



# A storm of opinions on Brexit referendum

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## Résumé

Le référendum britannique du 23 juin 2016 aura des conséquences incalculables. On peut s'étonner de voir la Grande-Bretagne quitter l'Union européenne alors qu'elle y avait des positions avantageuses. Mais un referendum est un pari risqué : il permet à tous les opposants d'ajouter leurs voix tandis que les promoteurs de l'Europe devaient obtenir un blanc-seing des électeurs que nombre d'entre eux n'étaient pas prêts à donner à David Cameron (les Ecossais pouvaient voter pour l'Europe sans paraître appuyer les Conservateurs). Quelles qu'en soient les suites, ce vote est une grande victoire du populisme européen. Il faudra de la clairvoyance aux dirigeants européens pour relancer une dynamique continentale après ce désaveu.

## Abstract

June 23rd, 2016 Brexit referendum will have incalculable consequences. It may be surprising to see Britain leaving the European Union while UK negotiated some advantageous positions. But a referendum is a risky bet : it allows all opponents to add their voices while the Remaining Campaigns had to gather many people who were not ready to give David Cameron a carte blanche (This aspect also explains why Scots could vote for Europe, as their vote was clearly not backing Cameron). Whatever will be happening, this vote is a great victory for populism in Europe. Clairvoyance is urgently needed from the European leaders to relaunch a continental dynamics after this disavowal.

**Mots-clés:** Brexit, référendum, populisme, métropole, mondialisation, Europe

**Keywords:** Brexit, referendum, populism, Europe, globalisation

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Leadership is all about Machiavellian fortune, where it is impossible to control the political art of virtue, this virtue of courage can turn coincidence into destiny. In view of the need for a new leader leading his people to an unknown destination, the Prime Minister did not err in sheepishly announcing his resignation on the morning of Friday 24 June. David Cameron promised a referendum to be re-elected in 2015 and to cut the ground away from the UKIP while at the same time keeping many Conservatives historically cool to the idea of the European project. But the gamble caused the political engine to speed over, lending meaning to the title of a poem: “A throw of the dice will not abolish chance,” written in 1897 by Stéphane Mallarmé, an English professor and translator.

### **Populism**

With De Gaulle refusing its first entry, not well suited to the European Union, Great Britain settled the long-standing issue with the European project. Supported by a significant part of the press, the British Conservatives have been stigmatizing this monstrous bureaucracy in Brussels for many decades, when the British influence had correspondingly increased since the early 2000s. Notwithstanding such derogation, the disaster of 23 June was announced. The antics of London’s former deputy mayor Boris Johnson, helped the populists of UKIP to campaign across the actual country by pitting against its legal structure and still lie about the cost of the European Union to the British citizens.

Ironically, the supporters of Leave highlighted the danger of migration and the sovereignty of the island. However, this vote strengthens the geographical

divide: shortly after the results, Nicola Sturgeon, Head of the Scottish Government, announced the holding of a new referendum on Scottish Independence, another game that may undermine the United Kingdom's history. It is not the only geographical divide. While the results of the vote call for a more detailed analysis, the younger generation favoured *Bremain*. The downgrading of certain regions and distance from big cities have contributed to generational cleavages overlapping with urban-rural divisions. This vote that certainly reflects globalization will undoubtedly affect mobility and migration.

## Many unknowns

The British High Court dismissed the appeal concerning British expatriates having no right to participate in the vote : the political representation for the British diaspora is a smear, which is inappropriate. The British Government loses part of its political rights on leaving power. The referendum vote will have some impact on British citizens living in another country of the European Union. In recent months, some politicians of this country dared to dream of an international future for the British to revive the Empire hidden from the *Commonwealth*. We will see whether the country could afford to maintain its own global mythology.

What is certain is that an anti-elitist vote expressed in this referendum is causing a deep divide. We will see how Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union will be used beyond financial market reactions, currency devaluation and economic consequences of this exit. Leaving this great European body would be the most difficult or even impossible. The terms of divorce must be set out according to Article 50, but nothing can guarantee the speeding up of exit. Great Britain will likely negotiate a privileged partner status, and the EFTA cherished by those who are in favour of an enlarged market, will open to it. During his entire campaign, David Cameron had claimed: *Once you're out, you're out.*

It is up to the European camp to exit, in order to ensure the consistency of the project. The challenge now lies in stating the basis for common policies so that the European project moves smoothly with the intergovernmental negotiations. The European Union symbolizes bilateral cooperation between a federalist view and a modest view. It takes more than luck to develop a

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political vision, it will be by making more people believe the need for a shared political project. . .