

## 'Freak result' and buyer's remorse

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Hours after Britain's referendum results confirmed it was heading out of the European Union, "buyer's remorse" started to surface in TV interviews among Leave voters.

One woman voter was clearly reeling from the harsh reality of the consequences. She insisted she would now vote Remain, if she had a second chance.

Another voter told the BBC he was shocked that Prime Minister David Cameron, who campaigned hard to remain in the EU, was stepping down. "The David Cameron resignation has blown me away, to be honest," he said.

This was despite analysts saying for months that Mr Cameron's political career would be finished if his Remain side were to lose the vote.

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To answer this question, the British press (or the pro-EU segment at least), turned introspective, examining its role in enabling Leave proponents to get away with not articulating an EU withdrawal plan at all throughout the campaign.

Commentaries also pointed to the stoking of scepticism and even hostility in the media towards the EU throughout the years.

So can the electorate be trusted to make sophisticated judgments for the good of itself?

Institute of Policy Studies deputy director of research Gillian Koh believes several stakeholders in society have to come together to nurture the right conditions for collective decision-making.

"There has to be an ongoing basis where political leaders, community leaders, experts, the media, play that role of fostering an informed citizenry, which is the bedrock of a democracy," she says.

### THE SINGAPORE TAKEAWAY

The existence of Leave voters lamenting the result tends to lend credence to the People's Action Party's (PAP's) periodic warnings for Singaporeans not to take a PAP government for granted. Supporting the opposition to register a protest vote can lead to a freak election result, goes the refrain.

In 2010, Singapore introduced a Cooling-Off Day - a 24-hour period when campaigning is not allowed - that must come before every Polling Day. The idea was to give the electorate time to calmly consider their vote after the heat of an election campaign.

Dr Koh says that Singaporeans - as citizens of a small country - cannot be just looking out for their self-interest.

"As Singaporeans, citizens of a small city state, we have to be even more savvy about global and regional affairs; we must oblige ourselves to constantly refresh our knowledge and think about issues of national interest, community interest," she says.

"That will be what distinguishes us or a Singaporean from being simply any other 'Joe Blow' (average guy) in the world - thinking only for his or her own ethnic group, or even only of his or her specific, immediate, narrowly defined national interest (and) without consideration of the need for peace and cooperation with the rest of the immediate region and the world.

"That 'big-citizen' mindset has to be cultivated as a constant habit and discipline - including among Singaporeans - but it also applies to very diverse societies like the UK as well.

"And no single stakeholder alone is responsible for this; all play a part. And you never stop, you never arrive. Each generation will require that socialisation."