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The Great Brexit Debate Off!

The Brexit battle lines have now been drawn with the heavy artillery appointments announced, such as Lord Rose in the 'In' corner and John Caudwell in the 'Vote Leave' corner. Key opinion formers like Charlotte Church and Russell Brand are still to declare their stance.

By mid 2016 we will all be dizzy with statistics about the pros and cons of being part of Europe, both politically and economically, but the truth is that we won't really know the longer term impact for certain until much later, and well after a vote either way. The last time England broke up completely with Europe was over the Pope's rejection of Henry VIII's marriage to Anne Boleyn. For England, it turned out to be a happy economic choice: it discovered that there were many more countries to do business with, and laid the foundations for the Empire.

This time around, however, things are less clear and the extent of the uncertain impact can be seen most clearly in the economic forecasts of the effect on the UK's GDP of a departure. Professor Tim Congdon believes the positive impact could be as much as a 12% lift in GDP, while the London School of Economics predicts a negative impact of between 2% and 10%. Broadly speaking, leading economic pundits are split down the middle on whether an exit would be good or bad for the economy, but the exact gain or loss will hinge on the terms of any Brexit that are negotiated.

In the end, the implications of Brexit could actually turn out to be more profound for the future of the remainder of the European Union than they are for the United Kingdom.

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