

Many lawyers have an innate suspicion of attempts by politicians and journalists to express qualitatively complex and discursive legal phenomena in simplistic and misleading quantitative terms. Those suspicions were amply rewarded during the referendum campaign of 2016. This paper will explore one of the key examples: attempts to express the influence of EU law on the national legal system in percentage terms, dominated by the grossly incompetent and / or dishonest calculations offered by Leave campaigners, in their attempt to prove the claim that UK “sovereignty” had been stolen away by “Brussels”. Critical analysis of some of the key Leave figures quickly reveals their lack of any credible scientific basis and failure to meet even the most basic standards of academic rigour. So how did they get away with it? And would it have been possible to do a better job?

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