

What Will the UK Be Like? ~The View after Brexit~

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1. Introduction

The UK had a referendum in 2016 that asked its people whether they should leave the EU. The result was ‘leave’, which most people had not expected. The word Brexit was made to express this situation. I was shocked to hear the result because I had thought that Brexit would never happen. After the referendum, some people began to regret their vote, which was called ‘Bregret’.

I became interested in the following two areas: the reason why people were not satisfied with their vote and what would happen if the UK held another referendum.

2. Literature Review

I read the following books: Todd 2016, Endo 2016, and Murakami 2016.

- People who voted for leave on the referendum gave many reasons why they wanted to leave the EU: problems of immigrants, (Endo 2016, p.116; Murakami 2016, p.24) weaker sovereignty (Todd 2016, p.28; Endo 2016, p.118), too many EU regulations. (Murakami 2016, p.24) Many people thought changes would happen if the UK left the EU.
- There was a tendency for elderly people to vote leave while the younger generation voted remain. More than 70% people voted leave in the cities like Boston which have a large population of elderly people and those who were not graduated from colleges. Also, the upper classes voted remain, while the middle classes voted leave. (Todd 2016, p.46; Endo 2016, p.98)
- Fake news and false information spread before the 2016 referendum. For example, the Conservative Party members had estimated the contribution to the EU excessively and said that the money could be shifted to NHS, but they were not true. Some people formed their opinions based on this. (Endo 2016, p.130; Murakami 2016, p.32)
- Former Prime Minister David Cameron is said to have used a national referendum as a way to strengthen his political power. (Endo 2016, p.110; Murakami 2016, p.32)
- There are some people who oppose immigrants coming into the UK. (Todd 2016, p.40) They complain that because of immigrants, they are losing jobs, their wages are getting lower, their infrastructure is being weakened, and their society is becoming unsafe. (Endo 2016, p.132; Murakami 2016, p.105)

After reading the books, I came up with the following questions.

Q1-1: What was the main reason why people wanted to leave the EU?

Q1-2: What would happen if the UK held another referendum?

Q1-3: I thought that elderly people wanted to remain the EU, but the result showed the opposite. Why did elderly people vote leave and the younger generation vote remain?

Q1-4: Fake news and false information seemed to have spread before the 2016 referendum and some people formed their opinions based on these. Do you think it a big problem?

Q1-5: Was it a good idea for former Prime Minister Cameron to use a national referendum as a way to potentially strengthen his political power?

Q1-6: What is the reputation of David Cameron after the election?

Q1-7: In the UK, does the government have to hold a referendum if the Prime Minister demands one? Aren’t there any advisory committees which will stop the Prime Minister from doing this?

Q1-8: There are some people who oppose immigrants coming into the UK. They think that, because of the immigrants, they are losing jobs, their wages are getting lower, their infrastructure is being weakened, and that their society is becoming unsafe. Are these all true? How have immigrants actually affected British people’s lives?

I also made a questionnaire with the following questions to gather citizens’ opinions.

Q2-1: Did you vote in the national referendum to leave the EU on June 23rd 2016?

Q2-2: Which did you vote for in the referendum, “leave” or “remain”?

Q2-3: Rank the choices from 1 to 3 for the reasons you supported either leave/remain.

<Leave>

- Decisions about the UK should be taken in the UK (not in the EU)
- There are too many regulations in the EU
- The UK pays too much to the EU
- The UK should regain control over immigration and its borders
- There is little/no choice about how the EU expands its membership or powers

- Others

<Remain>

- The risk of Brexit is too great with regards to the economy/jobs/prices
- Access to the EU single market, while out of the Euro-zone and Schengen area gives the best of both worlds
- The UK would become internationally isolated by leaving
- Others

Q2-4: Which would you vote for if there were another national referendum?

Q2-5: If you voted for the same position in a second referendum, would the reasons be the same? If no, what reasons support your decision?

Q2-6: If you voted for the different position, what would influence you to change your decision?

3. Methodology

I set up hypotheses about the questions above. I will test the following hypotheses against the results of interviews.

H1-1: Problems caused by immigration would be the biggest reason because people thought that their lives were changed by immigrants. They may want to control the number of immigrants.

H1-2: Remain would win a second referendum by a narrow margin. Some people might change their vote because they were regretting their vote. They thought that they did not get information enough. However, there are still a significant number of people who agree with Brexit, so the margin would be narrow.

H1-3: Elderly people might have wanted to get back to the old UK before joining the EU. They felt to be left by globalization because of it.

H1-4: Fake news and false information would be a big problem because some people believed the information which is not true and formed their opinions based on them.

H1-5: I believe Mr. Cameron used the referendum to strengthen his power, which I believe was wrong. He seemed to give up on solving the UK's current problems.

H1-6: Mr. Cameron's reputation might be very bad because his decision will have a big effect on the future of the UK.

H1-7: There would be no advisory committee.

H1-8: It is usual to live with people from other countries in big cities like London, so British people who live there would not think that their lives became unsafe. However, in small towns, people were confused about immigrants suddenly coming and changing their lives.

To test these hypotheses, I interviewed the following people and groups.

A. Professor Christopher Hill

7/25 Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge

He is an Emeritus Professor at the Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS) in Cambridge. He has published widely in the areas of foreign policy analysis and general international relations.

B. Dr Julie Smith

7/31 Robinson College, University of Cambridge

She is Director of the European Centre in the Department of Politics and International Studies, Cambridge University, and a Fellow in Politics and Graduate Tutor at Robinson College, Cambridge.

C. Supervisors of Reach Cambridge Programme

8/1 Downing College, University of Cambridge

They are students or graduates of Cambridge and took care of us during our stay in Cambridge.

Reach Cambridge Programme is a residential summer school based in Cambridge. Students live and learn in the historic colleges of Cambridge University and meet students from all over the world. (Reach Cambridge HP)

D. Citizens aged 18 and over in Cambridge



B. Dr Julie Smith and me

4. Result

I mainly asked about how people were feeling about the current situations and their future.

A. B. Interview

Q1-1

A. Immigration is one of the biggest reasons why people supported Brexit. The British economy, language, and the

flexible entry attracted them. People in small, very conservative rural areas are frustrated because 50% of the population is now accounted for by people from Eastern Europe and they have changed the culture there.

- B. Sovereignty, the concept of taking back control and immigration are the reasons, and immigration is necessarily linked to the membership of the EU. The leave campaign was able to get clearer messages, and it had the issue of the EU budget linked with NHS, the National Health Services. There is a real question of being seen to support the NHS and suggesting that if we left the EU, there would be money for NHS.

Q1-2

- A. If we had one tomorrow, 52% would vote for remain and 48% for leave. The country was divided between two kinds of people: those who enjoy different cultures and have confidence about future, and those who are left behind by globalization and are annoyed that their culture was changed.
- B. If there is a serious economic situation and that becomes clear before we actually leave, we could get a vote to remain in the EU. There may be a shift already with more information becoming available.

Also, before the first referendum, the leavers had a stronger message and people seemed to broadly believe it while they did not believe in the remain campaign which seemed too negative.

Q1-3

- A. They may want to go back to the old UK like in the 1950s or 1960s, before it joined the EU. The EU has given four freedoms (people, capital, goods, and services), which have changed their lives in Europe.
- Two most important indicators of how you will vote in the referendum are age and education. Older people tend to vote for leave, the educated for remain, the uneducated and old for leave, and the educated and young for remain. In Cambridge, 70% voted for remain, and in Cambridge countryside 70% voted for leave.
- B. People who were over 65 and have been able to vote in a previous referendum in 1975 voted for leave, and some of them thought that they were misled. In the 1975 referendum, they thought they were voting for a free trade area.
- I think it is easier to persuade older people because what they remember from the past was better than we have now. However, in many cases, some people who had been conservative are supporting UKIP (UK Independence Party), which aims to leave the EU, because they appeared to be listening to those people.

Q1-4

- A. Fake news or false information can be seen in any elections, so it is not a big problem. Representative democracy relies on the Parliament that makes decisions indirectly, and it may be very risky to go to a referendum because they may be exploited easily for political purposes or used to press other purposes.
- B. Fake news or false information is one of the biggest problems. In the case of a referendum, the decision has to be binding for all time, so it is difficult to know what the will of the people actually means. You might have to have an absolute majority of voters and 2/3 majority of those voting so that fake news or false information would not have big influence on their decision.

Q1-5

- A. It seems that Cameron wanted to strengthen his position because it was becoming weak and he must have felt that he had been squeezed from two sides. He might have thought "If I win the referendum, it is the end of the problem". He went to the council of ministers in Brussels and said "we will have a referendum on Europe but don't worry, I will win".
- The referendum should not be held to solve every current problem because it does not actually solve the problems and is not practical. However, the UK used it to solve the problems inside the Conservative party. It means they themselves could not decide whether it is going out of the EU.
- B. One of the things that I am actually meant to be doing at the moment is to write an article, for a special issue of a journal called British Politics, precisely Cameron's referendum gamble, which was mistaken. He thought that if we offer the referendum the leavers wanted, it would be the end of the discussion. But he compounded it by not having made any progressions at all for what would happen. Many conversation that people had before the referendum was about why they were voting to leave.

Q1-6

- A. His reputation is very bad. He is almost like Tony Blair, who had a lot of achievements but would be remembered as very unpopular or mistaken. Some people say that Cameron's decision was the worst because it will have a big, long-term effect, change British policy, economy and culture, and makes life difficult.
- B. N/A

Q1-7

- A. There are not any advisory committees, and the decision was taken by prime minister and his cabinet within the Conservative Party. The government is very strong in the British system. The Liberal Democrats probably accept the

referendum because they thought it would be a good way to remove all the constant arguments about Europe. They should have argued more, which means the referendum should have 60% or 2/3 majority to leave the EU. In most countries, any big constitutional change requires 2/3 majority to stop people constantly from changing and creating too much chaos. However, Cameron did not do that because he was overconfident.

- B. There are no advisory committees, but some rules like Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 exist. Some countries like Ireland have referendums many times. They have a whole set of rules about how they are run and information can be given.

However, with the vote on whether we should change out the electoral system, the registration to have a referendum said ‘this is the binding referendum, so the government would be bound by the result.’

Q1-8

- A. Most of them might be the perception of people. Though there is a slight loss of wages as a result of the cheaper labour coming in, it is not a major factor. The UK still has high employment. Many people in non-rich areas of the country see immigrants who are coming in, doing the work, and their children having difficulty getting the work. It is true that a part of these problems is because of immigrants who are willing to work for low wages, work hard, want to get educated and make their lives better. Though immigrants do the same as we do, they are seen as the cause of the unstable and insecure economy.
- B. The leavers understood what they had been told, and actually used the immigration questions. It means they made it a political tool. In London, which is very cosmopolitan, a large majority people voted to remain. In contrast, in some areas which have very little immigration, people were voting leave because they were worried about how immigration would have influence on their future. Actually, immigration did matter, but it was partly about fear or perceptions of the real situation of immigration. It differs a bit in how far you are from London, and immigrants actually harming or improving your life.

C. Supervisors

Age/Sex/ Nationality	18-24/female/ English	30-34/female/ English	18-24/male/ English	18-24/male/ English	18-24/female/ English
Q2-1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Q2-2	Remain	Remain	Remain	Remain	Leave
Q2-3	1. EU single market 2. The risk is too great 3. Other (did not like the leave campaign)	1. The risk is too great 2. The UK will be isolated 3. EU single market	1. The risk is too great 2. The UK will be isolated 3. EU single market	1. EU single market 2. The risk is too great 3. The UK will be isolated	1. Decisions should be taken in the UK 2. Little choice about EU policy 3. Control of immigration/borders
Q2-4	Remain	Remain	Remain	Remain	Remain
Q2-5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Q2-6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	• Not well enough informed • had not thought how it would appear to the rest of the world • have made people with a racist agenda happy

D. Citizens

I could not interview any citizens.

5. Discussion

From the literature review and the results of the interviews, I tested the hypotheses above.

A. B. Interview

A1-1: Problems caused by immigration would be the biggest reason because people thought that their lives were changed by immigrants. They may want to control the number of immigrants.

It can be said that one of the most decisive reasons for Brexit was the problem of immigrants, as both of the specialists said. British people are frustrated because the wage level dropped and their lives were changed because of them. If they leave the EU, they can control the number of immigrants because they will not be bound by the rules of EU anymore.

Dr Smith also mentioned that it is another big factor in Brexit to take back control by leaving the EU. There was a problem that they were bound by the rules called European Constitution and they cannot make part of their decisions.

It seemed that the leave campaign had a stronger message and impact in terms of free movement and sovereignty.

A1-2: Remain would win a second referendum by a narrow margin. Some people might change their vote because they were regretting their vote. They thought that they did not get information enough. However, there are still a significant number of people who agree with Brexit, so the margin would be narrow.

According to the interview to Professor Hill, remain would win by a narrow margin. Some people are regretting their vote because of little information, so their vote would move to remain. However, there are still some people who felt they had been left behind globalization and are indignant that their culture was changed because of immigrants, so the voting margin would not be big.

A1-3: Elderly people might have wanted to get back to the old UK before joining the EU. They felt to be left by globalization because of it.

As both of the interviewees said, elderly people seem to want to go back to the old UK before it joined the EU, because free movement of people and goods changed the British people's lives. They thought the old UK was better and if they leave, they can go back to it.

Dr Smith also said that it was easy for 'leave' campaigners to persuade older people.

A1-4: Fake news and false information would be a big problem because some people believed the information which is not true and formed their opinions based on them.

I had had a preconception that people are confused by the fake news or false information which spread before the referendum, but Professor Hill said that it was not such a big argument because it can be seen in any elections or referendums.

Dr. Smith suggested that they should have an absolute majority or 2/3 majority of voters so that fake news would not have big influence on their decisions.

I think that one of the factors that caused this problem is SNSs like Twitter. Because of them, a lot of information spread quickly even though most of it was not true.

A1-5: I believe Mr. Cameron used the referendum to strengthen his power, which I believe was wrong. He seemed to give up on solving the UK's current problems.

Both of the specialists said that Cameron thought that this referendum would be the end of the current problems, but actually he made more problems. Also, Cameron seemed to have been squeezed from two sides: the remainers and the leavers in the Conservative Party, as Professor Hill said.

A1-6: Mr. Cameron's reputation might be very bad because his decision will have a big effect on the future of the UK.

Professor Hill said the reputation of the former Prime Minister David Cameron was bad. Some people say that his decision was the worst because it would have a big effect on their lives.

I think he left a big anxiety about the UK's future and also was deprived of his political position on this referendum. If the leaving negotiation goes well, his reputation could be better. However, it is not going well now, so his position would not change.

A1-7: There would be no advisory committee.

I thought that the government of the UK has a strong power because in the UK there are not any advisory committees that stop the prime minister from having the national referendum.

The Japanese system has some similarities to that of Britain; in Japan, if the prime minister says that he or she will dissolve the Lower House, they must do so. I think it is not a good idea because the people's will are not reflected on this decision.

A1-8: It is usual to live with people from other countries in big cities like London, so British people who live there would not think that their lives became unsafe. However, in small towns, people were confused about immigrants suddenly coming and changing their lives.

I felt that British people misunderstand immigrants or actually do not know much about them. Immigrants have not made as many problems as the British people think.

C. Supervisors

D. Citizens

I had interview only with five people, so I cannot analyze how people felt from this research.

A person who voted leave first thought that decisions had to be taken in the UK. However, after the referendum, she felt she was not well informed and regretted her vote. I think that even when there is right information available, people could not make good use of it because there was too many information, including the wrong one, on the Internet.

6. Conclusion

British people wanted to take back sovereignty of the UK and control of immigration. They thought that they would not be bound by the EU regulations anymore if they leave.

If another referendum were to be held, remain would win by a narrow margin because some people who voted for leave regret their vote. I think people felt that they were not well informed and voted without enough thinking.

I think this national referendum ended in failure because voters were not well informed and Prime Minister held one without enough thinking. We should review how the referendum should be.

7. Bibliography

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