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In/out referendum campaign

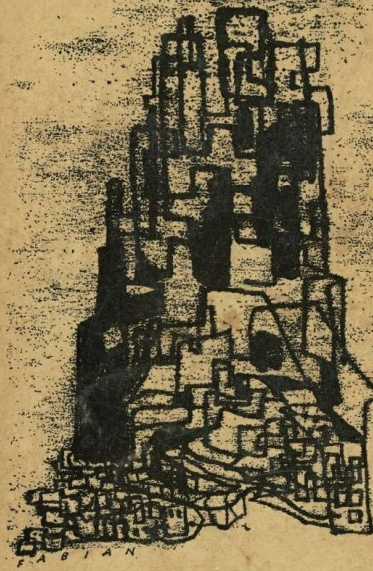
Dr Monika Brusenbauch Meislová
EVS465: Brexit: Politics, Policies and Processes

24 March 2020



PENGUIN BOOKS

Brexit



Franz Kafka

COMPLETE UNABRIDGED

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Referendum campaign

- **unofficial beginning:** 20 February 2016 when PM announced that a referendum would be held)
- **official beginning:** 15 April 2016
- **poll/referendum:** 23 June 2016
- **duration:** 10 weeks



- **Electoral Commission selected two official groups:**

- Designated official leading Remain campaigning group: Britain Stronger in Europe
- Designated official leading Leave campaigning group: Vote Leave



Referendum campaign

Cabinet divisions

- **Dilemma** → suspension of collective cabinet responsibility by Cameron
- **6 of 24 cabinet** ministers rejected the government position
- **importance of Boris Johnson's decision to back Leave** (DC wanted to avoid any sense of infighting/"blue on blue" attacks)
- **Tensions over the use of govt officials.**



Remain campaign

- Focus on **economic costs of brexit** (Treasury, IMF, Bank of England)
 - the one issue the Remain campaign could unite around
 - conglomerate of campaigners
 - focus was on the transactional, business-like partnership
- **Intervention by Obama**
- **Project Fear**
- Pro-Remain campaign no illustration history in UK politics
- The leadership of the campaign rested with the **PM**
- **Corbyn** hesitant in his support for Remain
- **Lib Dem recovering** from a heavy 2015 defeat
- Other Remain-backing parties (SNP, Greens, Lib Dem) uneasy at sharing a campaign with Cameron





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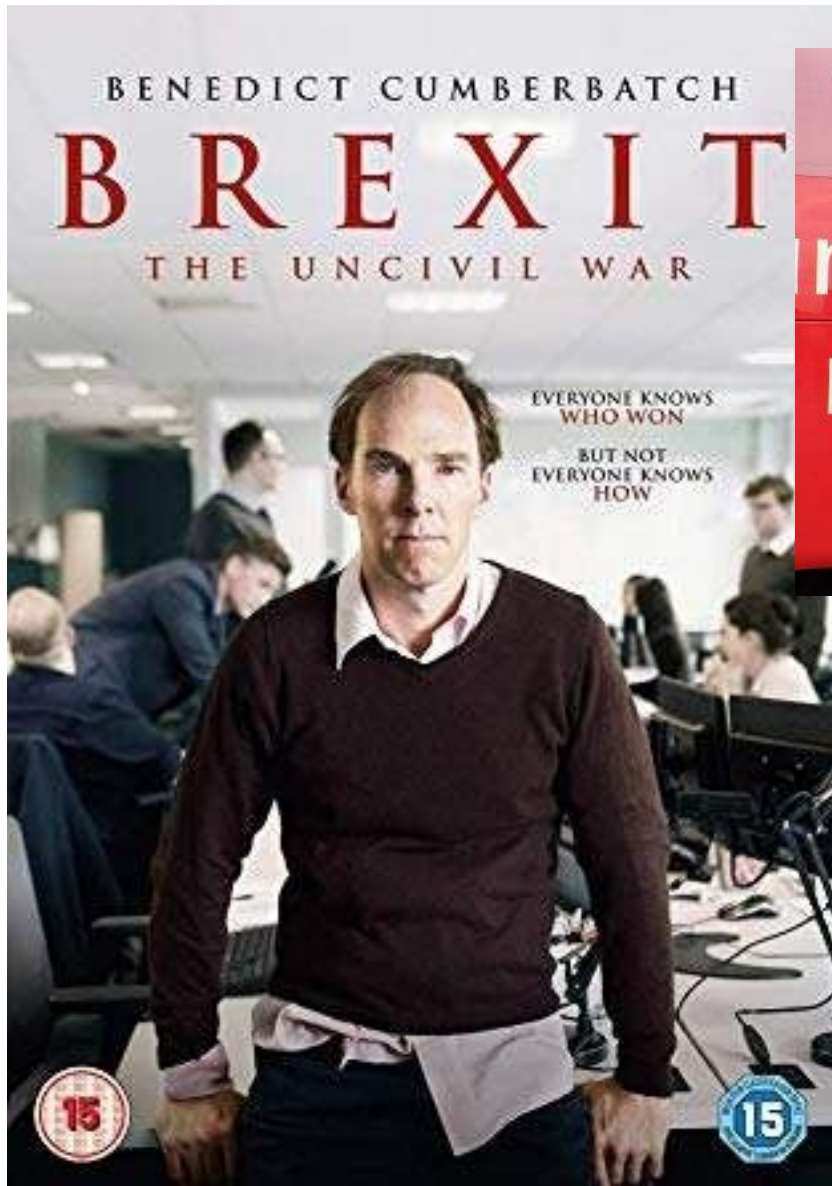


Leave campaign



- **Many Leave campaign groups**
- **Vote Leave:** official campaign, a cross-party campaign run by Matthew Elliot and Dominic Cummings
- Boris Johnson, Michael Gove, Labour MP Gisela Stuart
- **Leave.EU** – a group connected to UKIP and funded by Aaron Banks
 - Tensions between the two groups (but allowed for a series of messages to be communicated to different groups of voters instead just one single message)
- Initial focus on the **economic and sovereignty argument** → quickly moved to an immigration territory
- **UKIP connections**





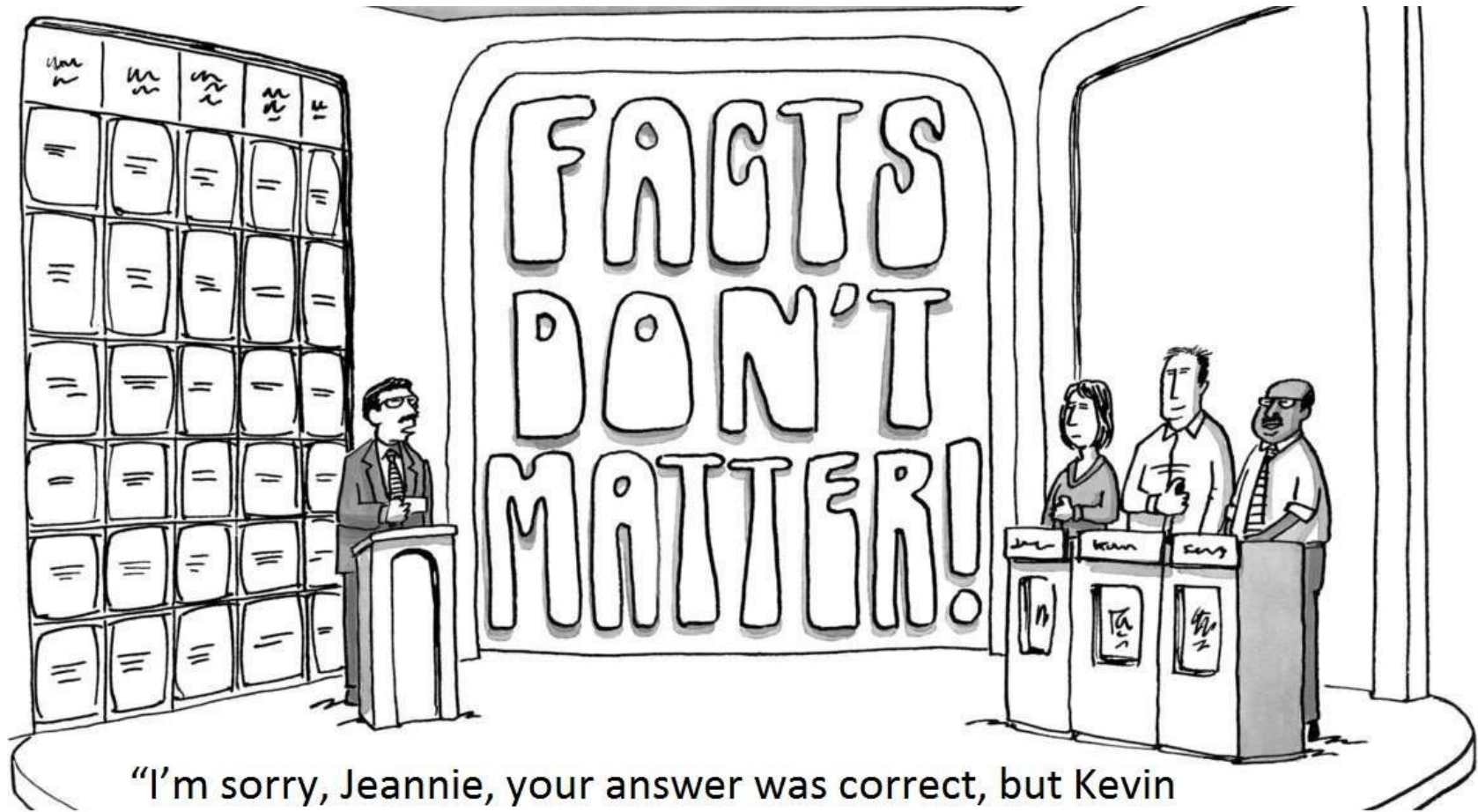
Leave Campaign

- **Immigration** as the predominant issue in the debate
 - Leave campaign able to draw on people's concerns about immigration with regard to security, identity, welfare, cost, border control + repeated failures of govt.
- **A post-truth** political campaign/fact-free campaign
 - unlike general elections, there is no set date for another vote
 - Both sides made much disputed claims!
 - Most notorious (Vote Leave): we send 350 million the EU a week – let's fund our NHS instead.



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“I’m sorry, Jeannie, your answer was correct, but Kevin shouted his incorrect answer over yours, so he gets the points.”



Thank you very much for your attention

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