of several well-established Eurosceptic groups, including, Global Britain, Better Off Out and the Bruges Group.

Leave.EU is close to Ukip leader Nigel Farage and is seeking to build a popular campaign outside Westminster. It has set out its case in the following statement:

*Imagine having £1,000 more to spend each year. By leaving the EU, each household could be better off by this amount - through cheaper food bills, no membership fees, with the cost of regulations lifted, too.*

*Imagine not having our laws dictated to us by Brussels. Instead, MPs would become accountable to the public and we would once again be able to make and decide on our own laws.*

*Imagine how we could then regain control of important issues such as our borders. We could welcome the right talent from all over the world - adding to the country's already phenomenal cultural and economic strength (rather than having to accept all EU migrants regardless of skill level).*

*Imagine having greater influence over our global trade, so that we can do our own deals with fast-growing Commonwealth countries and North America (without 27 other EU countries all arguing for their own special interests!).*

*Imagine the sense of pride we would get from negotiating our own global trade deals; if Iceland can negotiate a free trade deal with China, then we most certainly can.*

*It's time to be a bigger part of the world rather than a smaller part of Europe. We believe Britain could do so much better outside of the EU.*

Leave.EU has launched "The Great British Fudge-off" to brand the Prime Minister's renegotiations as an orchestrated fudge on a grand scale. A new website is now online ([www.fudgeoff.eu](http://www.fudgeoff.eu)) where the public can sponsor fudge bars to build an EU fudge mountain that will be presented to the Prime Minister.

Speaking about the reasons behind the campaign the co-founder of Leave.EU, Arron Banks, said:

*Everyone who takes a close look at the Prime Minister's negotiations with EU leaders can see that it has become a futile and pointless exercise. We already know there will be no Treaty Change which means whatever is agreed will not have the force of law behind it and can be overturned by the European Court of Justice. Our message is simple, the negotiation is not what it seems, it is a political fudge designed to fool the public and leave the EU unreformed. We can see it happening in real time but the British public will not be taken for fools and we should call-out the Prime Minister for this greatest political fudge of all time.*

### Labour Leave

The Labour Leave website states that the group was set up to represent the large number of Labour Party supporters who want to see significant change in the UK's relationship with the EU and make their voice heard in the EU renegotiation. It goes on to note that in the 2015 General Election, the country voted "overwhelmingly for parties seeking a reformed relationship with the European Union". Labour Leave will campaign on the basis that it would be a "political mistake" for Labour to campaign to stay in the EU without seeking reforms when the country has voted for a reform.

The group is led by its Co-Chairs, Kate Hoey MP and Graham Stringer MP with John Mills as Secretary. John Mills, founder of JML the TV home shopping company, is the largest individual donor to the Labour Party.

Kate Hoey MP has written:

*The Labour Party is looking at radical policies to tackle the problems in our country. We need to take back real control from the unelected and unaccountable European Commission if we are to have a chance of implementing any of these. The votes of the Left cannot be taken for granted in this referendum: there is now a strong Trade Unionists Against the EU campaign, and around the country, grassroots campaigners are speaking out. Labour Leave may be in a minority within the PLP, but then so was support for Jeremy Corbyn.*

*I have never felt so optimistic about our chances of winning the referendum. In the event of a Brexit, we can trade and co-operate with other European countries not involved with the EU, and reach out globally, particularly to the bloc of Commonwealth countries in Asia. We face a great opportunity if we leave. We can stop being Little Europeans and become Internationalists again.*

Efforts have been made to form a single Eurosceptic group which would become the official Leave campaign in the referendum. Leave.EU has argued that a merger would end the potentially confusing situation of having two, apparently rival, groups with similar names. Vote Leave have resisted the approach for reasons related to the personality of Leave.EU's leading figure, Arron Banks. Differences within UKIP, between Nigel Farage and Douglas Carswell, are also relevant.

### The UKIP stance

One national political party is unambiguously on the 'Leave' side.

The United Kingdom Independence Party was founded in 1991 as the Anti-Federalist League, a single-issue Eurosceptic party. Renamed UKIP in 1993, the party adopted a wider right-wing platform and gradually increased its support. With Nigel Farage MEP as Leader, the party made significant advances in the 2013 local elections and the 2014 European Parliament elections, where UKIP received the most votes.

At the 2015 General Election, the party gained the third largest vote share – almost 4 million votes – but only one seat in the House of Commons.

UKIP argues that genuine reform in the EU is simply not possible, and that Brexit is, therefore, the logical choice:

*A British exit from the EU, 'Brexit,' is the only choice open to us, if we are to make our own laws and control our own destiny. Unless we leave, our democracy, our law-making powers and our sovereignty will continue to be salami-sliced away by the EU.*

*Genuine reform is impossible: successive EU Presidents, senior officials and European Prime Ministers have confirmed there is no hope of Britain negotiating any opt-outs, or special treatment.*

*As far as our 'influence' goes, we have very little anyway. As the European Union has expanded, our vote share in the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, and the European Commission, has declined to the point where it is now almost insignificant.*

On the critical issue of immigration, Nigel Farage has recently blogged that immigration into the UK can only be fully controlled by retaking control of from the EU:

*It is clear that only by voting to leave the European Union in the forthcoming referendum can we have a system of controlled immigration at sensible levels. Just*

*how can this or any government plan effectively for the future with our population rising so quickly and with open borders meaning we have no control over who can and can't come to Britain each year? A complete open door to the whole of the EU is madness.*

Nigel Farage also wrote to the Irish Times on 12 November 2015, calling on Irish people who have a vote in the referendum to lend their support to the UKIP 'Leave' campaign, arguing "that the transformative power of democracy in Ireland has been crushed by the iron fist of the EU – by the euro, the bank debt, the troika, and by Euro-slave Irish politicians."

### On the Other Side

In the *Financial Times* Philip Stephens has argued that, as the Cameron negotiations move on, "the nascent Remain campaign has struggled to find its voice." That campaign includes three main groups and the Liberal Democrats. The three main pro-EU groups are discussed below.

**Britain Stronger in Europe** is a cross-party and civil society grouping designed to convince voters that the United Kingdom should remain in the European Union. The group includes leading business people and politicians from the Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green parties. The group also involves a former Army Chief of Staff, trade union figures and personalities from the worlds of arts and entertainment.

Britain Stronger in Europe is supported by three former Prime Ministers – John Major, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown – by Labour's Shadow Minister for Europe, Pat McFadden MP and by the new Liberal Democrat Leader, Tim Farron MP.

The Group's chairman is Lord Stuart Rose, former chairman of Marks and Spencer and a Conservative member of the House of Lords. The Executive Director is Will Straw (son of former Labour Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw).

The group argue: "We are stronger, better off and safer in Europe than we would be out on our own. To vote to remain part of Europe is to vote for a stronger, better off, safer Britain that delivers opportunity for individuals and families, now and in the future. To vote to leave is to take a leap into the unknown, risking a weaker economy, the prospects of future generations and a loss of influence on the world stage."

**British Influence** is an independent, cross-party pressure group, founded in 2012 to make the case for the European

Union amid increasing calls for British withdrawal from the EU. Its co-presidents are Danny Alexander (Liberal), Kenneth Clarke (Conservative) and Peter Mandelson (Labour). Peter Wilding is the founder and director of British Influence.

British Influence, which believes that Britain is better off in a better Europe argues that "Europe is changing and if we work with allies to reform the EU we can make even more of our membership. Britain must remain engaged and work within the EU for change. Taking the defeatist and self-defeating route would leave other countries to set the agenda in Europe and then impose it on us."

**The Senior European Experts Group** is an independent body consisting of former high-ranking British diplomats and civil servants which produces authoritative briefing notes for British Influence. The Group includes Lord John Kerr, Lord Robin Butler, Lord David Hannay, Sir Nigel Sheinwald, Sir Colin Budd, Anne Lambert, Graham Avery.

A recent paper looked at the possible consequences raised for Britain by a vote to leave the European Union. This examination of the major policies affected demonstrated that a wide range of economic, constitutional and political issues would need to be addressed, and in a relatively short period of time. To avoid a disorderly exit, the UK would have to decide its domestic policies on a range of important areas. It could only do this, however, in parallel with its negotiations with the EU because domestic policy choices would impact on the success or otherwise of the UK's negotiation with the EU. For example, employment issues, such as whether the UK retained the Working Time Directive or planned to continue subsidising farmers, would affect the EU's attitude to the UK in those negotiations.

**Labour IN** has been launched with over 210 Labour MPs, including the Party Leader Jeremy Corbyn and the entire Shadow Cabinet signed up to Labour's campaign to keep Britain in the European Union.

Jeremy Corbyn welcomed the launch of the group: "I am proud to support Labour's campaign to keep Britain in Europe. That goes hand in hand with our determination to put a progressive reform agenda for the European Union on the table. Labour has campaigned to make sure our place in Europe has led to better protection and rights in the workplace, and we will continue to fight for jobs and security for all the British people. We will do all we can to defend those rights and work for a fairer and more prosperous Europe."

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Labour IN is led by the former Home Secretary, Alan Johnson, who argues that “It’s about British jobs, jobs that put food on the table for millions of families whose livelihoods depend on EU membership [...] it’s about British businesses, businesses that rely on Europe for exports worth 227 billion pounds a year; and it’s about Britain’s global influence; in this increasingly interdependent world we can achieve more by working with Europe than we can alone.”

The Liberal Democrats have launched their campaign which they see as “a generation fight to win the forthcoming referendum on Britain’s continued membership of the European Union.”

The Party Leader, Tim Farron, argues that “if the UK were to leave the EU, trade rules would be made without us, our voice would not be heard in climate change negotiations and our borders would be more vulnerable. There is no doubt the UK would be poorer and weaker if we walked away from our closest neighbours and most trusted allies and left the EU [...] Only by remaining fully engaged in the EU can we deliver the further reforms that are urgently needed not only for the UK, but also for the rest of the EU.”

### The Cameron Letter

In a letter to the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk on 10 November 2015, Prime Minister Cameron set out four substantive proposals for renegotiation under the headings of Economic Governance and the Eurozone, Competitiveness, Sovereignty and Immigration, summing them up in clear terms:

- Protect the single market for Britain and others outside the Eurozone. Mr. Cameron wrote: “What I mean by that is a set of binding principles that guarantee fairness between Euro and non-Euro Countries.”
- Write competitiveness into the DNA of the whole European Union, “and this includes cutting the total burden on business.”
- Exempt Britain from an ‘ever closer union’ and bolster national parliaments “not through warm words but through legally binding and irreversible changes.”
- Tackle abuses of the right to free movement “and enable us to control migration from the EU, in line with our manifesto.” Tackling abuse could involve major changes in welfare rules, for example by imposing a four year ban on EU migrant workers

accessing benefits and limits on child benefits for the same workers.

Significantly, David Cameron wrote “the purpose of this letter is not to describe the precise means, or detailed legal proposals, for bringing the reforms we seek into effect. That is a matter for the negotiation, not least as there may, in each case, be different ways of achieving the same result.” He concluded that “our concerns boil down to one word: flexibility.”

In a major speech at Chatham House on the same day, the Prime Minister introduced a new dimension to the debate by asking: “What would being outside the European Union mean for our economic security? And what would it mean for our national security?” He then made some thought-provoking comments on both aspects of security, arguing that “the single market has rules. We will not always get what we want from those rules. But we have more influence over them from inside the EU, where those rules are actually made.”

And, reminding his listeners of a range of current issues – ISIL, Syria, Ukraine and migration - he said “our membership of the EU does matter for our national security and for the security of our allies which is one reason why our friends in the world strongly urge us to remain in the EU.”

### Responses

Responding to the Prime Minister’ letter and to the speech at Chatham House, *The Guardian* commented that “Mr Cameron’s speech and letter are not beyond criticism [...] As ever, he should have made a more committed case for Britain in Europe, going beyond the important security arguments” and concluded that as the referendum approaches “ [...] the phoney war will end soon. An explosion of pent-up anti-Europeanism in the rightwing press and in the irreconcilable wing of the Tory party is going to happen at some point. When it comes it will be messy and destabilising, but Mr Cameron has to tough that out. He has to remember the big picture, secure a deal he can sell to the voters and then sell it hard and with conviction.”

From a different viewpoint *The Telegraph* commented that “a fundamental change to Britain’s position in the EU is not anticipated and is not even being requested. Perhaps this was never a realistic hope; but in his Bloomberg speech three years ago in which he announced plans for a referendum, he foresaw a “new settlement” in Europe, one “in which... some powers can be returned to member

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states. Little is now heard of repatriation of sovereignty. Mr. Cameron is effectively preparing the ground for a referendum that invites voters either to support the status quo with some modifications, or to leave. That at least has the virtue of clarity.”

In a House of Commons debate on the letter the Prime Minister faced strong criticism from Tory backbenchers, with Jacob Rees-Mogg arguing that “this is pretty thin gruel –it is much less than people had come to expect from the Government.” Bernard Jenkin asked “Is that it? Is that the sum total of the Government’s position in this renegotiation? Is not the onus on those who advocate that we should stay in the European Union to explain why we should put up with being a second-tier country in an increasingly centralised European Union, paying more and more, and losing more and more control?”

And, Ian Paisley Jnr asserted that “the Council of Ministers and the European Commission constantly break their own solemn word, and their treaties, in matters that are fundamental to them, so why should we put our faith or our trust in any changes that they might agree to?”

### Donald Tusk Letter of Response

Following the receipt of the Cameron Letter the Brussels Institutions began an intensive process of consultation involving all 28 Member States with a view to preparing for a full-scale debate on the UK issues at the December European Council.

On 7 December 2015, President Tusk wrote to the members of the European Council “to let you know where we stand on the issue of a UK in/out referendum before we address it at the December European Council.”

Addressing the four policy areas raised by the Prime Minister, President Tusk indicated that “on the relations between the euro ins and outs we could search for an agreement around a set of principles that will ensure the possibility for the euro area to develop further and be efficient while avoiding any kind of discrimination vis-à-vis Member States that are not yet, or, in some cases, will not be part of the euro.”

On competitiveness he pointed to “a very strong determination to promote this objective” and insisted that “everybody agrees on the need to further work on better regulation and on lessening the burdens on business while maintaining high standards.”

Wide agreement was seen to exist “that the concept of ‘ever closer union among the peoples’ allows for various

paths of integration for different countries and “there is also a largely shared view on the importance of the role of national parliaments within the Union as well as strong emphasis on the principle of subsidiarity.”

However, he stated that the fourth basket on social benefits and the free movement of persons is the most delicate and will require a substantive political debate at our December meeting, noting that there is presently no consensus on the request that people coming to Britain from the EU must live there and contribute for four years before they qualify for in-work benefits or social housing.

“All in all it is my assessment that so far we have made good progress. We need some more time to sort out the precise drafting on all of these issues, including the exact legal form the final deal will take. We also have to overcome the substantial political differences that we still have on the issue of social benefits and free movement.”

Donald Tusk then introduced some political remarks, saying that “all involved must take their part of responsibility [...] Uncertainty about the future of the UK in the European Union is a destabilizing factor. That is why we must find a way to answer the British concerns as quickly as possible.”

Political reaction in London reflected the difference between the two camps. David Cameron’s office welcomed the letter as encouraging but added that “the whole renegotiation is difficult” and a spokesperson for Britain Stronger in Europe saw the Cameron letter as “a really good agenda for reform [...] which the rest of Europe wants to see as well.”

On the other side, Matthew Elliott, CEO of Vote Leave, was scathing: “David Cameron is only asking for trivial things, not the fundamental change he used to say we need. That is why he is now having a manufactured row with the EU to try and make his renegotiation sound more significant than it really is. People are fed up with politics as usual and want real change. They want an end to the supremacy of EU law, to take back control of our borders and to stop sending £350 million a week to Brussels. The only way to do that is to Vote Leave.”

And UKIP’s Paul Nuttall said that the Prime Minister had no choice but to campaign to leave. “President Tusk has called Cameron’s bluff...”

The Tory MEP Syed Kamall commented that there would have to be a compromise on the deal, saying “that’s the way business is done in this town.”

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## The Real Campaign

The publication of the Cameron letter has led directly to a period of consultation involving the UK Government, the Brussels Institutions and the other Member States. A discussion on the progress of these talks has been included in the draft agenda of the European Council meeting on 17-18 December 2015 – along with the pressing items of terrorism, after Paris, and migration. A *Financial Times* report referred to officials from a number of Member States expressing irritation at being expected to devote time to the British wish list at a difficult moment. However, “all countries said they recognise the need to address the UK question in a timely manner.”

Reaching conclusions on the four points in time to schedule the referendum in the first half of 2016 - the preferred timing for many British Ministers, having regard to the evolving and volatile political scene in Europe - presents a real challenge. An agreement at the latest at the February 2016 European Council would allow a June or July poll.

Whatever the timing, the crucial question relates to the content of any agreement between the UK and its partners and its likelihood of acceptance as the basis for a vote to remain in the Union.

Lord Roger Liddle, former advisor to Tony Blair and to Jose Manuel Barroso, argues in his extensive analysis – *The Risk of Brexit* – that “all [...] calculations lead to one single conclusion: conclude the EU renegotiation and hold a referendum as soon as possible.” He makes the important point that, while Britain’s EU partners want to keep the UK in the Union “they may judge that in practice Cameron’s options are limited and that they have little need to make big concessions that run deeply contrary to their interests. Yet Cameron needs to demonstrate that he has won something significant...”

Analysts differ on the likely result of the renegotiation but it is accepted that it will involve a mixture of small immediate concessions, confirmation of the direction of EU policy in key economic areas and a number of ‘post-dated’ commitments in areas where treaty change might appear appropriate but would be politically impossible in the foreseeable future. A typical ‘Euro-package’ is probable along the lines of previous arrangements with Denmark and Ireland.

Such an outcome must provoke the immediate question ‘can it be sold to the UK voter?’ and in particular to the uncommitted section of the electorate which is crucial in any referendum as Enda Kenny has no doubt explained

to the Prime Minister on the evidence of Ireland’s nine European referenda between 1972 and 2013.

The only people who matter to David Cameron are the swing voters in the middle – people with no strong convictions on the issue of EU membership who could vote either way. In campaigning terms, this gives the ‘Leavers’ their marching orders. As Philip Stephens has argued, in his *Financial Times* column on 12 November 2015, “the calculation is that identity and emotion will trump cold economic and political facts. The populist trick is to be anti-everything: anti-elites, anti-big business, anti-globalisation, anti-Brussels and, of course, anti-immigration. During the 1975 campaign, the late Ian Paisley Senior framed Europe as a Papist plot to suffocate British Protestantism. The language may not be quite so colourful this time around.”

It is certain that any package emerging from the renegotiation will prove unacceptable to the committed Eurosceptics in UKIP and in the various ‘Leave’ groupings. The majority of UK newspapers will follow the *Telegraph* line and some will go much further in hostility to the EU. The policy line of the ‘Leave’ groups is to make remaining in the EU dependent on newly negotiated conditions that they cannot attain in the real world. They want the UK’s membership to amount to little more than a trade agreement, ignoring the fundamental nature of the EU Single Market with its well-founded rules and conditions. As Roger Liddle explains “if Eurosceptics really want to escape this they have to argue for withdrawal.”

On immigration the simple UKIP line will be at the heart of the debate – exiting the EU is the only way to gain control of the country’s borders. It is clear that the downward direction of support for membership is directly related to the migration crisis across the EU and to the Union’s great difficulties in mounting effective and united responses.

Simon Tilford, writing in a Centre for European Reform bulletin, argues that “If Britain votes to leave the EU it will be because of hostility to immigration. It will not be because of the threat of Eurozone caucusing, the role of national parliaments vis-à-vis the European Parliament, regulatory threats to the City of London or concerns over the competitiveness of the EU economy. Disillusionment with the EU has risen in the UK because membership has become synonymous in many voters’ minds with uncontrolled immigration.”

The leader of Labour IN, Alan Johnson, agrees that “In any case the referendum won’t be on a reform package, it

will be about whether to remain on the pitch or instead to become mere spectators.”

### What Can Cameron do?

The Prime Minister is confronted with difficult choices as he seeks agreement with his twenty-seven colleagues around the table of the European Council.

He needs a 'saleable' package of responses to the four themes of the 'Dear Donald' letter and a well-crafted communication programme to promote it. This must be cross-party as far as possible, allowing for Labour Party reluctance to join openly with the Conservatives after the disastrous fallout from the all-party alliance in the Scottish independence referendum. It must also have the support of sectional, regional and civil society interests. Irish experience points strongly to the positive influence of such non-political voices. Credible information sources, official and media, are most important.

The position of the trade union movement will be crucial. While David Cameron has backed away from directly demanding reduction in employee rights or changes to the Social Chapter(s) of the Treaties, workers' representatives remain wary. As the TUC General Secretary, Frances O'Grady, has argued "it's hard to see why British workers would vote to stay in a European Union which no longer secures their rights." It is relevant to note that trade unions across the EU form part of a movement which views the current TTIP negotiations between the EU and the US with grave suspicion in respect of the potential negative impact on public services.

David Cameron, and those around him whose objective is for Britain to remain in the European Union must accept that a successful referendum campaign will not be won simply on the basis of whatever terms he, together with George Osborne, manage to bring home from Brussels.

The narrative of the referendum campaign must give due respect to the 'terms' and to the nature of the battle to attain them. But, the substance of the debate must be firmly changed from the 'terms' to the decisive 'choice' facing voters across Britain - whether to 'remain' or 'leave'. It must also be made clear that this is not a vote to strengthen the UK's hand in a second round of negotiation. This is, without question, an 'In-Out' referendum and 'Out' means 'Out'.

The stark message about what is at stake is made clear in the closing passage of Cameron's Chatham House speech on 10 November 2015:

*And ultimately it will be the judgment of the British people in the referendum that I promised and that I will deliver. You will have to judge what is best for you and your family, for your children and grandchildren, for our country, for our future. It will be your decision whether to remain in the EU on the basis of the reforms we secure, or whether we leave. Your decision. Nobody else's. Not politicians'. Not Parliament's. Not lobby groups'. Not mine. Just you.*

*You, the British people, will decide. At that moment, you will hold this country's destiny in your hands. This is a huge decision for our country, perhaps the biggest we will make in our lifetimes. And it will be the final decision. When the British people speak, their voice will be respected – not ignored. If we vote to leave, then we will leave. There will not be another renegotiation and another referendum.*

*So I say to my European counterparts with whom I am negotiating. This is our only chance to get this right – for Britain and for the whole European Union.*

*I say to those who are thinking about voting to leave. Think very carefully, because this choice cannot be undone. And to those who are campaigning to leave but actually hoping for a second referendum – I say decide what you believe in. If you think we should leave – and leave means leave – then campaign for that and vote for it.*

*But if you are actually arguing for a better relationship between Britain and the European Union, then don't campaign to get out. Work with me to get that better deal for Britain.*

By Tony Brown



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