

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
MASTER'S DEGREE IN EUROPEAN STUDIES

Chair of Comparative History of Political Systems

RETRACING THE ROOT CAUSE OF BREXIT: BIRTH AND
DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM INDEPENDENCE PARTY
(UKIP)

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“If you lead a country like Britain, a strong country, a country which has taken a lead in world affairs in good times and in bad, a country that is always reliable, then you have to have a touch of iron about you.”
Margaret Thatcher

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is a truth universally acknowledged that the European Union (and, previously, the former European Economic Community, EEC) and the United Kingdom have always had a troublesome, stormy, complicated, if not rocky relationship. Proof of it can be found effortlessly while tracking the key steps of the European Union history.

Europe as we know it nowadays is nothing but a project conceived in the minds of a few distinguished and visionary politicians from the past century. Still bewildered by the advent of the two world wars in the continent, they envisioned the creation of a supranational authority able to avert any replication of these catastrophic phenomena. Before the Cold War period erupted, the farsighted leaders of some European countries established that the prosperity of the continent depended only on nations “as a whole, and not singly” (Hitchcock, 2004:147). The 9 May 1950 Schuman Declaration was the milestone of such a long process: only after 11 months, six founding members (Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany) agreed on the establishment of the so-called European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), where the aforementioned States would share their national production of coal and steel through a free circulation without customs barriers and unfair competition practises (like quotas, subsidies, etc.). The idea lying behind this was the fact that, in a situation of peaceful trade of such goods, two sworn enemy nations like France and West Germany (whose neighbouring areas of Alsace and Ruhr were rich of them) would have been prevented from provoking another conflict. In all of this, the United Kingdom was offered the possibility to join, but refused as the objectives of the community were not in line with its national interests. Representatives of the Labour party, such as Clement Attlee, Ernest Bevin and Stafford Cripps committed themselves to preserving British parliamentary sovereignty and highlighted this, as well as British exceptionalism, as reasons for standing aside from European supranational integration (Forster, 2004: 13). In any case, it was the first non-member state to sign the Association Agreement in 1954.

In 1957, the Rome Treaties instituted the European Economic Community and EURATOM, following the initiatives of such great European politicians as Gaetano Martini, Jean Monnet and Paul-Henri Spaak. UK former Prime Minister, Mr. Anthony Eden, concerned to be embedded in a European integrated system

and, subsequently, to lose the “*special relationship*”¹ with the United States, rejected the proposal of a deeper European integration in the nuclear energy and transportation sectors. In addition, the United Kingdom, jealous of the success of the Rome Treaties, grouped together with Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal, Denmark, Norway and Austria and forged the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1960. Finland, Iceland and Liechtenstein joined in the following years. Basically, it aimed at reproducing the trade conditions offered by the EEC between those member states who had yet not or did not wish to join the EEC.

However, the United Kingdom soon understood that EFTA could in no way compete against the revenue generated by the common market of the EEC (an astonishingly successful post-war recovery). It was as early as in October 1961 that the UK, under Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, made its first official application to join the EEC. After a long 16-months reviewing process, UK saw its application request fail due to the veto posed by the General Charles De Gaulle. In a press conference on the 14 January 1963, the French President justified his choice as a consequence of incompatibilities between the interests of continental European states and insular Britain. He declared: “*L'Angleterre, en effet elle, est insulaire. Elle est maritime. Elle est liée par ses échanges, ses marchés, ses ravitaillements aux pays les plus divers. [...] Bref, la nature, la structure qui sont propres à l'Angleterre diffèrent profondément de celle des continentaux. Comment faire pour que l'Angleterre telle qu'elle vit, telle qu'elle produit, telle qu'elle échange, soit incorporée au Marché commun tel qu'il a été conçu et tel qu'il fonctionne.*” (Ina, 1963)². De Gaulle highlighted the deep economic differences, particularly the Commonwealth free-trade area relations the UK held, which were inconsistent with the nature of the common market itself. He concluded by wishing Great Britain to change drastically in order to adjust to the other six members’ economic policies: only in that moment would the United Kingdom have found no obstacles to EEC accession. Nonetheless, it has been debated that De Gaulle harboured some resentment against the United Kingdom, as it appeared like a “Trojan horse” of the United States, leading to an “Americanisation of Europe” (Cvce, 2019).

¹ Term firstly employed by Winston Churchill during a speech in 1946, it is nowadays widely used to outline unofficially the military, political, historical, cultural, social and diplomatic bond between the United States and the United Kingdom.

² Translate: England, indeed, is insular. It is maritime. It is linked to different countries by the nature of its exchanges, market, supplies. In short, English nature and structure is profoundly different from the ones of the mainland. What can be done so that England as it is, produces, trades can be embedded in the common market as it is conceived and how it works.

Not only did UK face General De Gaulle's veto once, but also history repeated itself in 1967. MacMillan was replaced by Harold Wilson; although he was not a European enthusiast, he decided to reopen the negotiations to join EEC's common market. Once again, on the 27 November 1967, during his usual press conference at the Elysée Palace, General De Gaulle left the audience speechless. He put into question the new British application request with "*extraordinary insistence and haste*" (Ina, 1967), blaming the devaluation of the pound sterling and the shift of world equilibria as trigger events. He carried on pointing out that the UK made a huge contradiction between "*accepting without restriction all the provisions that governed the six members and asking for a negotiation*" (Goldsmith and Farrell, 2017). He then enlisted the five acts in which London stood against the European integration process. In a world in which the US was such a hegemonic power, the ever-growing greatness and threat of USSR, the rapid economic recovery of the European continent, the new Chinese presence and the fall of the Commonwealth countries let Great Britain feel insecure and see its former leadership being challenged, as the Suez channel defeat proved earlier in 1956. In addition, the pound sterling was being devaluated and suffered from external liabilities for being a reserve currency. In a nutshell, as De Gaulle put it, "*un État qui précisément par sa monnaie, par son économie, par sa politique, ne fait pas partie actuellement de l'Europe telle que nous avons commencé à la bâtir*"³.

The United Kingdom soon understood that EEC accession would have always been hampered by the French President, as long as he would have stayed in power. After the resignation of General De Gaulle and the establishment of Georges Pompidou as new French President, the path to join EEC seemed more likely. Indeed, the famous Accession Treaty was signed on 22 January 1972, in the capital city of Belgium, Brussels. The British signature came from UK's most Europhile Prime Minister, the Conservative Edward Heath. The effective membership came into force on 1 January 1973. However, the very first disagreements on the content of the Treaty arose very quickly, up to the point that a referendum was held in 1975. On that occasion, the voters were called on deciding whether to stay in the then EEC and common market. The results showed the British people had voted by a margin of two to one to stay in the European Community (Clarke et al., 2017: 1). As scholars David Butler and Uwe Kitzinger (1996) pointed out: "*It was unequivocal, but it was also unenthusiastic. Support for membership was wide but it did not run deep*".

³ Translate: a State which, precisely due to its currency, economy and politics, is not actually part of that Europe we began to build.

Another major historical point was the advent of UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who ran the office at 10, Downing Street from 1979 to 1990. At this stage, a few clarifications must be pinpointed: she began her political moves in the Conservatives as *pro-European*, in opposition to Labour's sceptical views towards British participation in the EEC. She also made proof of this by appointing pro-European ministers in her cabinet. No one would question that the Conservatives were considered pro-European at least up to half of Mrs. Thatcher's political mandate. Regardless of the good premises, what made the Iron Lady's mind change was substantially a problem of money: ever since the entry into EEC, the Thatcher government made much of the fact that the British contributions to the community budget were disproportionately large (Vinen, 2009). Particularly, regarding the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy), she bluntly declared that Britain was not receiving enough help for its development, for she claimed "I want my money back!" during the Council meeting in Dublin in 1979. As agreed, Mrs. Thatcher signed the famous Single European Act (SEA), although she manifestly expressed all her disappointment for the reforms of the European institutions. It is important to highlight that she was a big fan of the Single Market, ERM, free market, national sovereignty and believed that cooperation in some areas such as trade, defence and the relations with the rest of the world among EC members was vital, but totally against the EMU and the Social Charter, as well as the establishment of a "European superstate" with "centralised power in Brussels" and "decisions taken by an appointed bureaucracy"⁴, as she addressed during her memorable speech at the College of Europe in Bruges, in 1989.

In 1991, the United Kingdom signed the famous Maastricht Treaty, or Treaty on the European Union, which transformed the European Communities into the European Union and shaped the role of institutions, Single Market and all the other policies as we know it nowadays. It created a new currency, the euro, from which the United Kingdom and Denmark were given the *opt-out* clause, meaning they can decide whether or not participate in a given policy area. Not only the currency, the UK was alone in refusing the Social Agreement (often referred to as the "Social Chapter") that extended cooperation in social policy, believing that it would increase costs for British companies (Garnett and Lynch, 2016). On 3 May 1992, a very young, blonde, dual-citizenship, irreverent journalist called Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson (in short, Boris Johnson)

⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_XsSnivgNg

was making his way inside political journalism as British correspondent from Brussels for the Sunday Telegraph. He appeared in the newspaper's front page with an article entitled "Delors plan to rule Europe" (The Guardian, 2019): he was referring to the famous former French Commission President, who was putting forward an idea to evolve the Brussels Commission in a "European government", with him or his possible successor to become "President of the European Community" and acquire executive powers. Basically, the alleged plan Delors was trying to obtain at the next summit in Portugal was the concept and powers of the European Commission as we know it nowadays, with the only exception of the plus proposal of eliminating vetoes. Not only were British officials not one hundred per cent happy of the Maastricht Treaty, but were also feeling offended by such an early attempt to amend provisions again. Boris admittedly confirmed that Britain would have been against greater integration steps since the early years. Further "first signs" of British uneasiness with the changing European landscape came from Boris Johnson's article from March 1994, entitled "Goodbye, Brussels". It was a series of the author's thoughts about British membership in a wider European Union that enlarged from 12 to 15 Member States. By rethinking about the concept of sovereignty, the UK was giving it up – or, in author's words, pooling – with the other "members of the club" in favour of one, single and major impact in international affairs, but at the same time as the example of abiding by European laws in national territory. With the final message that British rules came from the Belgian capital city, Boris was anticipating a scenario that would have developed after more than twenty years: the British people would have said goodbye to Brussels. The ratification and subsequent entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty coincides perfectly with the birth of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), that is 1993. From this moment on, if British politics was never quite easy to understand, the advent of this brand new political party, ruining the well-known tripartite system, will shift the political equilibria up to the famous referendum on 23 June 2016.

After this brief and concise demonstration of the chaotic beginnings between the United Kingdom and the European Union, the following dissertation chapters will change focus and present, in the clearest possible way and following the timeline thread of the events, the true historical-political pathway of the British Eurosceptic party that changed not only a nation, but also European history. This dissertation will be divided into three chapters and a final conclusion, and topics will be discussed as follows:

The first chapter will be, firstly, focused on a brief but helpful comparison between Euroscepticism and populism, as many tend to merge or confuse the two terms pretty frequently. Secondly, the origins of the purple party – from the forerunner Social Democratic Party (SDP) to the official creation of this Eurosceptic “experiment” inside the London School of Economics (LSE) in 1993. The mission of the party was getting the British people out of the European Union, deemed a failing and lying project. Thirdly, a short presentation of Nigel Farage will be provided, together with the first political setbacks. Furthermore, the chapter will present the first 1997 European election success and the characteristic internal warfare that protracted all over the years, to the 2004 great watershed period with the odi-et-amo turbulent relationship with Robert Kilroy-Silk and his definitive resignation.

The second chapter, instead, will focus on the first confusion years of the party immediately after the departure of Kilroy-Silk. Farage was the first in understanding that UKIP had to change its political slogan and abandon the single-issue pressure group appearance they had. In addition, a focus on the problem of immigration and its witnesses will enjoy enough space to be sufficiently understood by the reader. A confrontation between UKIP and the extreme right-wing British National Party (BNP) will be assessed and will then declare a sharp difference in the two parties’ ideals. Moreover, a look at the international situation from 2008 onwards will be taken into account as source to explain the surge in Eurosceptic and populist movements across the Old Continent. Farage’s first and the second leadership years will be noteworthy to read, together with the Lord Pearson of Rannoch’s odd leadership. Finally, a full review of the British first-past-the-post electoral systems, the average UKIP voter and the disillusionive 2010 general elections will be fully discussed.

The third chapter will concentrate on the purple party’s most exciting years, confirming it as competent challenger of the British tripartite order at every by-election. UKIP could boast its political record in 2014, when it was proclaimed the most voted party in the United Kingdom at the European Parliament elections of the same year. Subsequent to this great political momentum, it tried to construct its solid electoral basin in a specific area in order to maximise its chances to secure a seat in the House of Commons. The 2015 general elections will reward the party with nearly 4 million votes and a seat in the Commons, even though the political character taking that seat was not Farage. The chapter will end up with the road to the famous referendum and the results after 23 June 2016.

The conclusions will present how British history developed in accordance with the expression of popular will, that is to say the Leave option. The journey will start with the promising and difficult negotiation taskforces carried out by Mrs. Theresa May and will end with current Prime Minister Boris Johnson (also known as BoJo) and his latest decisions to apply a no-deal Brexit at all costs next 31 October 2019, no more delays will be demanded. As regards of UKIP, after accomplishing the party's political mission, Farage stepped back from leadership and UKIP started to fall dramatically in preferences, up to the final decline with Farage's scission and creation of the Brexit Party that, formally, has replaced UKIP at national as well as European level.

2. A BRAND NEW BRITISH POLITICAL FORCE IS BORN

2.1 *Euroscepticism or populism?*

It is as clear as crystal that the UK Independence Party has imposed itself as UK's major Eurosceptic party over the years. It has also been affirmed that this is the perfect example of nationalist populist party. But is it really so? At this stage, a complete review of the terms "Euroscepticism" and "populism" must be pointed out. These two have very distinct meanings, although the one does not necessarily exclude the other.

Euroscepticism is a commonly widespread term in international and European politics mainly nowadays; it is said to have its origins dated back to late 1980s, at the heart of the process of European integration, coinciding with the SEA and the subsequent Maastricht Treaty. Because of the undefined nature of such a phenomenon, scholarly literature has not provided an accurate definition yet. As Topaloff (2012: 17) and Sørensen (2007: 56) affirmed, comprehensible defining of social science's concepts is extremely challenging – and Euroscepticism is one of the most notorious terms to define. In more general trends, Euroscepticism coincides with "*[expressing] the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration*" (Taggart, 1998: 366). As Sørensen (2007: 56) also describes, it is a lack of satisfaction towards the EU. Worldwide dictionaries offer a sort of explanation which focuses largely on the economic advantages-and-disadvantages relationship the EU has brought about, or ideologies (xenophobia, nationalism) being part of it, without considering other remarkable political and socio-cultural variables, being these of paramount importance in this framework. Furthermore, one cannot argue that Euroscepticism is the representation of a single political view, as it moves among the most extreme wings of both right and left parties, whereas centrist parties tend to be more pro-European. Taggart and Szczerbiak propose a dualist view: one is soft and the other is hard Euroscepticism (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2002, p.7). According to the former, it is kind of "reformist", as it does not oppose directly to the process of EU participation or deeper integration, but expresses some doubts where a change in policy areas or nationalist objectives collide with EU's ones. For this reason, it is often associated with those parties who desire to gain more sovereignty for the nations they are called on to represent. The European

Conservatives and Reformists group, including the British Conservative Party and the European United Left-Nordic Green Left alliance, can be given as major examples of soft Eurosceptic organisations and parties. (Euractiv, 2013). The latter, instead, is more extreme as it also takes into consideration not only a complete distrust of the EU as a whole and *tout court* but also the willingness to pull back membership. The European Parliament's Europe of Freedom and Democracy group, which includes the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), are the main examples of hard Eurosceptic organisations and parties. (Euractiv, 2013)

Populism, like Euroscepticism, has a wide range of interpretations. Cas Mudde (2007) is an expert in the field and theorised three core values of populist philosophy: *anti-establishment, authoritarianism and nativism*. As first stance, it is of anti-establishment sentiment because, as the Oxford Dictionary (2019) affirms, it is "*A political approach that strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups*". Ordinary people are regarded as homogeneous and inherently "good" or "decent", in counterpart to dishonest elites (Barr, 2009: 29-48). Furthermore, the authoritarian term is given as populist representatives do have a somewhat authoritarian trend, which is represented by charismatic leaders. Lastly, it is of common knowledge that such leaders, during their passionate speeches, like to put accent on nationalist and xenophobic arguments, claiming that the State in which they live should set aside non-nationals. Populism favours mono-culturalism over multiculturalism, national self-interest over international cooperation and development aid, closed borders over the free flow of peoples, ideas, labour and capital, and traditionalism over progressive and liberal-social values (ibid.). Typical examples of populist leaders are Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, Matteo Salvini and Nigel Farage.

Coming to our original question, it can be easily replied that yes, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) fully falls into the Eurosceptic category, but of a hard-line one. Not only does this party take part in the Eurosceptic spectrum, but his most important former leader, Mr. Nigel Farage, has been and still is one of the politicians embodying the concept of populism. After this short clarification, it is time to move back in time and start this journey towards the ascent of the British political party that led the nation out of the European Union.

2.2 Prologue and the early years (1992-1997)

The EU seemed a successful story, with the objective of eradicating another multi-states war from the continent achieved, the economies of the participating nation states flourished and boosted from 1960s to 1980s, appealing inevitably other States that wanted to join. Particularly, by the early 1990s the members of such an exclusive club passed from the original six to fifteen, including Great Britain. The EU was a peculiar hybrid that worked: a non-federal integrated economic space with a high degree of political cooperation (Goodhart, 2017: 92). In such an idyllic scenario, what could go wrong?

Before touching UKIP's birth, it is important to note that a British grassroots movement first appeared on 26 March 1981, called Social Democratic Party (SDP). It was founded by some senior Labour Party moderates, after the split at the summit of British politics, and reached more than seven million Brits during 1983 and 1987 general elections. The party merged with the Liberal Party in 1988 and formed the Social and Liberal Democrats (at present abbreviated Liberal Democrats). From that moment onwards, British politics was shaped into a tripartite system, opposing the "*status quo*" parties of Conservatives to Labour but with the more and more important presence of the Liberal Democrats. However, in spite of the huge change the party brought about and all the mass-media attention, SDP did not last long. As Goodwin and Milazzo (2015) put it, while the SDP had shot up into the sky like a rocket, it had soon fallen down like a stick.

UKIP story began on 3 September 1993, in the dusty office of a lecturer at the London School of Economics (Ford and Goodwin, 2014: 2). Actually, an early attempt occurred in 1991, under the name of Anti-Federalist League, led by Dr. Alan Sked and backed financially by Sir James Goldsmith; however, the 1992 elections proved a veritable disaster and the party was dismantled. Other waves of influence came from the 1970s, with the National Front (NF) conquering a considerable part of the electorate, but fell short due to internal fights and split-up into small factions, such as the xenophobic British National Party. In the early years of activity, the party was scarcely noted in the internal politics of the nation. The original members were political maniacs and academics who had absolutely no idea of how to organise a political campaign. The early strategy was straight and simple: to repeat *ad nauseam* how the country was endangered by the damage of EU integration process.

Since its very beginnings, the party could count on a prominent character, who would soon turn into an unreachable and uncontested leader of the party: Mr. Nigel Farage. He was born on 3 April 1964 in a wealthy family – his father being a stockbroker – and attended prestigious schools such as the Dulwich College in London. He never enrolled at university, in favour of working as commodity trader. His political career started as Conservative at the age of 14, but felt that this party would have so actively betrayed what the country could stand for (BBC, 2014); then he joined UKIP's battle for British withdrawal from the EU in 1993 and was immediately elected at the European Parliament for South East England in 1999, 2004 and 2009. He took the leadership of the party twice: from 2006 to 2009 and from 2010 to 2016, when he decided to quit the party soon after the referendum results. But UKIP is no overnight success or, as it can sometimes seem from the ubiquity of Mr Farage on the airwaves, a one-man party (ibid.).

Not only did they see a dark period since the birth of the party, also a new danger came out of the blue: in 1994, Sir James Goldsmith decided to use a considerable portion of his personal assets to be invested in a formation of a party leading the Brits to a referendum on the EU. For this reason, he called it the "Referendum Party". Sir Goldsmith was an experienced politician, who used his fortunes to print pamphlets, hire activists and engage celebrities for his campaign. By contrast, UKIP were not as much organised and well-oriented, also due to the lack of funds in the party and not so many militants on the ground. Even though they presented at their first parliamentary elections in 1997 with the slogan "THE ONLY WAY IS OUT"⁵ and with confidence that Euroscepticism grew in UK after the Maastricht Treaty, the results reached a petty 1.7 per cent. The fact that the party was concentrated only on the withdrawal from EU membership and this political view alone (in short, a single-issue party group), having nothing else to say in other subject matters of relevant significance to the country, resulted in a heavy fiasco.

UKIP was believed to be like a comet in the British political sky: it could have had some sort of success at first, but it could not live long-lasting. Proof of it are the witnesses of small-party groups that died because of internal fights. Instead, UKIP managed to survive the in-fighting and to show its power against those who have always attacked and bad-mouthed about it, such as the famous quote from former Prime Minister David Cameron, who apostrophised them as

⁵ UK Independence Party Manifesto of 1997 developed by Dr. Alan Sked.

“fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists” (BBC, 2006). Whether quoted by journalists on rare occasions, they were depicted as amateur hours. For example, the Daily Record (1997) scoffed them by comparing as a “*kamikaze parties doomed to spend their lives on the fringes of politics*”. Some pundits opened an interesting comparison between UKIP and the French movement of the 1950, called the “Poujadists”⁶.

After licking their own wounds and starting all over, a membership system with a security deposit of £500 per candidate was set up, plus the new strategy focused more on a few interesting seats in the South East and South West of England, where almost three candidates in four still stood. The results of Goldsmith’s party were quite blatant: it reached almost 4 per cent, UKIP’s more-than-doubled statistics, which is fair enough for a minor political party in UK. But why the Southern regions? As Ford and Goodwin (2016:31) explain, they obtained such success because of large numbers of elderly voters with high percentage of agricultural employment, concerned by the latest EU policies on agriculture and the famous 1996 ban on exporting British beef, due to the “mad cow disease” crisis.

An interesting historical moment banged on UKIP’s doors only three months after the defeat at 1997 parliament elections: Sir James Goldsmith died, and the Referendum Party was dissolved right afterwards. It could have been the one-of-a-kind opportunity for UKIP to gain momentum and gather all Eurosceptic minds within one party, also in view of the upcoming EU Parliament elections in 1999. Nevertheless, UKIP wasted time in the first relevant internal disagreements and fighting. Hayton (2010: 28) distinguished these difficulties as “growing pains” of a young party trying to lock its own spot in the national political arena, and trying to become a mainstream organisation. The first leadership represented by the founder, Alan Sked, was called into question for multiple reasons, one of which being the failure to reach agreement with Sir Goldsmith while still alive. A coalition conducted by a young Nigel Farage managed to ostracise Alan Sked and place a newcomer, Michael Holmes.

2.3 1999-2002: UKIP’s first watershed years

⁶ An anti-establishment conservative reactionary political movement, able to gather a small coalition of voters to protect the business interests of traders from high taxes and the seemingly unreachable elite. It was named after Pierre Poujade, a French bookseller and populist politician. It was a small-fringed party that had short life in French politics.

Once the infighting being sorted out, the party could focus all its energies on the fast-approaching European elections. It was a gigantic opportunity to get noticed, even as small party, thanks to the system of proportional representation used at the European Parliament, which contrasted the British traditional first-past-the-post plurality method. It is important to recall how the British political system works: The United Kingdom, comprised of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, is a parliamentary democracy in a constitutional monarchy. Currently, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II represents the Head of State, while current Prime Minister Boris Johnson is the Head of Government. The British Government exercises the executive power, under permission of the monarch and the autonomous governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The legislative power is entrusted to the Palace of Westminster, in London, where the House of Lords and the House of Commons gather to propose and discuss laws. The House of Lords (the Lords) is the upper chamber, is unelected (accession granted either by appointment or hereditary succession) holds 790 seats and approves the laws coming from the House of Commons. On the other hand, the House of Commons (the Commons) is the lower chamber, is elected and holds 650 seats or constituencies (Parliament, 2014). Its members are referred to as Members of the Parliament (MPs). In general, elections occur every 5 years, as a result of the 2011 Fixed-Term Parliamentary Act, or more rarely when the Parliament is dissolved.

Suddenly, a brand new nightmare came to light: the new Conservative Party leader, William Hague, was campaigning against the EU and the relationship the United Kingdom had with EU institutions; he claimed the necessity for Britain to stay in Europe but “not run by Europe”. Despite such declarations, the 1999 European elections rewarded UKIP’s efforts by attracting 700.000 British voters, reaching 7 per cent and gaining three seats. One of these, was Farage’s who, triumphantly and ironically at the same time, declared that “For a parliament I want no part of, under a system I despise, I found myself blinking into the cameras at one in the morning saying how proud I was” (Engels, 2001). Inside the European Parliament, UKIP formed a new group, called Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD), in which other EU countries representatives joined afterwards. EFDD’s agenda is particularly fascinating: it somewhat coincides with UKIP’s propaganda, namely to hinder further EU integration, strengthening of national borders and intransigence towards xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination (EFDD, 2019). But gaining attention once every five years was not the maximum aspiration. The party lived in a constant paradox, in which its voice was powerful and heard

outside the national borders, but went isolated and unheard within national borders.

Once again, the party was not intended to learn from their previous mistakes and another internal warfare broke out. Holmes's dictatorial leadership disappointed many Ukipers, it seemed like UKIP's major representatives were playing all against all, for a confrontation general meeting was convened in Westminster in January 2000. The situation escalated quickly, generating brouhaha. Farage managed to regain the assembly's composure, Holmes was ousted, a total sinking of the party was averted. The new leader was Jeffrey Titford, a former embalmer, who had previous political experience with the Conservatives and Referendum parties. The calm nature of his character succeeded in quelling all internal disputes. Engels (*ibid.*), in his columns of *The Guardian*, described him as "an emollient man, a sort of Willie Whitelaw figure, and an ideal leader for such a fractious party". Under his leadership, UKIP presented at the 2001 general elections with 420 candidates; however, UKIP did not bear in mind that times slightly changed compared to 1999 favourable conditions: Europe was no longer a priority topic for many Brits and the party were under attacks from a rancorous Alan Sked, who provided allegiances of UKIP members (particularly, Nigel Farage) being in close contact with some exponents of the extremist BNP. Moreover, the Conservative leader William Hague tried to oppose his party against the adoption of the euro as national currency and against a deeper EU integration, to which the ruling party (the Labour under former PM Tony Blair) was taking time to think about it.

The question on the single currency was a hot topic, as the United Kingdom with its pound sterling had to abandon the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) due to ferocious attacks of the speculators in September 1992. Suspension of sterling from the ERM, which cost the country £4 billion of its currency reserves and inflicted lasting damage on the economic credibility of Conservative governments, was a catalyst for many, moving their position from that of tacit scepticism and acquiescence to active scepticism and a willingness to oppose the government's policy on the euro (*op. cit.*, 2004: 108). A timid Conservative attempt to join forces with UKIP in a one-slot Eurosceptic position during elections was soon kept off the table, and interrupted all communication. Ukipers were enthusiastically convinced that they could easily steal votes to those disillusioned by Labour and to the Liberal Democrats.

Unfortunately, UKIP's major sin was immodesty: 2001 elections gave a hard (figurative) slap to the party, which saw its broad consensus of 1999 elections basically cut in half, especially in those regions deemed fortresses. Some blame the again poor campaign strategy, since the party still had nothing to say on NHS or education fields. What the party candidates only affirmed was to quit the EU and fund national structures from the savings. Others believe that the high concentration of proposed candidates hindered the construction of local support which is of paramount importance in the British electoral system. Another major strategic mistake was the role of activists: they followed all international policy debates and worked poorly on the ground in order to pave the way for their respective candidate.

Clouds do sometimes have a silver lining, however: despite the discouraging results, UKIP still held its position as fourth most-voted party in the United Kingdom. But surprises are not finished here: the abrupt boost of candidates meant that UKIP consensus was growing even outside those highly Eurosceptic areas; lastly, an interesting feature has been detected: UKIP fascinated a specific portion of the electorate, mainly from the countryside or rural parts, the elderly and people with low levels of education.

Another change in leadership took place in 2002: Titford gave way to Roger Knapman. Contrary to all his predecessors, Knapman boasted a previous political experience as Conservative MP, being in the latter party a government whip in 1995.

2.4 UKIP and the Conservatives: friend or foe?

It has often been reported that UKIP may resemble the most Eurosceptic fringe of the Conservatives, partly due to the thought's congruencies concerning the ideology. The Conservatives have always been a centre-right party in UK politics, supporting the EU project in alternate historical phases. At present, Tories reflect Thatcherism, and it has been argued that UKIP also would apply some Thatcherite policies (Hug, 2014: 7). The Conservatives have always shown a dissing behaviour towards UKIP, and repeatedly tried to tear UKIP consensus down through ferocious media attacks. On the other hand, it has been demonstrated that some Ukipers formerly belonged to the Conservatives, thus all this diversity is not quite manifested. However, it cannot be avoided to affirm that UKIP ideals were remarkably influential on changing Tories' positions towards the EU. This is further confirmed by Gifford (2006: 865), who shows no

doubt in stating that UKIP has hardened the Tories' EU-policies, and consequently the Tories are now a "middle way"⁷ to Europe. From the early 1960s to the late 1980s, the Conservatives proclaimed themselves the "party of Europe" (op. cit., 2016: 341). Probably, the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and all the problems that carried with it (the treaty being defined as a step "too far") shifted the balance and certainties of the party. In more recent times, British politics has witnessed a more Eurosceptic trend within the Conservatives. This is reinforced by the matter of EU integration – a high-salience issue among MPs (op. cit., 2010: 32). The latter was, and still is, a UKIP fundamental, core principle on which they built their broad consensus: and having high salience, it is as much important for British citizens, too.

UKIP has lost its charm nowadays, but there is no uncertainty in affirming that Tories would have loved seeing the party losing ground and downgraded to a pressure group in those days. Before referendum took place, were the Conservatives fearful of UKIP? Maybe, especially when political luck started smiling on the most Eurosceptic party. Could it have been a sort of threat? The only thing time has replied to is the fact that UKIP (and later on the Brexit Party) has become a "refuge for Tories" – members or politicians (Abedi and Lundberg, 2009: 72).

2.5 The first boom years: 2004-2005

Somebody once said, "Who is content with the least is the richest of all". Actually, this is not UKIP's case. After dusting off and tailoring once more, UKIP were ready to face the upcoming European Parliament elections in 2004. On national ground, there was a big issue: their quote in the polls was sparse. The British people scarcely knew what the party wanted to represent.

In order to carry out a radical change of direction, Knapman hired US President Bill Clinton's former adviser, Dick Morris. The two met on a journey at sea, in which Morris admitted being sympathetic with UKIP's intentions, but the way the party sought to achieve the goal was wrong. In a party summit in Devonshire, Morris provided a short list of changes for the party, particularly regarding communication:

1. Change of slogan: "Say No"
2. Use of billboards

⁷ The expression "middle way" is an indicator of the political-ideological position adopted by Conservatives: it stands between hard Eurosceptic (like UKIP) and pro-EU (like Labour).

Why this change of slogan? The reason is quite intuitable. In general, communication is based on the so-called K.I.S.S. concept/acronym (Keep It Straight and Simple). It did not present itself to the public as a dramatic nor drastic change of perspectives, but it resembled more like the famous “Thanks, but no thanks”. It was employed to say no not only to the single currency but also to uncontrolled immigration (especially from the EU’s new members from post-Communist countries, such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, the Republic of Slovakia) and the European Constitution (which was subsequently vetoed by France and the Netherlands). Concerning billboards, the baseline was more or less alike: people tend to throw newspapers away almost immediately, while billboard messages remain more stuck in their minds.

Not only did UKIP public relations change, but also a huge wave of media attention arrived when Robert Kilroy-Silk, a national day-tv broadcaster and former Labour MP, took the political field with Kapman’s party. Thanks to Kilroy, the party benefitted from large sums of private funding from the well-known businessman and donor Paul Sykes. Soon after Mr. Kilroy gave his support to the party, other national celebrities endorsed UKIP’s campaign: Joan Collins, Patrick Moore, Edward Fox and Stirling Moss. Thanks to this mediatic boom, subscription to the party saw a threefold increase.

As surveys indicated UKIP belonging to one of the three most-voted parties, attacks from external parts did not miss the chance to go unheard. The Conservatives kept their attitude by alleging relations with the extreme right fringes of British politics, whereas Alan Sked came back to claim that his former party diverted from the original path. One further attempt came from Conservative MP Michael Howard, who apostrophised UKIP as a bunch of “cranks and gadflies” (Daniel, 2005). Nevertheless, all these efforts did nothing but help the party in raising more and more consensus.

Party	Votes won	% of vote	Loss/Gain	Seats	% of seats	Loss/Gain vs actual '94 result	Loss/Gain vs notional '94 result
Conservative	3,578,218	35.8	▲7.9	36	42.9	▲18	
Labour	2,803,821	28.0	▼16.1	29	34.5	▼33	
Liberal Democrat	1,266,549	12.7	▼4.1	10	11.9	▲8	
UKIP	696,057	7.0	▲6.0	3	3.6	▲3	▲3
Green	568,236	6.3	▲2.6	2	2.4	▲2	▲2
SNP	268,528	2.7	▼0.5	2	2.4	—	▼1
Plaid Cymru	185,235	1.9	▲0.8	2	2.4	▲2	▲1
Pro-Euro Conservative	138,097	1.4	New	0	—	—	—
BNP	102,647	1.0	New	0	—	—	—
Liberal	93,051	0.9	▲0.3	0	—	—	—
Socialist Labour	86,749	0.9	New	0	—	—	—
Scottish Green	57,142	0.6	▲0.4	0	—	—	—
Scottish Socialist	39,720	0.4	New	0	—	—	—
Natural Law	20,329	0.4	▼0.2	0	—	—	—
Socialist Alliance	7,203	0.1	New	0	—	—	—
Humanist	2,586	0.0	New	0	—	—	—
Weekly Worker	1,724	0.0	New	0	—	—	—
Socialist (GB)	1,510	0.1	New	0	—	—	—
Others	84,872	0.8		0	—	—	—
Total	10,002,273			84	100		

Result of 1999 European Parliament elections for British parties. Source: Wikipedia via BBC (1999).

Party	Votes won	% of vote	Loss/Gain	Seats	Loss/Gain†	% of seats
Conservative	4,397,090	26.7	-9.0	27	-8	36.0
Labour	3,718,683	22.6	-5.4	19	-6	25.3
UKIP	2,650,768	16.1	+9.2	12	+10	16.0
Liberal Democrat	2,452,327	14.9	+2.3	12	+2	16.0
Green	948,588	5.8	+0.1	2	+2	2.7
BNP	808,201	4.9	+3.9	0	0	0
Respect	252,216	1.5	New	0	0	0
SNP	231,505	1.4	-1.3	2	0	2.7
Plaid Cymru	159,888	1.0	-0.9	1	0	1.3
English Democrat	130,056	0.8	New	0	0	0
Liberal	96,325	0.6	-0.3	0	0	0
Independent - Martin Bell	93,028	0.6	New	0	0	0
Scottish Green	79,695	0.5	-0.1	0	0	0
Scottish Socialist	61,356	0.4	New	0	0	0
Christian Peoples	56,771	0.3	New	0	0	0
Senior Citizens	42,861	0.3	New	0	0	0
Countryside Party	42,107	0.3	New	0	0	0
Independent - Herron	39,658	0.2	New	0	0	0
Pensioners	33,501	0.2	New	0	0	0
Christian Vote	21,056	0.1	New	0	0	0
ProLife Alliance	20,393	0.1	New	0	0	0
Forward Wales	17,280	0.1	New	0	0	0

Result of 2004 European Parliament elections for British parties. Source: Wikipedia via BBC (2004).

The two charts are aimed to analyse the evolution of British voting during the last European Parliament elections in 1999 and 2004. It must be added that the turnout was slightly different: from more than 10 million voters in 1999, UK increased its interest on EU issues in 2004 with almost 16 and a half million voters. A surge in the votes for UKIP is easily detectable: compared to 1999, UKIP saw its parliamentary representation improved from 3 to 12 MEPs, including the newest member Robert Kilroy-Silk, gaining more than 9 per cent of preferences than the previous elections. UKIP's rapid success outlasted the competition, even bypassing the Liberal Democrats. However, other comparisons may be highlighted: for instance, the Conservatives conversely, while remaining UK's most-voted party in both European Parliamentary elections, saw a decrease in preferences by 9 per cent with respect to 1999 turnout, but it must be noted that the Tories' worst European result had not reached its apex yet. The Labour party was another story: it had already recorded a bad result during 1999 elections, to be even worsened in the following, losing for both events an overall amount of 21 percentage points.

As the nature of UKIP events requires, another internal crisis broke out. This time the responsible of this was Robert Kilroy-Silk who, after winning a seat in the European Parliament with the party, was convinced that Knapman did not have the ability to be the party's leader, up to the point that during the annual conference of the party, he gave a provocative speech: in a sleight of hand, however, the former chat show host said that he would not challenge the present leader, Roger Knapman, for the position. Instead, he said, he intended to wait for him to retire (The Telegraph, 2004). Moreover, he presented his strategy to not compromising with the Conservatives under no circumstances. His staunching speech raised hostilities with the other members of the party, particularly the donor Paul Sykes started to dissociate with him for being excessively extreme. Farage and other prominent activists moved immediately to circumvent Kilroy's coup. In a desperate last attempt to menace Knapman's leadership, only after 4 months of partnership with UKIP, Kilroy soon understood that he was not quite appreciated in the party, for he quit in January 2005. One last spark could not miss: the tv presenter dismissed some of his former colleagues in the UK Independence Party as "bloody right-wing fascist nutters" (Independent, 2005). In any case, the abandonment of Kilroy-Silk did provoke a substantial fracture in the party, to the point that they were not as ready to face the 2005 national elections as they were for the 2004 European ones. But as seen before, this was just another fleeting crisis moment, to be evolved into something absolutely great.

3. THE REAL TURNING POINT YEARS: UKIP AS AN AFFIRMED DOMESTIC POLITICAL FORCE

With Kilroy departing from UKIP, the party navigated in turbid waters again. Nigel Farage said that Mr Kilroy-Silk had been the "icing on the cake" in the 2004 European election campaign, but insisted that the party was more united without him (The Guardian, 2005). In the meantime, the latter did not waste time in establishing a new political party on his own, "Veritas" (from Latin: "Truth"), confident to have a portion of electorate secured for his presence only. Kilroy-Silk claimed the party he was about to leave did not do any work in their newly appointed positions as MEPs and that, for this reason, UKIP had "no policies, no energy, no vision and no spokespeople" (BBC, 2005). His party instead tried to detach from general Euroscepticism discourse, proposing the introduction of the flat tax and focusing more on another highly delicate issue for the United Kingdom at that time: immigration. He could not have proven being more wrong at this stage: he lost in almost every constituency where his party competed against UKIP in the 2005 domestic elections. Seen the poor performance, Kilroy resigned in July of the same year and the party continued to work its way through British domestic politics, up to the point the party eventually merged with the Liberal Democrats in 2015.

From a very attentive analysis of UKIP's broadcast from 2005, the video started with an emblematic sentence: "No one would have believed that, in the first years of the 21st century, Britain's affairs would be watched and scrutinised by an alien world. With the help of our three political parties, who lied to the British public about their intentions, minds immeasurably more bureaucratic than ours slowly and surely drew their plans against us".



EU was then presented like a maritime monster, a horrifying giant octopus invading and seizing-destroying all UK's symbols, such as the parliament, churches, ports and monuments. These illustrations were not chosen randomly, as they represented the areas linked to the EU that UKIP tried to explain to public opinion in a scary fashion. The allegory of the monster capturing Westminster Palace reflected the fact that 70% of British

laws came from the European Union, including taxation, food-labelling, immigration, health and safety, employment, fishing and farming. This “alien system” was deemed “bad for our economy, our self-respect and our prosperity” (UKIP Manifesto, 2005). The media and written message revolved around the prominent (and bulky) figure of the European Union in British life, whose withdrawal would have brought nothing but benefits for Britons. From an economic point of view, they advocated to get out of the EU club, certainly, but to keep closer economic ties through bilateral agreements with each EU Member State and also feel free to do the same with other NAFTA or Far-East countries. UKIP promised to get rid of all those EU regulations proved detrimental to British businesses and, by cutting the £12 billion the country sends to EU budget every year would mean giving £25 more to pensioners each week. In the agricultural field, the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) seriously jeopardised British farming system: out of the CAP, UKIP would grant minimum prices especially for small farmers and those who decide to farm in difficult areas, plus have free will on GM products and crops. Among all matters covered, most of attention definitely fell on immigration: UKIP claimed Britain was unable to house all immigrants flocking the borders at that time (one million arrivals every four years), due to EU’s uncontrolled immigration and Labour’s “open-door” policy. However, compared to what the party did state regarding immigration later on in this chapter, they still took immigration theme with a grain of salt. In conclusion, the 2005 manifesto again tried to stress the breadth of UKIP’s policies under what Gardner (2006, 271) terms “liberalism”, but which could just as well be considered populism, for their lack of overarching ideological coherence.

3.1 Immigration to the United Kingdom: a multifaceted problem

It can be affirmed that immigration to the United Kingdom is not an issue born in recent times. History of the last century showed that massive non-white population migrated especially to the region of England shortly after the end of World War II. Before such a terrible event broke out, Richard T. Lapiere (1928) conducted a research whose results highlighted that there were much stronger levels of racial hostility in England than in France. Both countries witnessed counter-migration from their former colonies, in the case of UK from all the Commonwealth countries precisely. However, between 1950s and 1970s, if in France the newcomers were “welcomed” by confining them at the outskirts of major French towns (the landmark example being the famous “Seine-Saint-Denis” quarter, located North of Paris, where the majority of today’s terrorists originated) and were offered little salary to rebuild the magnificence of the cities

devastated by bombings, in England social riots mounted. Particularly, on 20 April 1968 Conservative MP Enoch Powell made a (in)famous speech that went down in history as “Rivers of Blood”: he foresaw that the increasing numbers of non-white immigrants to Britain would cause unavoidable racial riots in the streets (The Telegraph, 2007). His speech was tremendously charged with significance also due to the fact that 18 days earlier Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in the United States. After his speech, the Conservative party removed him from his government position, but a considerable group of supporters did not like the move and protested vehemently in the streets.

Luckily enough, what Powell had predicted never turned into reality, but this gave rise to extreme right-wing parties aimed at contrasting the migratory phenomenon in the whole country as well as at local level through racial hostility practices. Far right-wing parties, known for their anti-immigrant policies and xenophobic tendencies, have experienced periods of success at the polls, sometimes following arrivals of non-white immigrants to England; the social demonstrations turning into electoral success but without any real stability for the long-term (Black, 2013). Some major far right-wing political parties flourished in England in the 1960s: the British National Party, the National Front, the English Defence League, the National Democrats and the British Freedom Party. Each group focuses more on a determines characteristic, although there is a common ideal baseline: improving interior policies (such as tighter immigration controls at the frontiers) and fostering nationalist ideologies. Over the years, these parties also grouped and worked together in order to attract a larger part of the British electorate, but ended up in small fractal groups placed at the fringes of British politics.

The immigration policies adopted between 1970s and 1990s were mainly characterised by more stringent controls compared to the previous liberalised 1960s. As a matter of fact, even Margaret Thatcher talked about the fear of being “swamped by alien cultures” during her political campaign in 1979 (Layton-Henry, 1994). All the policies implemented in those years were specifically targeted to haltering unlimited immigration while welcoming those who could prove beneficial to British economy.

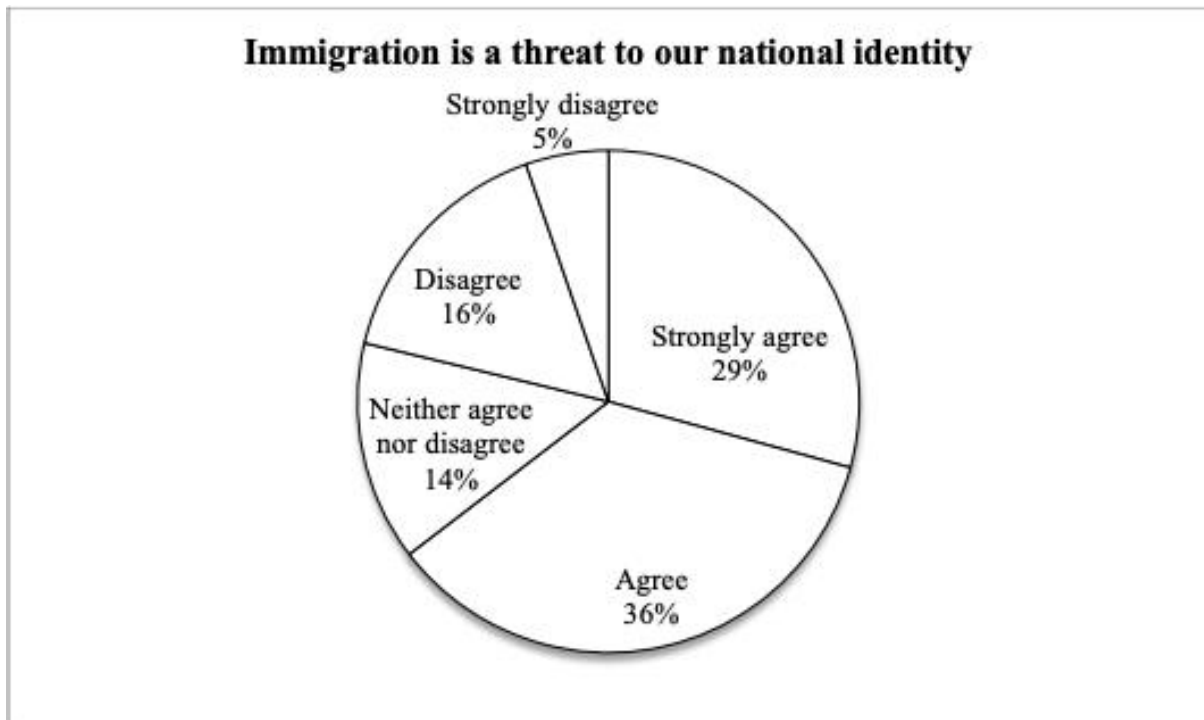
In the 1980s and 1990s other locally diffused protests against the police arose, involving mainly second-generation immigrants; the sons and daughters of those who came to Britain from former Commonwealth colonies. These cases

made clear the fact that the police failed to provide safety and to quell protests adequately.

At the beginning of the 21st century, when the non-white immigrant population accounted for 9 per cent, England was shaken by a revival of sectarian violence, particularly towards those cities such as Oldham and Bradford with greater Asian minority communities (namely Bangladeshi and Pakistani presence). From the surveys recorded by Arzheimer and Carter (2006), the white inhabitants of the same neighbourhood gave the sensation that these minorities had been unfairly advantaged by specific government support programmes; conversely, some representatives of the ethnic minority declared that white people were privileged by a political establishment that was behaving “directly or indirectly racist”. One theory may explain that such kind of violence escalated quickly because the police were unable to provide adequate protection to these minority groups against local racist herds. The violence perpetrated in 2001 represented a common thread between the continuing impoverishment of the involved areas and the inaction of police. Inevitably, the ethnic minority lost faith in the police more and more, who arrived late to the accident site. As a consequence, two different protests (one organised by the National Front made up of all racist gangs, the other was the Anti-Nazi League composed mainly of South Asian people) took the streets and fought each other in Bradford. After many hours employed by the riot police to appease the revolt, it was crystal clear that this event did not involve local inhabitants, which was particularly strange. While the problems of race relations were apparent in Bradford, those who sparked the violence were from other areas that possibly experienced the same general problems (The Guardian, 2001). Although it is not an overwhelming news, it must be pointed out that violence against immigrants is more likely to occur in those economically weak areas.

According to the Office for National Statistics (2015), UK net migration remained positive every year since 1994, to be increased sharply from 1997 onwards. Especially, the United Kingdom saw a peak of immigration from 2004, as a partial result of the joining of former Communist countries in the European Union. A decline due to the global financial crisis was recorded only in 2008, to be increased again up to 2014 for what concerns EU citizens. Net non-EU citizens migration followed almost the same path: it saw a steady increase from 1997 to 2004, halted in 2005 and decreased drastically between 2010 and 2013 and began to increase again in 2014.

Until 2008, immigration was not perceived as top-agenda issue; instead, following the global financial crisis, things have substantially changed. The British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS) conducted a research, asking the participants whether they agreed or disagreed on a clear statement: “Immigration is a threat to our national identity”. The following results are impressive.



Source: British Social Attitudes Survey, 2008.

Almost a third of the interviewed strongly agrees with this statement and more than a third simply agrees. In sum, nearly two thirds of public opinion were convinced that immigration represented a major threat to their nation.

Moreover, the United Kingdom signed the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees and the subsequent 1967 Protocol, meaning that as State it has the duty to provide shelter to all those people commonly referred to as asylum seekers who fall under the legal interpretation of “refugee”, as well as being prohibited from refouling any person to the place where they were fleeing from provided that they would face certain death or serious violations of human rights. Despite these theoretically fair assumptions, UK’s position towards refugees has always been controversial to say the least. Both Labour and Conservatives pledged for tougher controls on immigration, especially regarding asylum seekers. Denunciations from human rights organisations highlighted detention centres for children or minors for long periods as well as police raids at dawn.

Remaining in 2008, former Labour PM Gordon Brown introduced the so-called “managed immigration” approach, which included a five bullet-points system allowing entry quotas based on the immigrants’ level of income, education and competencies. What is certain to affirm is that while the Conservatives depict the United Kingdom as a country that is no longer able to impose its national sovereignty over its borders – thus threatening the population by stressing words such as security, illegal, defence, border controls and rule of law – Labour representatives try to defend the multi-ethnic population that has always characterised the country and that has contributed to making it great today.

3.2 UKIP in the British political background from 2005 to 2009

As previously mentioned, UKIP was once again not ready to embark into 2005 national elections. The party coffers were insufficient and candidates to new elections had to pay for their own campaign. In addition, British politics was shifting the hot topic from the European Union to other national issues, such as education, taxation, NHS, defence, trade. Yet, UKIP remained a single-issue Europhobic party and had little or nothing to say about it. 2005 was also the year in which public opinion started looking at immigration as a serious concern: instead of maximising the support to the party by exploiting the topic, UKIP decided not to expose as they were genuinely frightened to be compared with the extreme right-wing British National Party (BNP) – which had made immigration their winning topic – or with the sudden shift of the Conservatives towards tighter immigration controls. In a nutshell, Ukipers feared public opinion’s wrong passed idea of being crudely categorised as Eurosceptic Conservatives or like “BNP in blazers”. They tried, although not always successfully, to dissociate themselves from the BNP extremists through Farage’s claims to be a libertarian non-racist party (2010). Critics against what Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008) had defined the Conservative soft Euroscepticism served as an excuse for Farage to ask Conservative supporters to “lend” their votes. Inevitably, the results of the national elections of that year were unexceptional. The total share of vote increased only marginally. However, a consolation margin can be found: not only the Southernmost regions, but also the Midlands started giving support to their cause. Furthermore, UKIP benefitted significantly from the election of David Cameron as new Conservative leader in late 2005: by importing more socially liberal focuses on the party’s agenda (such as gay marriage or climate change) he was already disappointing senior and hard-liner Conservative supporters.

2005 soon came to an end and so did Roger Knapman's leadership. The only successor capable to stand the party together and, perhaps, broaden the horizons was Nigel Farage. After an internal party ballot, Farage received 45 per cent of preferences over three other candidates and became officially the new leader. The first big obstacle he had to face was how to transform his single-issue party into a fully-fledged one, able to satisfy and appeal also those Conservatives disenchanted and disillusioned by Cameron's political choices. All his good purposes list was soon thwarted by the harsh reality: his party was still locked into internal problems such as little administrative support and extensive membership losses. Another upcoming major nightmare was the fact that BNP was gaining political field. As demonstrated by the Plymouth University Elections Centre (2006-2008), between 2006 and 2008 local elections UKIP managed to win only 6 total seats compared to the BNP's 58! The fast-approaching 2009 European elections put loads of pressure on Farage's leadership, who was explicitly asked to strike a deal with BNP by other influential UKIP members. A similar idea started to circulate also among the BNP's National Executive Committee, ending up in a well-known meeting in November 2008. Farage met the BNP's messenger, Buster Mottram, who opened the talks by making an offer that had already received the approval from BNP's Chairman, Nick Griffin. The idea of the offer was quite simple: BNP would stand for election in the North while UKIP would have clear field in the South; each party would not interfere within the other's regions so as to make a win-win strategy work. Actually, such an offer seemed to not find favourable ground among the NEC members. Farage was farsighted enough to turn the table on his favour, rooting out Mottram and distancing his party from BNP for ever. With 2009 European elections coming up, a locked win for UKIP was still all but certain, nonetheless.

3.3 The 2009 European elections: Right in the middle of the global financial crisis

2008 and 2009 will be years that, from an economic point of view, will hardly be forgotten. In a moment in which globalisation reached its peak, with capitalism spreading all over the world – even in the former Communist countries such as China -, the advent of the Internet and social networks and richness levels never touched before, the perfectly well-oiled economic machine broke right at its heart. One of the big-four investment banks and well-known global financial services firm in the United States, the Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc., filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on 15 September 2008. All its loss was due to the so-called subprime mortgage crisis. After Lehman Brothers' declaration of

bankruptcy, the US market literally collapsed and the United States plunged into the deepest recession period like never before. The most terrific part was that several European banks (such as Deutsche Bank) made large investments in the American mortgage market, thus “imported” the crisis also in the Old Continent and the markets were seriously concerned that some European countries were totally unable to bail-out the banks involved in the troubles, which resulted in a massive sell-off of European bonds (deemed safe up to that point). The first economic consequences did not take long to be felt: falls in bank lending, investments, house prices (particularly Spain and Ireland) and the beginning of recession in Southern European countries. All this situation had also tangible effects on people: fall in consumption, less company profits, less corporate and income tax, which resulted in higher deficit and higher debt. What had started as a banking crisis soon transformed into a sovereign debt crisis. At that time, the European Union did not have the adequate measures to counter such an immense crisis: article 125 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states clearly that *“The Union shall not be liable for or assume the commitments of central governments, regional, local or other public authorities, other bodies governed by public law, or public undertakings of any Member State, without prejudice to mutual financial guarantees for the joint execution of a specific project. A Member State shall not be liable for or assume the commitments of central governments, regional, local or other public authorities, other bodies governed by public law, or public undertakings of another Member State, without prejudice to mutual financial guarantees for the joint execution of a specific project”*. The idea lying behind this article was the avoidance of incurring into a Member State’s risk of moral hazard. As Charles Wyplosz (2009) puts it, “if a government knows that, under some circumstances, part of its expenditures will be paid for by other European governments, then sooner or later it will take advantage of the arrangement”.

In addition to all this already dramatic situation, there were other two increasingly important issues: 1) the eurozone had a common economic policy, but 19 different fiscal policies; 2) an actual risk that high-debt countries might default. This is what the EU had to immediately face: the Greek crisis. On 4 October 2009, former Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou announced that Greece cheated on government data sent to Eurostat one month earlier, with deficit-GDP ratio at 15.6 percentage points, exceeding the 3% ceiling part of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. Its public finances were unsound and needed urgent action: Greece was like the Argentinian train, derailing towards certain default. The Greek situation shocked negatively markets, making other countries in a very

unstable position, up to the point that also Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Cyprus soon needed help, creating a bad contagion effect. Italy is sometimes added in the list of unsafe countries, as even if it did not ask for help from the EU, public finances were (and still are!) unsound, with one of the highest public debt-to-GDP ratio in the European Union: 132%, only Greece behaves worse. Italy was a special case because a technical government was installed and averted the obliged request of Troika intervention, as was the fate of its “neighbours”. Some investors even started speculating against the resistance of the euro and bet on a near end of the single currency experiment. The European Union had to take a decision as soon as possible: should Greece be saved through financial aid coming from other Member States or should the Treaties be respected and let Greece save on its own? The answer came 6 months after the crisis broke out: although European Northernmost Member States disagreed (Germany *in primis* at first), it was agreed that Greece had to be saved at all costs or the EU would not have survived in its entirety as we know it today. After three bail-out programmes in Greece, one in Portugal, a Memorandum of Understanding in Spain, Troika intervention in Ireland and Cyprus, the situation seems to have been stabilised, although critical austerity measures (generally, fiscal consolidation and hard cuts to public spending) have been implemented at the expenses of the population. At present, Greece is still far from pre-2009 situation and certainly was the country that suffered the most compared to the others.

Nonetheless, the crisis has brought about the birth of several populist parties in these territories: the most famous examples are Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain. Although the latter did not manage to govern the country, the former tried as a sort of “protest party” but it utterly failed; as a matter of fact, last 2019 elections in Greece saw the emergence of another party in power, New Democracy. Also Italy saw the set-up of a new populist party, the so-called Five Star Movement, and the increase in consensus for a historical hard right-wing party, the North League. Other European States that did not face the same economic hardship as the previously mentioned countries, however, shared the common ordeal: nationalist-populist parties started to spread up all over Europe, posing a serious threat to the balance of European core values, and a steady standstill in national economies started to widespread and last for a long term.

Research on the 2004 and 1999 European contests showed that voters’ attitudes to European integration affected the likelihood of switching support from one party to another compared with the previous national election, especially among more Eurosceptic voters (Hobolt et al., 2009). There has been

manifested evidence that parties with more extreme positions either for or against the EU do better at European compared with national contests (Hix & Marsh, 2007). With its core policy of withdrawal from the EU, UKIP would appear to be well-placed to benefit from these effects, especially given the divisions within the Conservative and Labour parties on the issue (Whitaker & Lynch, 2011).

Although this might be sufficient explanation to expect a surge in votes for UKIP, as a result of critical Eurosceptic period for the United Kingdom and all over the European continent, actually this was not the case. What did come in handy to UKIP for the upcoming elections was a singular event happened in the United Kingdom one month before the official date of elections. The Daily Telegraph (2009) printed a series of extracts from leaked computer discs, which contained the documentation of some Commons MPs' second-home claims. From the 8 of May 2009, investigations went further and involved all the three British main parties' MPs: it revealed that they were repeatedly committing abuse of the expenses system, such as "flipping" homes to maximise claims and avoided to pay capital gains tax by continuously changing the domiciliation of second homes. Although David Cameron and former PM Gordon Brown's public apologies were released immediately, adding that the audience were more than justified in being furious, the elections became a common stage for protest vote and UKIP could eventually ride the wave of public rage by offering a valid alternative to the "corrupted establishment". The fact that the European elections were taking place in the same day as the English local ones reflected a domestic-issue vote preference rather than a real European one.

At the eve of the 2009 European Parliament elections, the Guardian ICM poll released a survey conducted in the third week of May, revealing that 63% of those surveyed would vote "mostly" or "entirely" on domestic issues and only 22% would vote mainly on European ones (The Guardian, 2009). It was actually bad news for the two main parties: Conservatives were on 30% and Labour on 24%. There was more than room for a UKIP explosion. "A recent poll put 55% of the British public wanting our relationship with the EU to be a trading one only," said Gawain Towler, UKIP's candidate for the European parliament in the south-west of England. "That's 55% of the British public who agree with our core proposal. That's why we're polling well." Interviewed by Global Vision (2009) prior to the European elections, Matthew Elliott, Chief Executive of the Taxpayers' Alliance, said:

"The EU affects almost every aspect of our lives, from the workplace to prices in the supermarket. It lands a huge cost on ordinary families that they can ill afford to bear, especially during the recession. People have a right to know

how their money is being squandered in Brussels and we are going to expose what is really going on. The main political parties have let people down by avoiding or fudging the EU issue, but it has such a big impact on our day to day lives that it must be dealt with.”

UK seats won at European Parliament elections 1999-2009

	Actual				Adjusted to current 72 seats			
	1999	2004	2009	+/- 04-09	1999	2004	2009	+/- 04-09
Conservative	36	27	25	-2	32	24	25	+1
Labour	29	19	13	-6	24	18	13	-5
UKIP	3	12	13	+1	2	12	13	+1
Liberal Democrat	10	12	11	-1	8	10	11	+1
SNP	2	2	2	-	2	2	2	-
Green	2	2	2	-	0	2	2	-
BNP	0	0	2	+2	0	0	2	+2
Plaid Cymru	2	1	1	-	1	1	1	-
Sinn Féin	0	1	1	-	0	1	1	-
DUP	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	-
Ulster Unionists	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	-
SDLP	1	0	0	-	1	0	0	-
Total	87	78	72	-6	72	72	72	-

Source: House of Commons Research Paper 09/53(1)

The following above and below charts show a direct comparison between 1999 and 2009 European election change of seats trend in the United Kingdom only. It must be taken into account a remarkably low turnout all over the European Union (only 43%), even considering the presence of the newest Member States. With respect to the United Kingdom, the recorded turnout was 34.5%; it was clearly lower than 38.4% of 2004 elections but higher than 24.0% of 1999.

	Votes	% share	Change 2004-2009	Seats won	Change 2004-2009
Conservative	4,198,664	27.7%	+1.0%	25	+1
UKIP	2,498,226	16.5%	+0.3%	13	+1
Labour	2,381,760	15.7%	-6.9%	13	-5
Liberal Democrat	2,080,613	13.7%	-1.2%	11	+1
Green	1,303,745	8.6%	+2.4%	2	-
BNP	943,598	6.2%	+1.3%	2	+2
SNP	321,007	2.1%	+0.7%	2	-
Plaid Cymru	126,702	0.8%	-0.1%	1	-
Others	1,282,887	8.5%	+2.4%	0	-
Total	15,137,202	100%		69	

Note: changes in seats won are adjusted for the reduction in the UK's allocation from 78 to 72

Source: House of Commons Research Paper 09/53(2)

In sum, the Conservatives confirmed to remain the most voted party, with 27.7% and gaining one seat compared to 2004. Surprisingly, the second most-voted party was no longer Labour but UKIP: they scored 16.5% and bypassed another British secular party after the Liberal-Democrats, winning another seat in EU Parliament. Conversely, the scandal leaked by The Telegraph punished severely Labour, which resulted in a loss of nearly 7 percentage points compared to the 2004 elections and lost 5 seats in the European Parliament. Overall, it can be affirmed that the United Kingdom continued its shift to right/far-right political parties when it comes to Europe.

In order to understand the results of these European elections, it is necessary to examine the widespread ideas between voters before the elections. The YouGov European election surveys comes in handy for this purpose: UKIP has reached to urban and local areas whose population was largely composed of people aged over 65, fewer people with a degree and higher proportions of self-employed (Curtice et al., 2005). The party's best-performing results came from non-urban areas of southern England, especially coastal and rural areas (Curtice & Steed, 2000: 249). However, the acclaimed success did not find fertile ground in Scotland and, more generally, Northern English cities. By comparing this survey's data to the one conducted from a few months before the elections were held (to be exact, in January 2009), it is possible to note several key findings: 64% of the population demanded radical change in Britain's relationship with the EU, including end to political integration and to the supremacy of European institutions, such as the ECJ or the ECtHR. 48% of those favoured a looser relationship based on trade and voluntary co-operation, whilst a further 16% supported a sharp withdrawal from the EU. By contrast, only 22% of the population supported Britain remaining an EU member on current terms. Moreover, the first-voting intentions survey found out that Conservatives led the poll on 35%, followed by Labour on 29%, Lib Dems on 15% and UKIP on 7%.

Notably, 10% of Conservative voters at a General Election would have switched to UKIP at the European elections, compared to 2% of Labour voters and 1% of Liberal Democrat voters (op. cit., 2009).

At this point, a common question is raised: apart from taking into consideration the international situation and the domestic scandal that involved several British MPs, what was the “European trigger” that induced more and more voters into giving support to UKIP’s Eurosceptic cause? UKIP was clever enough to drive voters’ minds on a specific core matter: by exploiting the immigrant situation, the leadership gave examples of how the concept of national culture and identity, in strong connection with the national sovereignty one, were endangered due to the increasing presence of the European Union breaking into national affairs. As Robert Ford (2012) outlined, nationalist concerns about the loss of sovereignty to Europe have grown as evidence of the power of EU institutions, and popular rejection of that power, have accumulated. As proven by the example-event reported at the end of this chapter, British hard-line nationalist voters assisted to the decline and, possibly, “surrender” of national sovereignty objectives (represented by both Labour and Conservative governments’ delegations in Brussels) to major European institutions. Eurosceptic parties such as UKIP (but also the Five Star Movement in Italy, for instance) had also strongly emphasised how the European Union has an indefinite mass of bureaucrats headquartered in Brussels who proclaim their “diktat” and the Member States must obey with no consent to dissent. Populist parties could easily (and legitimately) mouthpiece the people’s anxiety, intolerance towards uncontrolled unskilled-labour immigration from “A8” countries, and sense of failure of Labour and Conservative governments to, at least, amend this dysfunctional relationship with the European Union or to call on a public referendum because the European Union “manipulated” national governments’ decisions.

From recent research on the 2009 European elections conducted by Ford, Goodwin and Cutts (2009), UKIP has been impressively brilliant into embedding an “uneasy coalition” within its core electorate. On the one hand there are the “Strategic Conservatives”, that is older disaffected Conservatives who gave their vote to UKIP in order to express their resentment over the EU-established *status quo*; on the other there are the “Polite Xenophobes”, that is to say economically-weak blue-collar voters with a hint of populist ideals on several issues (e.g. immigration, Islamism and against the established political élites) and considered UKIP an outlet for their views.

UKIP seemed to have learnt from past mistakes and launched a clear-cut message to all British voters, and this time it covered more than one issue, mixing up Euroscepticism with populism and anti-immigration: although it was not the only British political party talking about a EU withdrawal, UKIP’s 2009 European elections campaign was built around a simple message, “Say No to European Union” (op. cit., 2011). The other parties, in comparison, defined

Europe as a “capitalist club” or, as was the case of the Conservatives, advocated for a review of the Lisbon Treaty but highlighting a negative view of Europe was not at the centre of the campaign. Regarding immigration, UKIP proposed a five-year-freeze on immigration and brought the case during a political confrontation television programme in 2009. They clearly specified that this policy was embedded in their electoral programme, while reprimanding the older British political parties for deliberately turning a blind eye on the social problem the population was suffering, claiming that a resolution could be found but it involved getting rid of the European Union.

In conclusion on the 2009 European elections from the UKIP point of view, it can be affirmed that it was the rebound moment the party was longing for. It widened up its electoral basin, enlarging even more in the Midlands, sealing its already-affirmed success in the Southern regions, although big cities such as London and other parts of Great Britain such as Scotland were not minimally inclined to vote for the party. The social support came in prevalence from local authorities characterised by a high percentage of working class, low education levels and poor health. As Ford and Goodwin (op. cit., 77) describe it, it was a veritable shift towards an electorate that was more blue-collar and less well educated.

Once the enthusiasm for the 2009 European elections was coming to an end, it was high time for the party to get ready for the next general domestic elections and urged to come up with a strategic political plan capable to lure more public interest towards the party.

3.4 Farage's first quit of leadership, Islam and Lord Pearson of Rannoch

With immense shock from all the ranks of the party, Farage stepped back from leadership, justifying his choice to focus all his energies on the 2010 campaign to gain a seat in Westminster, the number-one objective UKIP had never achieved so far. His decision came out unexpectedly, right out of the blue. The biggest problem of all would have been: who could have replaced him? In any case, the party was changing perspective as it was finally more united than ever, and infightings were just a thing of the past. Indeed, such was the change that also the theme of immigration started to stand up in UKIP's arguments. If the party had recently exploited it as a response to mass and uncontrolled immigration from the European Union as a consequence of the great enlargement of 2004, in 2010 the subject matter had to be analysed from another, increasingly worrying side: the cultural-religious clash with Islam. The mass immigration coming from the Eastern countries especially, brought many Muslim worshippers with it, spreading across the country but keeping itself as an isolated reality that did not want to conform to Western customs and traditions. As usual, Nigel

Farage and his declarations on the topic did not go unobserved. As BBC (2010) reported in an interview, Farage expressed heavy positions on the Muslim practice of wearing the burqa or any total face-covering veil for women. “I can't go into a bank with a motorcycle helmet on. I can't wear a balaclava going round the District and Circle line”, he observed. That is why Farage and his party called for the so-called “burqa ban”, for which “[...] It's a symbol of something that is used to oppress women. It is a symbol of an increasingly divided Britain”, he concluded. In addition, the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS) in its 2010 report on religion, highlighted several thought-provoking points: only 45 per cent of those interviewed felt that diversity had brought benefits to the country's life, while only one in four thought positively about Islam. The most striking point was the fact that people with none or low education levels were twice as inclined to behave negatively towards Muslim believers with respect to well educated ones. If UKIP was afraid to touch certain themes in order not to be associated with the extreme right-wing parties in the past, this time things changed considerably. The Muslim issue was such a hot topic from which to gain a large share of the British electorate to remain silent.

At the same time, a new party leader had to be elected. In November 2009, the party chose Lord Malcolm Pearson of Rannoch as seventh UKIP leader. Even though Farage publicly supported the election of Pearson, his name made the most anti-establishment members furious. The logic behind is very straight and simple: if UKIP proposed itself as an anti-establishment party, could not have a former Conservative MP, a representative of the House of Lords designated by Margaret Thatcher as leader. In spite of his past, Lord Pearson lacked a complete know-how of party politics and how to deal with party life and alliances. This reflects a continuing issue of attracting more “novice ideologues” than those with professional political skills (op. cit., 2009), which in turn makes it difficult to modernise and optimise the organisational side of the party. Also his interviews made UKIP members vehement: on the one hand, the group preached against anti-establishment altogether, on the other Pearson boasted on his private mansion in Scotland and his custom of regular visitor at an exclusive gentlemen's club in the City. Another action committed by Pearson a few days after his election revolted all the party against him: leaked information alleged Pearson making a secret agreement with David Cameron on the 2010 national elections. He promised UKIP members not to run for next elections and in turn Cameron, once elected Prime Minister, would have allowed the organisation of a national referendum on the EU. Evidently, UKIP activists strongly opposed to the idea and were angry because no one consulted their opinions. To make matters worse, Lord Pearson was hit by the same 2009 scandal that hit major political parties on second-home claims. As reported in an investigation of The Telegraph (2010), the new leader of the UK Independence Party claimed more than £100,000 in publicly-funded expenses on the basis that his £3.7 million house in London was his second home while also owning in a 12.000-acre estate with servants in Scotland.

Although it took some months to detach his figure from his initial gaffes, Pearson proposed new interesting ideas on a wide range of themes. Firstly, he would have liked to reduce the number of MPs in the House of Commons – from 646 to 250 -, earning a maximum salary of £30.000 per year (Financial Times, 2010). Secondly, the way the Parliament had to be conducted was using the Swiss style, that is going only when issues to vote come up. In addition, talking about climate change, he was part of the British people who did not believe that climate change was caused by man’s unwise actions and also published a paper together with Lord Monckton, Thatcher’s former adviser, in which he demonstrated that science was wrong, and government should stop its cuts on carbon emissions. Regarding Islam, he also expressed all his wariness and looked at them as a potential threat like the USSR was last century. “Most of the terrorism on the planet today is a problem coming from within Islam and that is what I want to talk about,” he said (ibid). Moreover, he wanted to remove the benefits of the welfare state to those Muslim men who broke bigamy by bringing more than a wife in UK. He invited the Dutch politician known to be Islamophobic, Geert Wildert, to the House of Lords and watch his documentary, *Fitna*, against Muslim people in 2009, but was denied the access. Definitely, Pearson represented the most extreme beliefs against Muslim people, up to the point that he affirmed: “It does worry you sometimes when you drive through parts of the country and you don’t really see a white face very much” (The Times, 2009). It must be pointed out that his extremist views were not shared by all the party, because UKIP fought a lot to be detached from racist, extreme right-wing parties and his declarations did not simplify the hard work carried out so far.

In all of this, UKIP’s reject for the European Union continued to spread up to the highest levels, as Nigel Farage did not mince his words on multiple occasions. As proven by the Italian MEP, Mr. Brando Benifei⁸, “[Nigel] has always been an extremely polarising and controversial figure, not only for the political positions of his parties (UKIP and Brexit Party in recent times), but also for the tone employed in his borderline-tolerance speeches, especially in Strasbourg plenary”. For instance, during a plenary session on 24 February 2010 MEP Nigel Farage attacked vehemently the former President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, having “all the charisma of a damp rag and the appearance of a low-grade bank clerk and the question I want to ask is who are you? I’d never heard of you, nobody in Europe had ever heard of you” and continued insulting Van Rompuy for being a “quiet assassin” hostile to nation-states because his homeland, Belgium, is a “non-country” (The Guardian, 2010). His colourful outburst that left everyone speechless, including Van Rompuy himself and condemned by former EP President Martin Schulz, resulted in Farage paying a £2.700 fine for refusing to say sorry because “the only people I am going

⁸ Interview to the Italian MEP, Mr. Brando Benifei, by the candidate via e-mail. Excerpt translated from Italian written declarations.

to apologise to are bank clerks the world over. If I have offended them, I am very sorry indeed” (The Telegraph, 2010). His speeches have generally been known for his voice-from-outside opinions and for his harsh drama, but this is part of the public character he wanted to build for the media. On November 2010, Farage addressed another powerful yet drastic speech against Euro-bureaucrats and the EU project: “Your obsession with creating this Euro state means that you’re happy to destroy democracy. You appear to be happy for millions and millions of people to be unemployed and to be poor. Untold millions must suffer so that your Euro dream can continue”. For this reason, “we don’t want that flag. We don’t want the anthem. We don’t want this political class. We want the whole thing consigned to the dustbin of history” (YouTube, 2010).


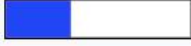






The more the election day was approaching, the more UKIP released targeted policies to limit immigration, as a key tool to catch a few votes more. Among the long list, UKIP proposed a limit of 50.000 immigrants per year, an increase in staff check at the national border by three times, the annulment of the Human Rights Act and even the withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights! It was finally the moment in which UKIP presented at national elections with a clear-cut strategy and a sound political programme, centred on some reforms such as flat tax, investment in the manufactory, more presence of street police, grammar schools, new job posts, proportional system restoration and, mostly, a return to British values. This time, the slogan used by UKIP was of powerful magnitude: in a white paper representing the faces of Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg, UKIP stated “sod the lot” (The Guardian, 2010), that is not to vote for the three traditional parties but instead vote for the party that advocated no public-sector cuts and withdrawal from the EU. The leadership of the party was more than welcome to open up to coalitions for the elections (for instance, with Conservatives who declared themselves openly Eurosceptic), but totally misread the intentions of UKIP members and activists, who instead advocated to remain independent. The campaign strategy was yet again miscalculated, as Ukipers found their leader represented alongside Conservative contenders in some constituencies. Needless to say, this lack of coherence in the campaign strategy produced a great deal of chaos and turmoil, undermining all huge efforts made earlier. This paved the way to an internal rebellion against the leadership. On top of that, a private recording clearly heard Lord Pearson apostrophise his UKIP companions as “Neanderthals”. On the election day, to save what can be saved, a Nigel Farage in a pinstriped suit hopped on a light aircraft at Hinton-in-the-Hedges, Northamptonshire, with a banner saying, “Vote for Your Country – Vote for UKIP”. It took a few minutes for the plane to begin its descent and realise something was not going right: the banner got caught between the rudder and the tail. The lightweight aircraft crashed to the ground shortly after, but miraculously Farage emerged unscathed. Immediately the rival parties exploited the situation to create advertisements against UKIP with blood and horrific scenes, in order to scare the voters.

2010 domestic election results for UKIP surely were not rewarding, but no one would dare defining it catastrophic. They gained 558 seats and enlarged their consensus in weaker regions, especially in the North side. In a nutshell, UKIP saw a slow but continuous progress, with victories in historically famous Conservative constituencies. However, the party did not manage to get into Westminster again, as it reached only 3.1 per cent on national scale. Even Farage failed his personal mission to beat the Speaker John Bercow, reaching 17 percentage points but placing 30 percentage points behind him. One positive aspect for the party was the news coming in August 2010: realising that the majority of party members were against him and badly prepared for party politics, Lord Pearson resigned as UKIP leader. It is actually sad to recall it, but small parties did not, do not and will not have an easy life in the British first-past-the-post system.

3.5 The British first-past-the-post system

When it is time for elections, Britain adheres to a very special electoral system, practised only in one third of world countries (including the United States, Canada, India and former colonies and protectorates). Its official name is first-past-the-post system (FPTP), but in some parts of the world (especially in the US) it is often commonly referred to as the *winner takes it all* practice. It is widely used for both single and multi-member electoral divisions. The logic behind its custom and the reason why it was called in this way is more than intuitable: the country with a first-past-the-post system is firstly divided into the so-called “constituencies” (as many as the seats in the parliament; in the specific case of the United Kingdom, the constituencies are 650). Each voter must choose one candidate for his or her local constituency by ticking a mark among a wide range of names and different parties in a ballot sheet; the candidate who receives the highest number of votes in a given constituency is finally awarded with a seat. The candidates who arrive from second position downwards in local constituencies do not receive any kind of representation, no matter how many votes they got.

If this explanation was not exhaustive enough, here is an illustration model offered by the Electoral Department in Singapore by taking into account the votes of the presidential election results from the 27 August 2011, using FPTP system.

Candidate	Symbol	Results		
		Votes	% of valid votes	
Tony Tan		745,693	35.20	
Tan Cheng Bock		738,311	34.85	
Tan Jee Say		530,441	25.04	
Tan Kin Lian (Loses deposit)		104,095	4.91	
Valid votes		2,118,540	98.24% of total votes cast	
Rejected votes		37,849	1.76% of total votes cast	
Total votes cast		2,156,389	Voter turnout: 94.8% of electorate	
Absent		118,384		
Electorate		2,274,773		

Source: Election Department Singapore via Wikipedia

From the reconstructed model above, it can be seen that candidate Tony Tan was the one who obtained the majority of votes compared to the other contenders. He won the presidency although the second most-voted candidate, Tan Cheng Bock, had a distance of only 0.35 percentage points and more than half the Singaporean did not vote explicitly for him.

The reasons why one country should prefer this electoral system is very simple: the ballot sheets then become effortless to count, and counters can declare the result of the local constituency far more easily than in the proportional system. In the case of the United Kingdom, as *The Independent* (2018) notes, it tends to produce a clear overall winner as Westminster normally runs under a bi-partite system. There is only one MP represented per constituency, thus a stronger bond between constituents and MP will be forged. On the other hand, some negative aspects of such practice can be pinpointed as well: not all votes are used, especially those earned by the non-winners - that are disregarded - and the ones for the first candidate that are in surplus once the constituency victory has been guaranteed. As it can be remarked, this system is thought to award larger political parties to the detriment of smaller groups, such as UKIP or the Greens, who have to double their efforts in order to build large basins of local preferences in order to get a seat; in most cases this turns out to be more difficult than expected. As it normally happens, rarely does the number of MPs a party has in parliament match the popularity within voters.

UK FPTP allows to create stable majorities within Westminster; thus, the winning party may govern on its own. Coalition governments do not tend to happen very frequently, even if recent British political history showed Labour party governing at 35% in 2005 and Conservative government at 37% in 2015. With time, this system has created two kinds of areas: the so-called “safe seats” (with very unlikely chances of changing hands) and “swing seats” (that, instead, change hands). When general elections occur, candidate MPs aim at attracting as many swing seats as possible by prioritising given constituencies with targeted policies, disregarding the safe ones’ necessities.

As Ford and Goodwin (op. cit., 2014: 221) recall, this system poses a serious problem of geography (as seen earlier) and psychology. It is of psychological kind because constituents have a general understanding of the system, for they are heavily influenced on the choices to make at ballot boxes, since they are called on using tactics. Perhaps they rather not to vote their preferred party option just because they are not sure that given party will win at local level. To combat such phenomenon, many resort to second-guess voting if the first alternative might result in putting their least preferred party in power. Unfortunately, by following this logic it is normal that smaller parties (such as UKIP) are biased for being deemed unlikely to win, a wasted vote. This is partly true because, as reported by Lord Ashcroft (2012), half of the potential UKIP voters interviewed stated “even if a few UKIP MPs were elected, they would not be able to achieve anything”, and “they only seem to be interested in Europe, and don’t have policies in other important areas”. Another psychological motivation relies on less and less enthusiastic activist support, as they see their party beaten over and over again, and donors, who do not waste time investing private money in something which does not lead to certain victory.

As previously anticipated in Chapter 2, UKIP had an example of small-group victory to refer to looking back in history: the Social Democratic Party (SDP). Nevertheless, some differences can be easily noted: SDP leaders were political experts coming from former Labour party who merged with another long-lasting political party institution, the Liberals; for this reason, credibility was an important tool for the party. By contrast, UKIP founders were not politicians and especially its first members and leaders had no absolute idea of how to run a party in orderly manners; in addition, they have always been belittled and mocked by other major political forces. SDP could boast a Westminster representation since its early stages, since two of its members were already House of Commons

MPs when the party saw the light. Conversely, UKIP soon had sound representation in the European Parliament (since 1999) but fought up to 2015 to win a seat in Westminster because the party leadership had always underestimated creating local constituency consensus for the party. On the contrary, SDP had always focused its energies on local parliamentary elections and counted on almost 50.000 activists to do the “hard work”. Nonetheless, one has to recognise that UKIP’s revolution of ordinary British political life has been far more complicated than SDP’s one, having to fight against all odds of the case, and probably this is the reason why UKIP has managed to survive over the repeated internal crises in the years and achieved its final objective little by little, showing an extraordinary power to give more boost and confidence to other minority parties, whereas SDP crumbled at last and was obliged to merge into the Liberal Democrats.

In the United Kingdom there exists a non-governmental political pressure group called “The Electoral Reform Society”, established to promote the abolition of the first-past-the-post system for any type of election, to be substituted in favour of the proportional one (known for the single transferable vote). To date, it is the world’s oldest political organisation operating in this field, founded in 1884 under the name of Proportional Representation Society by John Lubbock, a famous Victorian historian and archaeologist. It wants to demonstrate that the first-past-the-post system is actually bad for voters, government and democracy. Among its historical successes, the Society has made single transferable vote a reality in Irish local and national elections as well as in Northern Ireland Assembly and local council elections. From 1973 onwards, the Society and its staff members have always been called on providing advice and guidelines for public awareness campaigns made by the government before elections take place. Moreover, the Society was granted the non-governmental organisation with consultative status by the UN ECOSOC in 1983. It also supported the Yes campaign during the 2011 Referendum on the Alternative Vote, consisting in a change of voters’ selection of candidates: they will no longer tick the name of their preferred candidate but put numbers (in which 1 is the favourite candidate), in order to give fairer vote distribution among competitors. Unfortunately, this reform was repealed by an astounding victory of NO (67.9% of voters) on a national turnout of 42%.

UKIP were very lucky to get into the European Parliament quite soon in 1999, as a result of changing the electoral system by the New Labour government. Since the government were extremely frightened to not win the necessary support

in the 1999 European elections, passed a law for which European Parliament elections would be conducted through the proportional system, in which a “closed list” of candidates from all British regions must be voted by electors and the final vote is then distributed in proportion to the total regional vote each party has achieved. The British electorate was offered an appealing opportunity, for they backed smaller groups far more easily, letting them win with lower vote percentages that, under a FPTP system, would be basically impossible to gain a seat. This is the widely-spread electoral system in the European continent and in most parts of the world.

From this open discussion, some UKIP’s “barriers to entry” can be emphasised and resumed:

- 1) UKIP’s voters were divided into those who support the party with their eyes closed when it is European elections time and those who are sceptical in the party’s victory and suffer from the “wasted vote” syndrome when it is national elections moment.
- 2) UKIP has always showed itself as a weak party with unresolved internal problems that culminated with internal warfare. Evidence of this are the continuous changes at leadership front.
- 3) UKIP’s message was uncertain and meagre: before 2010, UKIP only focused on its obsession for EU withdrawal, which could interest a wide range of voters during the European elections every five years, but was totally detached and unsympathetic for British national concerns, thus pushed consensus away.
- 4) UKIP did not build a “stronghold” for national support as the other long-tradition parties did, but boasted small victories scattered here and there. They could not count on a certain electoral basin, which makes enormous difference when it is time to face first-past-the-post system.

But things were going to change drastically after 2010.

3.6 UKIP on its way to Westminster: the radical changes

The first change in UKIP direction started from within: after Lord Pearson of Rannoch’s resignation, Nigel Farage returned at the helm of the party with 60% of votes on 5 November 2010. The way the party would have approached to national elections, under the second leadership by Farage, would have changed significantly. Farage’s plan was centred on a double objective: first, the party would have won by-elections and then focused on local elections. Actually, this strategy was nothing new as it had been employed for years by other parties.

The earliest opportunity to put into practice this new trend came in January 2011, with the by-election in Oldham East and Saddleworth. Honestly, this area was particularly challenging for UKIP, as it was constituted by a multi-ethnic urban and Northern working-class electorate. In addition, the Labour-Liberal Democrat presence was deeply rooted in the territory thanks to the large amounts of investments in the area, as well as being the emblem of the BNP's core electoral basin. On top of that, the weather was not helpful in North-Western England in January: militants had to work under the snow and with freezing temperatures. A native candidate, Paul Nuttall, was chosen to open a representative office in the local area. He was elected deputy leader of UKIP in November 2010 and spokesperson for education, life skills and training in July 2014. He campaigned passionately alongside Farage to steal votes from BNP supporters, and even if the final result was a marginal improvement of 1.9 per cent, Farage was convinced that this was the right path to follow. After two months, another by-election came out of the blue, this time in a more suitable setting for UKIP's average voters such as Barnsley. As usual, UKIP got a local candidate to enter the pitch, Jane Collins. She had already gained enough consensus during the 2010 general election, and the success was confirmed with 12.2 per cent of votes. The strategy was working. However, the strength and limit of the by-election fights were represented by the social support band in which UKIP could gain, and was terribly weak when those social preconditions lacked in a given territory. However, this did not turn off UKIP's enthusiasm and carried on with Farage's strategy. The first real by-election satisfaction arrived from Corby, where UKIP had almost 15 per cent and ranked third. The occasion to get at the centre of (media) attention arrived from Rotherham in 2012: a couple, who have been approved foster parents for seven years, were eight weeks into the placement when they were approached by social workers about their membership of the UKIP. For this reason, the couple saw their foster children from Eastern Europe removed from their care because they support a party "with racist policies" according to social workers (BBC, 2012). Nigel Farage strongly condemned the decision coming from Rotherham Borough Council as an "appalling prejudice" towards the party, but politically he expected nothing different from the "bigotry of the Labour party and Labour controlled councils". The occasion proved exceptional, as UKIP by-election candidate Jane Collins peaked almost 22 per cent and finishing second-ranked. It can be affirmed that UKIP was a serious by-elections contender, stealing loads of votes to Labour and Conservatives and doubling their vote shares, although a proper seat was actually missing, plus they still were under examination to be deemed safe to enter

Westminster. The encouraging results showed that UKIP was no longer a small party for which the media and other parties could mock for; when its resources are well-employed, UKIP is no longer a small insurgent party, it is a real potential threat to political order because it had acquired local support by developing lethal campaign skills!

Following a recent survey in YouGov (2014), the changes in UKIP support in comparison with the 2010 local elections can be accurately observed: at that time, UKIP benefitted from the support of around 37.000 electors, of which 4.000 declared openly they would vote for them at general elections. It is not completely true to say that UKIP support came mainly from the so-called “Tory switchers”. As a confirmation of Ford, Goodwin and Cutts’ 2009 theory, UKIP seemed to appeal more to older, working class former Tories, especially those who left school at 15 or 16 and earn less than £20,000 a year. However, if people were asked to vote for UKIP at general elections, as demonstrated with the FPTP system results, their confidence in the party was called into question. But in case of European elections, as shown by 2004 and 2009 results, their share of votes doubled significantly. UKIP, in sum, attracted all those people falling into the category of “fairly” or “very” right-wing party support.

UKIP support

	% supporting UKIP
Groups most likely to vote UKIP	
Those who say they "very" or "fairly" right-wing	24
Working class (C2DE) Conservatives in 2010	22
Men over 60	21
Daily Express readers	21
Daily Mail readers	20
Highest educational level GCSE/GCE or lower	18
Semi- / unskilled men (DE social class)	18
Sun readers	17
Daily Telegraph readers	17
Skilled manual men (C2 social class)	16
Women over 60	16
Men aged 50-59	16
Household income less than £20,000 a year	16

Groups least likely to vote UKIP

Household income more than £30,000 a year	7
University graduates	7
Daily Mirror readers	7
Voters under 40	7
Those who say they are "slightly left-of-centre"	6
Times readers	6
Voters who voted Labour in 2010	5
Those who say they are "very" or "fairly" left-wing	5
Independent readers	4
Black and Asian voters	2
Guardian readers	1

The party shift towards a further pragmatism has been quite evident especially in this chapter. An amendment also in the description of the EU in itself has been observed. However, the underlying idea of withdrawal from the EU has never been abandoned. It is rightful to pinpoint that from a mere Euroscepticism the party broadened into a more complex, all-round and adaptable political figure. The progression from a simple and straightforward disengagement ideal (under Sked's leadership) shifted to down-to-earth engagement (with Holmes and Titford's leaderships), to a wider amplification of covered areas and development of new policy paths (thanks to Knapman's leadership), to changing the ideal of independence in a changed contextualisation of the EU (with Farage and Lord Pearson's leaderships). Interviewed on the issue⁹, current 2019 UKIP Head Office Mr. David Challice has stated that UKIP's approach to the EU has always been the same, ever since 1993 and has never changed. In his own words, "UKIP has always wanted to pull out of the EU, be good friends with it, trading with it, but not be subject to it.", concluding that "we seek an amicable divorce from Brussels".

It is proper to add that also the historical sequence of events did literally boost the party's fortunes. The years going from 2011 to 2013 saw many phenomena happening inside and outside the United Kingdom that marked significantly the voters' next choices. First of all, as previously stated, the eurozone crisis exploded and did not want to stop; although the European institutions created some macro-economic surveillance mechanisms for Member States and established the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), the Six Pack, the Two Pack and even the ECB president Mario Draghi intervened to relaunch stagnating European economies through the Security Markets (SMP), Outright Monetary Transactions (OMT) and the Quantitative Easing (QE) programmes, the third bail-out programme for Greece, it was a long way before out of the zero-GDP growth tunnel, and this was true mainly for Southern European States. Luckily enough, the United Kingdom remained an "outside observer" thanks to its strong currency, the pound sterling, but did not pass the economic downturn years in serendipity. Even the United Kingdom was hit by the global financial crisis in 2008, with a stalled economy that plunged into deep recession in 2009. When Labour government left Downing Street in 2010, state coffers were in severe distress: the country's annual budget deficit passed from £40 billion in 2008 to £145 billion, accounting for more than 10% of British GDP (Office for Budget Responsibility, 2010). According to the latest data, in 2010 the new government

⁹ Interview to 2019 UKIP's Head Office, Mr. David Challice, conducted by the candidate via e-mail.

inaugurated a five-year programme of cuts in public expenditure in order to decrease drastically the budget deficit. From 2012/13 the economy began to recover, growing by 1.7 per cent in 2013 and an estimated 2.6 per cent in 2014 (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2019). However, a high deficit still endured, and government was obliged to put in place a new set of cuts on state expenditure for 2015. At national political level, constant resentment towards the European Union increased dramatically since the Abu Qatada case, a former Jordan Muslim preacher who fled to UK, was jailed in October 2002 for suspected terrorist acts under the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act of 2001. He was released on bail and put under control order in March 2005, but after two months UK Secretary of State decided to deport him to Jordan. He resorted to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), that took almost ten years to decide that Mr. Abu Qatada could not be deported to Jordan as he might have faced serious violations of human rights. This decision made Brits furious. Eventually, UK signed a bilateral agreement with the Kingdom of Jordan in which the deported man would not suffer from evidence obtained by torture, for Qatada was escorted back to Jordan in 2014. In early 2013, legislation to allow same-sex marriage (one of former Prime Minister David Cameron's top priorities) was passed in England, Scotland and Wales, but this provoked many Conservative MPs to revolt against their leader. In August 2013, the British government was divided into taking a final decision on attacking Syria for its alleged and illegal use of chemical weapons on the population. Nigel Farage appeared on multiple television broadcasts and shows in order to make an appeal to the government: he publicly demanded to stop waging war against Syria in the name of the British population's disapproval of intervention and attacked the government for, as usual, ignoring public opinion. In all of this, 2014 saw a recovery in mass immigration from Romania and Bulgaria, which was uncontrolled and unstoppable under EU rules. The ground to act could not be more favourable to UKIP. With its last moves, UKIP showed that the long-lasting all-directions local and by-election campaign has borne its fruits, transforming the party from a small, demeaned single-issue party whose media gave little importance to a party whose leader could talk in the name of the population (especially the most vulnerable categories) about international crises and affairs. UKIP was now ready for the big boom.

4. CALL TO ARMS: TOWARDS 23/06/2016 AND BREXIT

On the 23 April 2014, in a warm and relaxed evening, UKIP hosted its annual spring conference at the famous concert venue, The Sage in Gateshead, North-East England. Even though the management of the Sage came under fire on social media for allowing the host of UKIP's meeting (Chronicle, 2014), the public gathering proceeded in absolute tranquillity. It was actually strange that a small, old Labour-supporter town located quite far away from the centre of British politics was chosen for such an extraordinary event. It was an all-standing room, the "early bird" free tickets finished in a blink of an eye, the whole venue was overcrowded. Everybody was waiting for Nigel Farage's speech. Life seems so strange, sometimes: Nigel Farage is the same man who was highly scorned and despised by national media to the point he was the "Patron Saint of Lost Causes" (The Guardian, 2017) or a bad political joke, frequently blamed as racist and potential demagogue, at the leadership of a party deemed a bunch of "fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists" by David Cameron in 2006, whose political mission seemed laughable and unrealistic like a flash in the pan, especially for the electoral system barrier. And here he came: a 50-year-old activist has become leader of the party after twenty years of political battles, much of these spent in anonymity. The times were changing and so did UKIP: more people were confident on listening to them, party's membership was increasing, more journalists were struggling to get an interview. From a small single-issue party, UKIP changed its image into a full-fledged British political party able to compete against and on par with other credible secular parties. They did have something to say, they did want to give voice to the "unheard". After the 2010 general election UKIP's vote intention share in opinion polls grew substantially, with the party level-pegging with the Liberal Democrats in 2012 before surging ahead in 2013. The pattern continued with 15% of the respondents in the April 2014 Continuous Monitoring Survey (CMS) indicating that they would vote UKIP in a general election and only 8% opting for the Liberal Democrats (Clarke et al., 2016). Party members were convinced to be an affirmed third political force in British political panorama. UKIP were able enough to attract disillusioned old Eurosceptic MP Conservatives and, at the same time, while building its strong electoral source in Southern regions also appealing to old blue-collar working-class Labour voters from industrial towns and regions in Northern England.

The way Farage spoke to the audience was a tested experiment: he preferred using an off-book practice talking about UKIP's themes (EU

withdrawal, uncontrolled immigration and taking back control of national sovereignty) in mixture with jokes and strong statements. His discourses looked more of an “entertainment politics” form, he could be compared to a comedian. Generally, he started with a comparison between his unwillingness to study for he soon started working and the majority of politicians who attended the same schools, with the same courses, and then applied for a research position in the parties that magically made them MPs a few years later. He survived a testicular cancer and a lightweight plane crash. He spoke about his all-round role inside the party: from interviews to papers and charts to read, the European reunions in Strasbourg and the events/manifestations for his party.

When he was announced by the speaker, he made his triumphant entry and was acclaimed by a jubilant crowd of over 1.000 participants. He started his speech with a sentence: “It is no coincidence that we are here today”. And then, he dropped the bomb: “This Labour party, they have turned their backs on you. You are no longer represented by them” (The Telegraph, 2014). The crowd was asked to change political views dramatically, passing on the other side with respect to what they would usually vote. Farage simply presented its party not as a bunch of fascist rioters but as the main alternative vote to Labour in the North. He did not also waste the occasion to criticise the latest Conservative policies. The newly elected Conservative PM, David Cameron, wanted to be a moderniser and drove British politics towards the changing world’s exigencies: as Goodwin and Milazzo (op. cit., 2015: 21) recall, rather than focus on traditional right-wing themes such as immigration and Europe, which had failed his predecessors and damaged his party, he talked instead about tackling climate change, alleviating poverty, delivering overseas aid, legalising same-sex marriage, celebrating Britain’s rising ethnic diversity, and bringing more women and ethnic minorities into politics. However, his “New-Labour fashion” political choices raised more than one concern among Conservatives. Tim Montgomerie, a right-wing commentator, made interesting notes on Cameron: “Some Tory strategists only seem interested in the centre ground and they are leaving David Cameron’s right flank dangerously exposed” (The Independent, 2006). In addition, the hung parliament composed of Conservatives and LibDem alliance was something deemed unnatural. Also, British politics had to take into account the holding of an independence referendum in Scotland in the second half of 2014.

Nigel was feeling optimistic at that time: the end of the absolute dominance of the secular political parties were doing his party a huge favour. He concluded

demanding as much support as the party had never received before for the upcoming European elections in 2014. Before the European elections took place, the party celebrated its 20th anniversary gathering at Central Hall, Westminster. Even on that occasion Farage had something to remark with his fellow colleagues. The party went through hell and back, he recalled, it was a hard way to climb British politics. They faced insults, jokes, fiasco and frustration feelings many times. But now was the time to seize the great opportunity. Indeed, British politics became a fertile ground for experimenting with a revolt against the bi-polar system. He promised that, if it was the case to cause the intrepidly announced “earthquake in British politics” (Daily Mail, 2013), he would start by there.

4.1 The 2014 European elections: a triumph for Eurosceptic parties

Three weeks had passed from Farage’s net victory over Liberal Democrats’ leader and Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, at LBC Radio live debate on whether or not Britain should have left the European Union. According to the month-before-election surveys, UKIP was ranked second, a few points behind Labour. But the party was accustomed to the fact that a landslide of votes would have come up in the latest weeks before the official date of elections, for which the party worked in advance. This time, the target was postal voters. Rallings and Thrasher (2014) found out that a record of 7.23 million postal votes were issued, accounting for 15.6% of total voting power. The party started to send leaflets, pamphlets and small manifesto copies from home to home weeks before the other parties in order to secure this considerable portion of the electorate. In addition, as one of Nigel Farage’s advisers commented, “We wanted to launch with a big bang and then dominate the news every day” in order to catch as much attention as possible. The plan was launched in Sheffield, where large, mighty and defiant advertising boards performed UKIP’s fellow supporters framed in a clear-cut message: Take Back Control – the party’s long-standing phrase. Analysing UKIP’s Manifesto (2014) dedicated to the European elections, the predominant figure of a smiling Nigel Farage reassuring voters as the true defender of UK from immigration, who brings jobs and housing, prepared the reader to the same dramatic tones used in the previous elections’ manifestos. The party evolved the image of the European Union, passing from the 2005 giant octopus to simply “a bureaucratic organisation writing our laws and costing us all £55 million per day in membership fees”. The core message contained in the manifesto represented nothing but Farage’s instincts. He was sure that party success was amplified when talking directly to people, subsequently manifesto messages were straight and simple. Farage counted mainly on 4 key figures, who have always proved him

loyal: Paul Sykes as main private donor (as it happened during Kilroy-Silk period), Paul Nuttall as expert of Labour areas near Liverpool, Patrick O'Flynn as director of communication (seen his past journalist experience for the Daily Express) and Steve Crowther as UKIP's amiable Chairman. Farage was chosen to represent the party in each interview, as well as starting a long tour all over the country. The rhythm was highly stressing, with no more than 2-3 hours sleep per night and frequent jumps of mealtime, as reported by Farage himself in more than one magazine interview. Nevertheless, it must be added that it was a campaign that paid off. From a survey conducted by YouGov in May 2014, UKIP was found to be weak in matters such as economy, health and education, but it also best performed on immigration and Europe concerns according to interviewed. Moreover, when asked what party electors would certainly cast a vote were European elections held on the following day, 27% stated UKIP and Labour, the Conservatives would reach 23% (losing 5 points compared to 2009 results) and 10% for Liberal Democrats (YouGov, 2014).

In April 2014, more than one survey placed UKIP in pole position, and the party could not be happier. However, the number of famous or at least exposed UKIP supporters who committed negative activities (such as offensive or xenophobic comments) mounted exponentially. The party was unable to undergo a tighter control and was forced to let all candidates sign a declaration paper in which they affirmed not to have damaged the party's image through violence or related actions and there was no "dirty laundry" to be revealed. Media coverage and rival parties' heavy assaults did not take long to arrive. A myriad of negative evidence was provided through Facebook and Twitter's post archives of UKIP members and also unlikely, if not mythic, but eye-catching allegiances on the party's habits and headquarter work conduct, as well as proof of UKIP MEPs' opulent expenditures during plenary meetings in Strasbourg and Brussels at taxpayer's money expenses. Admittedly, Farage constated the vast leakage of dirty news meant that the tight control procedure resulted in an utter failure. In any case, all this messy situation did not scratch the party's support. Growing concern in the party escalated as surveys revealed that the party was adverted as highly racist, for Farage had to intervene once again to quell the media. To worsen the situation, a former disenchanted UKIP activist, Mike Nattrass, founded a party, "An Independence from Europe", and competed against UKIP with the slogan "UK Independence Now" to confuse deliberately voters. In polls, UKIP was falling short of support and placed third after Labour; Farage decided that either things would have turned out well or he would have resigned shortly after the election results.



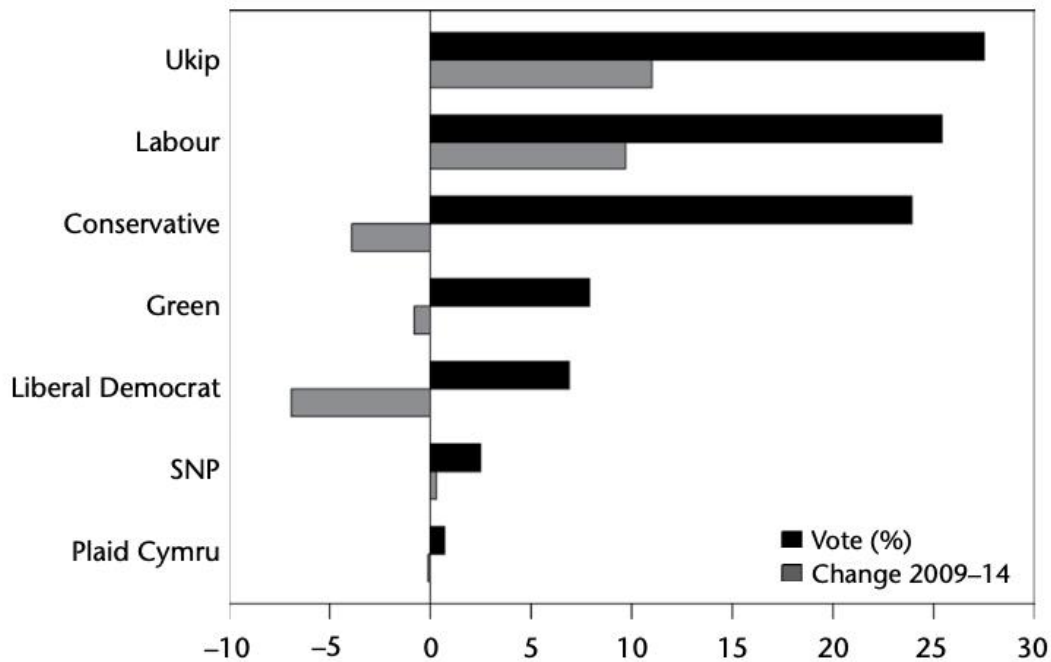
Samples of UKIP's campaign for 2014 European elections.



When polling stations were closed all over the European Union on the 25th of May 2014, the results were particularly alarming: out of 28 Member States, 23 had European Parliament seats won by Eurosceptic parties. This highlighted the surge in negative views of the European project was a common trend among all

EU Member States, not only a British exclusive with its UKIP. However, if compared with the 2009 edition, it can be said that turnout remained relatively low (only 43% of the then 400 million European inhabitants). 212 in 751 seats of the European Parliament were assigned to a Eurosceptic party. That equals a seat share of more than 28 per cent, which is a significant increase to the previous European Parliament, where Eurosceptics made up less than 20 per cent of MEPs (Tiemann et al. 2011: 98). Also in this case, a substantial difference between hard and soft, left and right-wing Euroscepticism has been remarked in the results: while left-wing Eurosceptic parties performed at best in Southern European countries (e.g. Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain), the right-wing part conquered the majority of seats. This widespread Eurosceptical success found reasonable explanation in the second-order elections theory made by Reif and Schmitt (1980). It states that European elections do not reflect European issues but national agendas. Just like mid-term elections in the United States (US), by-elections in the United Kingdom (UK) or regional elections in federal countries, they are considered less relevant than the main national elections in which voters decide on who will form the next government (Treib, 2014). Falling into second-order category by nature, European elections are generally supposed to have low turnout rates. EP elections were held using the first-past-the-post system up to 1999, then it was Labour that changed the electoral system, afraid that the party would not have made it that year. Citizens may use second-order elections instrumentally to register dissatisfaction with the performance of the incumbent national government or main party of choice (Heath et al. 1999; Oppenhuis et al., 1996). Instead, with the introduction of the party list system in 1999, that potential for representation could be taken much further, not least given the unwillingness of Labour and the Conservatives to make much of an issue of European integration at all in subsequent elections (e.g. Rallings & Thrasher, 2005). As a matter of fact, UKIP has been able to confirm its structural role in the UK's party-political representation to the European Parliament following its strong showing in 2009 (op. cit., 2010).

Back to UKIP, the results were of high magnitude: the party confirmed itself as the most voted, with support from more than 4 million Brits, winning 24 seats in the European Parliament and polling well ahead of Conservatives and Labour and doubling the results of the last European elections held in 2009.



Vote percentage and change in support for parties at the 2014 European elections. Source: Goodwin and Milazzo (2015).

It must be noted that UKIP deserved the victory for the large-scale, far-reaching campaign the party had organised. Inevitably, media and secular parties tried to minimise UKIP’s impact, stating that European elections were not seen as of high salience as the domestic ones, but the fact that UKIP reported a landslide victory having to fight against all odds of the case was something truly outstanding and highly impacting. And the “cool part” was not over yet: thanks to the high appeal of the party after these results, on the same day UKIP won 160 seats in local elections. The party was riding an extremely positive wave of events. A post-election study by Lord Ashcroft (2014) could not miss: when asked interviewed the reasons of their vote’s choice, 79 per cent of UKIP voters said the EU theme was the core topic that convinced them, another 48 per cent instead replied that the party’s whole domestic programme made the difference. Another survey asked respondents to quote the single most important reason underlying their vote choice. A majority of UKIP voters chose EU-related issues, with 39 per cent saying that they were dissatisfied with the UK’s relationship with the EU and UKIP proposed against this, whereas another 22 per cent argued that they were unhappy with the current level of domestic immigration and thought

that UKIP would diminish this (YouGov, 2014). It must also be highlighted that a significant portion of electorate was extremely disappointed with the long-lasting established party politics, to the extent that nearly half the population refused to cast a vote for them. John Curtice (2014), when asked if UKIP could finally enter British standard politics, affirmed that undoubtedly UKIP imposed vigorously its status as serious party contender to stability in British long-lasting polarised system since World War II. To make a point, Ed Miliband's Labour party came out devastated and had no strategy to rise up in surveys, Nick Clegg's Liberal Democrats nearly disappeared by losing another 7 percentage points compared to last European election and finishing even behind the Greens; the situation was such stressful to the point that Nick Clegg was asked to resign. In the meantime, Conservatives licked their wounds but the situation was not as tragic as Cameron's advisers had predicted, having lost only 4 percentage points in comparison with the last elections. Despite the favourable political situation, Farage's party had not had the chance to have a say in Westminster yet. UKIP may have won European elections, but how would a fragile and strategically divided party face (and survive) the first-past-the-post system and, subsequently, cope with the lion's cage the House of Commons is? 2015 general elections were to become the most uncertain political battle in recent British history.

4.2 Lessons from the Past: the 2015 domestic elections

Before plunging straight ahead to the 2015 political environment, it is observable that support for UKIP's 2014 European elections came mainly from skilled blue-collar voters (such as electricians) and those who run routine jobs (e.g. drivers). It was also more feasible that voters carrying semi-routine jobs (e.g. store clerks) cast a vote for UKIP than for Conservatives, LibDems and Labour. At the same time, UKIP could count on middle-class and professionals' votes as well as from financially insecure lower classes (those with technical employment, for example): basically, the party stole Miliband's largest portion of the electorate. In sum, UKIP shared the portion of electorate who would easily turn to the most widespread right-wing populist groups throughout Europe: low or poorly-educated, middle-aged, blue-collar and disillusioned Conservative/centre-to-right-wing voters afraid of uncontrolled immigration, a more intrusive European Union in national affairs and enraged towards the "ruling class" who, instead of protecting their interests, just simply ignored their existence and surrendered to European interests.

When general focus shifted from the European election to the national one, UKIP disappeared in polls. This is not surprising news. The party had a long history confirming the brilliant trend at European level and a discouraging side of the coin within national boundaries. But Farage wanted to be optimistic, since the landslide victory on European ground had certainly doubled (at least) the fame of the party all over the country. UKIP opted to up the ante, by writing to Ofcom and threatening to sue were UKIP not inserted in political debates because deemed a minor political party.

Another set of by-elections followed in that period, and UKIP managed to impose as main opposition party to Labour and Conservatives. However, despite support increased substantially even in those areas where the party had always performed poorly in the past (e.g. UKIP obtained 27 per cent of preferences, compared to 4 per cent in 2010 by-elections), internal miscommunication problems still were there. For example, when Farage decided to not stand in Newark, the party deliberately overlooked his advice of pushing for a young and proactive woman candidate, and opted to an old, former Conservative, Roger Helmer, who created a great deal of turmoil due to his declarations on women victims of rape and LGBTQ community (The Guardian, 2014). Moreover, their disorganised “every door” strategy still lacked important features in order to compete against secular parties’ well-prepared election machines. Proof of this was the fact that UKIP supporters in local constituencies never received calls or envelopes reminding the approaching of elections, or even they did not offer lifts to polling stations. The encouraging results for Conservatives persuaded them of the possibility to erase UKIP for good at 2015 general elections.

Things were not working very well for UKIP in the European Parliament either. The “Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy” group was obliged to form alliances both in order to gain more weight when speaking and also for what concerns voting procedure. As noted above, 2014 saw the surge in Eurosceptic political parties throughout the Old Continent, and this would come in handy to Farage’s party. However, all these parties were distinct for their extremist, ethnic nationalism, neo-Nazism, Islamophobia and sometimes revived anti-Semitism core values. Certainly, Farage himself and other UKIP exponents made strong statements on various or related topics from time to time (for example, regarding immigration and Islam in UK), but he saw his party deeply rooted in simple British Euroscepticism and had nothing in common with anti-Semitism (like Marine Le Pen’s National Front) or anti-democratic thoughts of many other fellow Eurosceptic parties like the neo-Nazi German group, or even strong anti-

Islamic rhetoric as was Geert Wilders's party's case. Once again, Farage was charged with the delicate task of building an alliance while avoiding Europe's most-extreme party representatives that would call into question, if not jeopardise, his legitimate claim to represent a credible alternative party in the United Kingdom. One possible ally came from Italy, that is the Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement, while UKIP refused to join Le Pen and Wilders. At the end of long talks, UKIP's new allies were: the Italian Five Star Movement, the Sweden Democrats (UKIP's party in Sweden), Order and Justice (a social conservative party from Lithuania) and a liberal Eurosceptic party from the Czech Republic (the Party of Free Citizens), plus a Marine Le Pen's and a Polish MEP. The holding of the group alliance in the European Parliament was safe at last. New problems arose when Jean-Claude Juncker, the former Prime Minister of Luxembourg, was appointed President of the Commission by the European Parliament. Cameron did not want him because the British people would have loathed his arch-unionist views as well as reject of any form of dissidence against the EU. The failed Conservative attempt to block Juncker's appointment proved beneficial to UKIP's reputation at European level by British citizens.

After leaked allegations of Farage competing for Thanet seat (in South East England) inflamed British mass media, UKIP's leader took the decision to reveal as less news as possible since secrets were not kept easily. However, he trusted his henchmen in revealing an "exclusive premiere" at Brooks Mews on August 28, 2014: an important Conservative MP, Douglas Carswell, was about to defect his position to stand with UKIP. He was an extremely disgruntled Conservative who hoped for a radical change in British politics, but saw his ideal shrink for the umpteenth time when Cameron was elected Prime Minister: he complained that Cameron wanted to bring change, but was not what the party members were actually expecting. As another Eurosceptic Conservative and feeling that his political "home" was leaving him out of space, Carswell played the UKIP card as last resort. In a room full of press media and UKIP activists, he dropped the bomb: he was resigning as Conservative MP and Clacton representative to launch a by-election, standing as UKIP representative. This was his D-Day. Only four weeks after the news, polls suggested that Carswell would have been certainly re-elected with a 60 per cent of preferences under UKIP emblem. The party were buzzing with excitement: it seemed as though they were about to win their first seat at the House of Commons. With other alleged Conservative MP defecting to UKIP and the party doing well in the polls, it was a truly lucky period for the purple party.

The Scottish referendum seemed to be helpful in Farage's plans: with 55 per cent of voters saying NO to a split from England and subsequent independence against 45 per cent in favour, combined with an increased support for the Scottish National Party (SNP), Farage was longing for a revival of nationalism in England too. He hoped that, with the conference held in Doncaster (a Labour fortress), people would have given UKIP confidence. Moreover, Doncaster is located pretty close to a place dear to Ukipers: Rotherham. Instead of focusing on second-importance and ridiculous concerns (as it happened during the 2010 elections campaign), Farage targeted the party's core values and, as a matter of fact, coincided with the people's needs that Labour was unable to perform at that time. After Douglas Carswell, another Conservative MP decided to join UKIP's cause: Mark Reckless, with his trustworthy campaign expert, Chris Bruni-Lowe. The UKIP vs all parties' battle to death had only just begun.



Nigel Farage unveiling his party's new campaign in Clacton. Source: The Independent via Reuters.

David Cameron, however, was not intended to give up easily. His hopes reignited as Lord Ashcroft (2014) published a survey for which Conservative defectors to UKIP would have still considered Conservatives as second-choice vote. Basically, Lord Ashcroft was suggesting that these voters could be still won back. On the other hand, Labour did not suffer from considerable defections to UKIP, but its anti-UKIP campaign started in manifest late (in November 2014) and the touched topics were not capable to relieve public opinion. UKIP, instead,

launched its new booming party Manifesto in April 2015: the motto was “Believe in Britain”. In short, the key points were the following: ban on foreign criminals residing or entering UK, no tax on minimum wage of £13.000, rise in the threshold for paying 40% tax to £55,000 and introduction of a new 30% intermediate rate on earnings between £45,300 and £55,000, block on unskilled immigration for a five-year term, end of free NHS to all those immigrants who did not contribute to British tax for at least 5 years but keep it free for delivery and at any time of need for UK citizens, imposition of health insurance to all immigrants as precondition to access, re-opening of grammar schools, cancellation of the “Bedroom Tax” and opposition to the “Mansion Tax” (BBC, 2015). On top of that, UKIP revealed its highly provoking billboard against Labour. The party, depicted as a red deflated balloon lying on the ground, had this inscription: “How many more times are they going to let you down?”. UKIP enlisted all the party’s main policy failures, among which the intrusion of American corporations inside the NHS and the failure to protect the country adequately from mass immigration. If Nigel Farage was not a political “celebrity” enough to be recognised everywhere, he was also awarded the “Briton of the Year” title by The Times at the end of the year (The Independent, 2014). This gave him a wide sense of optimism for the start of the new year. Apart from giving up on alcohol for a while, Farage was happy to see his party acknowledged by Ofcom as major party status. Actually, the first months of 2015 were tough enough to assist two documentaries made against them released on TV and realised that the party’s core policies (Europe and immigration) attracted a small portion of public and, as controversial as it may seem, those concerned with European relations were Conservative voters who, instead, were not willing to defect to UKIP. Farage soon realised that those supporters who felt threatened by Europe and concerned by uncontrolled immigration were too low numbers. UKIP’s campaign problems were always the same as ever: not enough (skilled and competent) activists on the ground, lack of grassroots pushes and few contacts with Ukipers. On top of that, seen the great absence of the party leader in the campaign, Farage’s health status was rumoured to be bad: he responded to be “as fit as a flea” (The Guardian, 2015) and his absence was due to the exhaustive political campaign he was leading in South Thanet.

What had created a downfall in preferences for UKIP were not a series of scandals, which – as was the case in the past – did not have a serious impact on opinion polls, but the evident confusion regarding one of its core themes: immigration. The fact that the immigration number to target changed from an initial 50.000 to 30.000 and then lowered again in only a few days, undermined

considerably the credibility of the party. Opinion polls were cruel: party support fell sharply from 19% in Autumn 2014 to 14% in early 2015. Moreover, Farage exaggerated his views when hosted in the seven leaders' debate on ITV on 2 April 2015. After stating that the faces and programs of the other leaders were all the same (his usual populist ace), he pointed out to the so-called "health tourism", stating that on average of daily HIV diagnoses, 60% of those who contracted it were not British nationals: since many people arrived in UK to get diagnosed and treated, costing up to £25,000 per year per patient, he strongly invited these people to treat themselves elsewhere. His aggressive mood made everyone furious, and moved the attention to Nicola Sturgeon who, instead, shone like a bright star and stole all Farage's attentions.

The official date of the 2015 General Parliamentary election was on Thursday, 7 May 2015, the first held at the end of the five-year fixed term imposed by the 2011 Fixed-Terms Parliament Act. According to the Electoral Commission (2015), UK turnout at 2015 general elections peaked to 66.2%, the highest ever, with nearly 30.7 million votes recorded. The rise in turnout was particularly evident in Scotland, which passed from 63.9% in 2010 to 71.1% in 2015. More practically, it saw the Conservatives winning unexpectedly 331 seats (adding 24 seats, the largest number ever reached by the party since 1992), confirming themselves as the only credible government party. Basically, Conservatives stole their former coalition allies' seats; in this way, Cameron's party was no longer obliged to form a coalition government. It came in such an unexpected way that no poll nor survey had predicted this magnitude. Labour, instead, came second with 232 seats but losing 26 constituencies with respect to 2010. One explanation of Labour's failure to gain consensus may be found in Nicola Sturgeon's party rise in Scotland. SNP saw a skyrocket increase from six to fifty-six seats! The loss of former Labour forty seats, however, could not be the only trigger cause. Some Labour advisers pointed out the fact that Cameron yelled about the economic recovery under his government out loud, as well as the dramatic abandonment of old pensioners and blue-collar electoral support that finished in UKIP and Conservatives' hands. Ed Miliband's party misinterpreted popular needs, prioritising a substantial reduction in the deficit rather than campaigning to lowering everyday living costs. Collecting another major defeat, Ed Miliband decided to resign. The new party leader would have become Jeremy Corbyn. Surprisingly, UKIP won its first seat in Clacton with 3,881,099 preferences and averaging +9.5% more votes than in the past and 12.6% vote share. Farage was utterly disappointed while observing that all the area in which UKIP pushed the majority of campaign efforts - South Thanet and surrounding

areas - did not produce any purple seat. The only victory in Clacton meant that the only UKIP MP candidate the party had always criticised, Douglas Carswell, had eventually made it. When the celebration of the first moment had passed, the party realised that their support increased to almost four million votes but not in the right concentration nor in the desirable places. It was a harsh defeat: the purple party won only one seat for almost four million voters! This was one of major critics made by Farage to the first-past-the-post system in the aftermath of the election results. Even Sir David Butler (2015) commented disparagingly how this was the “harshest treatment that our capricious electoral system has ever inflicted on a nationwide party”. Nevertheless, by bringing nearly four million votes home equalled to UKIP’s political weight was impossible to disregard from that time onwards. The party had officially raised its electoral profile and could eventually replace the Liberal Democrats as alternative political choice to Labour and Conservatives. The Liberal Democrats were the party that, on average, lost the most: by ceding 49 seats and confirming only 8, adding a loss of 15.2 percentage points of preference. Nick Clegg followed his Labour colleague example and resigned. From a fragmented British politics, a new single-party return at government seemed to put an end to this transitional period.

It can be noted that, contrary to what critics had anticipated, the UKIP bubble had not burst yet: the insurgent party came a long way to stay, not only for the referendum campaign but also most probably beyond that (Tournier-Sol, 2017). The fact that UKIP affirmed as major political opponent by stealing the role to Clegg’s Liberal Democrats gave the purple party a more credible nature. Even in those constituencies where UKIP did not even manage to position second, it can be remarked that the party made huge steps forward, and the opposition bore the expenses.

As the elections were over, Chris Bruni-Lowe announced all activists that his number-one contender and party leader Nigel Farage was about to resign. He was utterly disillusioned by the petty victory of Clacton seat and he was still out of Westminster once more, never mind the party dream to create an “earthquake” that could redraw the map of British politics. Even though some of his closest activist tried to convince him that UKIP had achieved important results by the way and could not quit right in the middle of the rise, Farage announced his resignation to a handful of journalists in Margate. The decision came once again unexpected that even his close friend, Paul Nuttall, knew nothing about his intentions beforehand. Pundits were already speculating that, without his charismatic figure, the party would have collapsed sooner. Farage informed,

through a letter, that the new *ad interim* would have been Suzanne Evans for the strong skills and great results achieved. But the final decision had to be taken after the NEC the following Monday. While watching the ordinary Victory in Europe (VE) parade in London, Farage was doubting about his final decision. He had always blamed Douglas Carswell as part of the problems of the party, being the latter not firmly convinced of UKIP's main ideals, and for this reason did anything in his power to ostracise Carswell's presence. But once he participated in the NEC conference on 11 May, a strange rejection from Mrs. Evans on proposals to become chairman and another unusual e-mail coming from Douglas Carswell regarding short money, ignited Farage's suspects of infiltration and saw himself obliged to come back to leadership or the party would have been doomed for ever. Meanwhile, Carswell threatened the party to revoke the leadership to Farage or he would have walked away. Another infight was about to start.

4.3 The United Kingdom on its way to Brexit: from the promise of a Referendum to Referendum Day

It is important not to lose sight about UKIP's main objective: to get the country out of the European Union. How can such an important operation be carried out? Through a popular referendum. It was extremely hard to obtain it, as shown by British history, since the last was held on the staying of the United Kingdom in the then European Community (actually, the Common Market) in 1975, from which British citizens voted "yes". Many tried to achieve the proposal, such as Goldsmith's party as seen before, but everyone utterly failed. However, times were "slightly" different and more mature to re-open the question, and there was also another important detail to be taken into account: in January 2013, former UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, in a desperate attempt to gain support for the Conservatives, gave what had been historically called the "Bloomberg Speech", in which he promised to launch a referendum on the European Union were he and his party to be re-elected in 2015 domestic elections. He knew in his heart this was more than a hazardous political move that would mark UK's destiny for years to come, of which he was the first concerned person (Cameron has always been against a likely exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union). However, UK's youngest Prime Minister had something in common with Nigel Farage: he liked "gambling" politically speaking. He did so in 2011 with the referendum on the FPTP system; in 2014 against the Scottish referendum, promising unity in the United Kingdom; finally, in 2015 domestic elections when he pledged to bring Conservatives alone back to power. When Cameron and his party came back to Westminster as the only governing party in

2015, in order to demonstrate he was a man of honour, high-level electoral promises had to be kept. More than this, Cameron felt high pressure from Conservative backbenchers to launch a binding commitment to the EU vote. At that time, Ed Miliband commented Cameron's choice as a political move against the rising (and threatening) political authority of UKIP. Mr. Miliband, who said he opposed holding an in/out referendum, said Mr. Cameron was "going to put Britain through years of uncertainty, and take a huge gamble with our economy" (BBC, 2013). The immediate reaction from EU political figures did not take long to reply: from the former French Foreign Affairs Minister Laurent Fabius, who talked about "Europe is not à la carte", to the German homonymous Guido Westerwelle who thundered "cherry-picking the EU is not an option". Former London mayor, Boris Johnson, could not be happier of the news: he had been a long-standing extreme supporter of UK withdrawal. In a speech at Chatham House backing Cameron's plan, the former Conservative Prime Minister, Sir John Major (2013), best captured some of the hopes for a referendum: "The relationship with Europe has poisoned British politics for too long, distracted parliament from other issues and come close to destroying the Conservative Party. It is time to resolve the matter". The news overwhelmed UKIP with excitement: it was high time to gather all major activists and be prepared for the party's biggest political strain. Certainly, as remarked by the rise in populist parties especially after the eurozone crisis in 2008, Europe crossed a hard political line: from the so-called "permissive consensus", that is populations agreed upon governments' seeking a stable relationship with the European Union, to a "constraining dissensus", that is the exact opposite (Hooghe and Marks, 2008). A constraining dissensus' maximum expression is found in Euroscepticism, a trend which was confirmed in Britain at the 2015 national elections. At the end of September 2015, YouGov launched a poll asking interviewed their voting intentions were the referendum to be held on that day.

EU referendum

Thinking about how you might vote in a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, which of the following best applies to you? (%)



The results were already giving a proper idea on who would have voted for what based on age, for instance: youngsters would have certainly opted to “Remain” while over-60s would have preferred to “Leave”. Pro-Europeans would have belonged to middle-class works and held a university degree, whereas anti-EU supporters belonged to the working class and with low levels of education. When looking at party response, it is interesting to note that not only UKIP but also Conservatives (even if not in an overwhelming majority) had always tended more to “Leave”. Other polls conducted throughout 2015 spoke out clearly that Brits’ main trend was to stay in, even though a stark preference for remaining was never highlighted. It has not always been this way, in all honesty: the peak of “Outers’ vote” arrived during the global financial crisis, the subsequent eurozone crisis and the massive immigration flocks to Britain between 2008 and 2012, climbing the Inners over nearly twenty points. In retrospect of the current situation, it must be highlighted that had David Cameron been successful in amending the relationship conditions with the European Union in a satisfactory way, a shower of “Remain” votes would have submerged and silenced the “Leave” front for good. One argument that favoured Inners in 2015 was the fact that human beings, by nature, are not prone to drastic life changes and this was also reinforced by the Scottish referendum’s results in 2014. Pulling Britain out of the EU would translate into going towards an uncertain path, and this was exactly what people wanted to avoid. Moreover, if it was true that nearly the totality of UKIP supporters would have voted to “Leave”, this was not true for Conservatives: as a matter of fact, research found out that less one in two Eurosceptic Conservative MP would have cast a “Leave” vote for real. And the percentage got definitely lower if Labour, LibDems or the Greens were taken into

accounts. The fact that Outers were divided in the way Britain should have acted once out of the EU gave more sense to rather the *status quo*. Goodwin and Milazzo (op. cit., 2015) talk about the “Farage Paradox”: that is, Outers enjoyed a large and widespread support before Farage’s party was established, to be decreased dramatically in favour of Inners when Farage was gaining political ground.

In the light of what happened, scholars blamed Cameron’s decision on how to formulate the referendum question: by reducing the European matter to a simple yes or no to go on with the European project, he did not consider at all other important aspects related to the EU, that might have turned the referendum in his favour. At the same time, also the Scottish referendum was filled with flaws and did not reflect the reality of facts. The conviction that this formulation would have erased Euroscepticism from the country was an enormous miscalculation. However, it is worth noting that the United Kingdom was and is not the only country bearing difficult relations with the highest ranks of the European Union: threats to invoke a popular referendum on the EU were employed also in France through Marine Le Pen’s National Front, who spoke about a possible “Frexit” were Brexit to put in place, and Italy with Beppe Grillo’s Five Star Movement, who claimed for a referendum on the single currency (€). Nonetheless, politics of the EU requires Member States to pursue national interests, for requiring a referendum is more than legitimate. This is of fundamental importance in order to keep agreeable and steady relationships between the nation-states and the supranational institutions.

On 28 May 2015, in fulfilment of Cameron’s political obligations, the then Secretary of State Philip Hammond had the first reading of the proposed European Union Referendum Act: it was the bill that made legal provision of holding a referendum on the EU-UK relations asking whether to continue or not membership in the EU. After three readings, the act passed on 7 September 2015, then approved by the House of Lords on 14 December 2015 and eventually given Royal Assent three days later. It legally entered into force on 1 February 2016. According to this act, the Secretary of State was requested to set an official date for the Referendum, to be held no later than 31 December 2017. As stated within the bill, the government was in no way forced to implement the results of the referendum, being the latter of mere consultative (or pre-legislative) nature. The popular will served as a means to influence government decisions on the policy path to follow later on. Moving step-by-step towards the historical timeline, David Cameron announced the fateful decision of launching a in/out referendum

in the United Kingdom at the end of the 2-days European Council on immigration and the Greek debt crisis in Brussels on 25 and 26 June 2015. He used the European stage to clarify and expose his intentions. At the end of the formal meeting, he declared the media to be delighted the process of "reform and renegotiation" of the UK's membership of the EU was "properly under way" (BBC, 2015). Although former EU Council president Donald Tusk highlighted that EU's basic principles – such as the free movement within the EU – were not to be considered for re-discussion, he referred the matter to the following European Council in December. But exactly, what did Cameron want to renegotiate with the EU? He did not have a clear programme at first, but among his key requirements, there were: to halt EU immigration, to opt-out to the “ever-closer union” formula, to keep the financial City of London out of the eurozone, to simplify European bureaucracy and more UK Parliament independence from EU laws. Nigel Farage expressed his concerns from the start, seeing this as an attempt to buy time before the inevitable no-treaty change would have been revealed. On the same date of the Council, the European Commission announced the creation of a “Task Force for Strategic Issues related to the UK Referendum” and placed former British official in the EU Commission, Sir Jonathan Faull, as Directorate-General from 1 September 2015.

On 11 November 2015, David Cameron officially sent a mail to Donald Tusk from Chatham House, highlighting the four main areas that the United Kingdom wanted to reopen negotiation on. These included: 1) protection of the Single Market for Britain and other non-euro Member States; 2) a new opt-out clause for the “ever closer union” formula and more parliamentary independence from EU laws; 3) restriction of access to migrants’ in-work aid, such as fiscal credits; 4) a substantial cut in the regulatory business burden and proposal to pledge more on the free flow of capital, goods and services. A shower of critics did not take long to come up: the other parties commented the renegotiation points as a proper farce. Needless to say that polls pointed to an increase in Leave vote after the release of the letter. In particular, voters felt “betrayed” by Cameron’s choice of not including the renegotiation of EU citizens’ right to live and work in UK. As polls entered into deeper details, Cameron had to face the fact that British citizens (and he himself was well aware about it) did not feel safe and prevented enough from another immigration flow, which induced voters in preferring an Australian-based immigration system (limiting the number of people entering UK from the EU). One month and a few days later, on 17 and 18 December 2015, David Cameron showed up at the European Council in Brussels, hopeful that an amicable and peaceful settlement on the UK re-discussions could be found easily.

Instead, he faced a simply opening of discussion panel with the other European leaders, who decided to remit the final decision at the European Council in February 2016. When arrived at the summit, Cameron emphasised that he would have stayed up all night to reach a good deal and he would not have backed off on cutting benefits for immigrants coming to UK. Although some EU leaders saw some British requests as unacceptable and impossible to compromise, Tusk noted that “if Prime Minister Cameron persuades leaders tonight that we can work together to find solutions regarding all four baskets then we will have a real chance to strike a deal in February” (The Guardian, 2015). Ipsos-MORI (2015) published an interesting survey in the same period of the EU summit: most Britons were quite confident that David Cameron would have campaigned in favour of remaining in the Union, but only 18% of the interviewed actually believed that Cameron would have reached a satisfying agreement. To make matters worse, the government released the official data regarding net migration to UK: a record number of 336.000 people arrived by the end of 2015. Brits responded this was seriously too much. Indeed, 2015 was an intense year regarding immigration, with record numbers of 100.000 people arriving to European shores from the sea each month. The risks related to uncontrolled immigration and increased terrorist attacks in the European continent (especially in Paris) doubled. In any case, Cameron and his Conservative party could rest on their laurels since polls indicated the party was stable at 39 percentage points. UKIP was also stronger than ever, with 17 percentage points (4 per cent increase with respect to 2015 general elections). Nonetheless, this statistics was not respecting how much Farage’s party had a weight in the referendum decision.

As 2016 began, two opposing political forces were created: the “Remainers”, the EU-friendly supporters, represented by Labour, Liberal Democrats, the Greens, Plaid Cymru in Wales, the Alliance Party in Northern Ireland. Moreover, even though Conservatives had to remain neutral, a group of “Conservatives In” and “Conservatives for Europe” joined the alliance. Also a wide range of professional figures’ interest groups (such as lawyers, scientists, private foundations, university groups) supported the cause. The Electoral Commission officialised the name as “Stronger In”. On the other hand, Eurosceptics who believed that Europe was destroying national sovereignty, could count on UKIP, Conservatives, Ulster Unionist Party, SNP, Democratic Unionist Party. To give support to the “Leavers” were a plethora of small movements, such as farmers, Muslim, economists and some students, as well as some left Eurosceptic groups like the Communist Party of Great Britain, the Socialist Workers Party, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport

Workers. In April 2016, the Electoral Commission gave them the official name of “Vote Leave”.

On 2 February 2016, the European Council published a draft resolution for the proposed changes to UK membership within the EU. Among several new proposals, the “Emergency Brake” mechanism stood out: if a specific country was suffering from an “exceptional magnitude” of immigrants’ flow, both the European Parliament and the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union could authorise the country to limit access to in-work benefits to new EU immigrants for four years (up to seven years if the conditions were extremely serious, available for request only once). Another interesting tool was the “Red Card”: like the red card used by referees in football matches, it would have allowed a Member State, together with other 15 Member States, to send a recommendation back to the European Parliament and amend it. It was not seen like a veto imposition, as other politicians could go ahead if they judged that all concerns were addressed adequately. Regarding immigrant’s deportation, the EU acquiesced in changing a legal sentence from “likely to represent a threat” to the verb “does”. Instead, the expression “ever closer union” did not imply any specific legally-binding obligation and amendments were not included in this sense, for an opt-out could be allocated. While granting the UK that future decisions would not have been made to favour the Eurozone over non-euro-area members, the EU was not intended to change the child benefit principle but only slight changes in the payment and/or in the amount of money compared with the country-of-origin living standards. The deal was severely criticised, as Conservatives’ promises were basically all broken. Also within Conservatives, the deal was deemed “a load of rubbish”, or “an insult to the United Kingdom”, together with the force of Eurosceptic newspapers that wrote down “The Great Delusion” like the Daily Mail. Nigel Farage had something to say and apostrophised the deal as “truly pathetic”. Many criticised the fact that Cameron had failed entirely to repatriate any powers from Brussels to London, that he had done next to nothing to increase the powers of the UK parliament over EU institutions and that the treaty change he had announced was essential was merely promised rather than nailed down (YouGov, 2016). Even voters felt that the renegotiation process did not produce the expected outcomes. As Cameron was close to sign the deal at the EU summit in February, polls clearly showed that the population believed that the reforms did not go far enough and deemed it a bad deal. His deal did not obtain the desired effect: a tsunami of Remain votes was far from arriving and also his party fellows were not convinced to support

Remain. John Curtice described Cameron more like an opposition leader than a Prime Minister at that time.

My guilt at missing what being a mother is truly about **SARAH VINE** SEE PAGE 15 

PM hails EU 'reforms' but critics say they'll do nothing to curb migration and will trigger years of benefits chaos

THE GREAT DELUSION!

By James Slack, Jason Groves and John Stevens

DAVID Cameron stood accused of delusion and selling Britain short last night after he hailed a deal to keep Britain in the EU. The Prime Minister claimed he had secured 'substantial change' to the UK's relationship with Brussels - despite having broken two key Tory manifesto pledges. Incredibly, he claimed the deal was so

COMMENT

The Mail admires David Cameron, but we have to say, on the EU, his capacity for self-delusion is breathtaking

SEE PAGE 14

good that he would recommend Britain joining the Brussels club - were it not already a member. Amid mounting fury at the gagging of Eurosceptic Tory ministers, Mr Cameron opted not to face Conservative MPs in the Commons - instead preferring to give a speech at the factory of a pro-EU German-owned company. In the chamber at Westminster angry Tory backbenchers lined up to denounce his 'slap in the face for Britain'. They

Turn to Page 2



Selling the deal: David Cameron speaking to staff at a factory in Chippenham, Wiltshire, yesterday after his EU negotiations

Source: *The Daily Mail*, 3 February 2016.

Soon after the deal, polls unravelled a sharp increase in Leave votes at 54% against 44% of Remain (excluding the undecided). Cameron had utterly failed in increasing support for remaining an EU member under special conditions. On top of that, David Cameron announced the official date of the referendum on 20 February 2016: it would have taken place on Thursday, 23 June 2016. Pleading his fellow Conservative MPs to use sense of duty wisely, he let them free to join

whatever side they would have preferred the most. In total, 17 Conservative ministers (among these, 6 in his Cabinet) promptly declared siding the Leave campaign; the most well-known were, for instance, former London mayor Boris Johnson, Justice Minister Michael Gove or Northern Ireland Secretary Theresa Villiers. Famous Conservatives who sided Cameron's Remain campaign, instead, were former Home Secretary Theresa May and the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne. Both sides created their special motto: it was "Britain Stronger in Europe" for Remainers, while "Take Back Control" was chosen by Leavers.

From these very few lines, it is possible to assume and find important hints on the way the two sides were going to deal with the referendum campaign. On the one side of the coin, David Cameron's Remainers decided to put all stakes on a very simple strategy, later to be nicknamed "Project Fear". Cameron thought that, firstly, by taking into account what previously stated by LeDuc (2003) – that is, when people are asked to cast a vote on top-level but risky or uncertain decisions regarding the destiny of a country during a national referendum, human nature tends to choose the option that less changes or revolutionises the status quo – and secondly, having carried out a successful campaign in Scotland in order to vote "NO" to the 2014 referendum with arguments alike, was convinced that people would have been more likely to cast a vote on Remain if they had seen how tragic the British situation would have been, in economic and security terms, outside the EU. Researchers highlighted that the British people could be divided into 6 categories: 2 in favour of Remain, 2 in favour of Leave and the last 2 were the undecided: these were Cameron's top-priority targets. As a matter of fact, the Remain began bombarding voters with catastrophic economic-financial facts and statistics even before the official date of the referendum campaign beginning. Will Straw, the executive director of Stronger In, recalled how important was to capture undecided voters worried for both immigration and economic risks by offering a mixture of assurances on immigration and declaring that "Britain was stronger, safer and better off in Europe than on its own", with the Leave vote compared to "a leap in the dark" (op. cit., 2017). Cameron could count on a plethora of illustrious personalities from the economic, statistic, financial, political, banking sector who endorsed the Remain side. For example, Mark Carney, the incumbent Governor of the Bank of England, warned voters that leaving would have meant rising interest rates and an increased capital would have left the country. To this added the British Bankers Association (BBA), who claimed that 60% of banks would have seen their businesses damaged. In Wales, the campaign focused on farmers, who were reminded that the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) had already allocated nearly £250 million and would

have injected another £300 million by the end of 2019, without forgetting that an exit from the EU would have implied the return to tariffs that might have arisen up to 12%. Goldman Sachs, the American giant in investment banking, threatened that if Leave had won the pound sterling would have lost at least 20 percentage points compared to the other valuable currencies. Deutsche Bank and HSBC prepared to relocate at least 1.000 job posts each from the City of London to Paris or Frankfurt. Investment would have been dampened, the economic growth would have been blocked and another thousands of job posts (such as those in the manufacturing sector) would have been put in jeopardy. House prices would have risen, more than £250 billion annual bill would have lost in trade, confidence would have crumbled to 2008 crisis levels, exports would have been reduced dramatically. Even former US President, Barack Obama, sided the Remain campaign arguing that Britain would have not had a special fast treatment with the United States in discussing new bilateral agreements. Even the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) thundered that leaving the EU would have had serious negative economic consequences for Britain and the rest of the world. Christine Lagarde, the former Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), predicted that the medium to long-term economic effects of Brexit would have ranged from “pretty bad to seriously bad”. Furthermore, former EU Council President, Donald Tusk, was pretty explicit and catastrophic in regarding a possible leaving of the EU as the end of Western political values. In addition to economic risks, the Remain campaign embraced a second focus: threat to national security. Leaving the EU would have not only triggered a “contagion effect” throughout Europe but also the whole United Kingdom would have been far more exposed to terrorist attacks as well as the creation of illegal immigration camps. Cameron reminded how a possible Brexit would have made happy only Vladimir Putin and ISIS at international level, because the former would like to “destroy” the European project and the latter would have had clear field to carry out other excruciating attacks.

On the other side, however, stood the Vote Leave campaign: at first, they decided to stress the people on immigration, as UKIP suggested and had been carrying on in his successful electoral campaign. For example, Dominic Cummings, the lead strategist for Vote Leave, spread the message that by keeping UK in the EU would have increased exponentially the repetition of sex attacks by immigrants as happened in Cologne, Germany, at the end of 2015. As they declared, these were the effects of Angela Merkel’s “Open-Doors Policy”. Besides, a vote to the EU equalled to a vote for a jihadist invasion, because the European Union had been manifestly unable to tackle terrorist threats. Moreover,

there were no guarantees that people arriving from the European continent would have been immigrants for real or hidden terrorists. In addition, at the end of March 2016, a survey conducted on British jails revealed that, among a list of 50 European serious criminals, almost all were imprisoned in the UK: this evidence confirmed that the United Kingdom had lost its control and safeguard on national borders. Moreover, another 13.000 foreign criminals had not been deported yet, costing British jails more than £35.000 per year. Indeed, Michael Gove commented that, as Justice Secretary, his hands were tied when it came to immigration issues because of EU laws. In the same period, the mind-boggling budget expenses of some Euro-bureaucrats in Brussels were made available to public: this other evidence suggested that, while many British families had to tighten their belts due to the economic downfall, they still celebrated and squandered endlessly, unashamedly and carefreely with UK's money; it was high time to get rid of the European Union. Leave supporters in Scotland stressed that, by leaving the EU, free university tuitions would have been kept for a long time; meanwhile, in Wales, many industries (among which the steel one) would not have faced Europe's unfair competition any longer. Liam Fox, former Secretary of State for International Trade, threatened voters that if immigration had continued at this rate, the government would have been obliged to erect a new house every six minutes, resulting in less green and countryside spaces. In support of immigration's cause, during the last days of the campaign, Farage revealed an impressive and provocative billboard with this writing: "Breaking Point – The EU has failed us all" and a picture with flocks of immigrants in the background. Critics from the opposition did not take long to arrive, by comparing it to racist propaganda that fuelled unreasonably immigration fears.



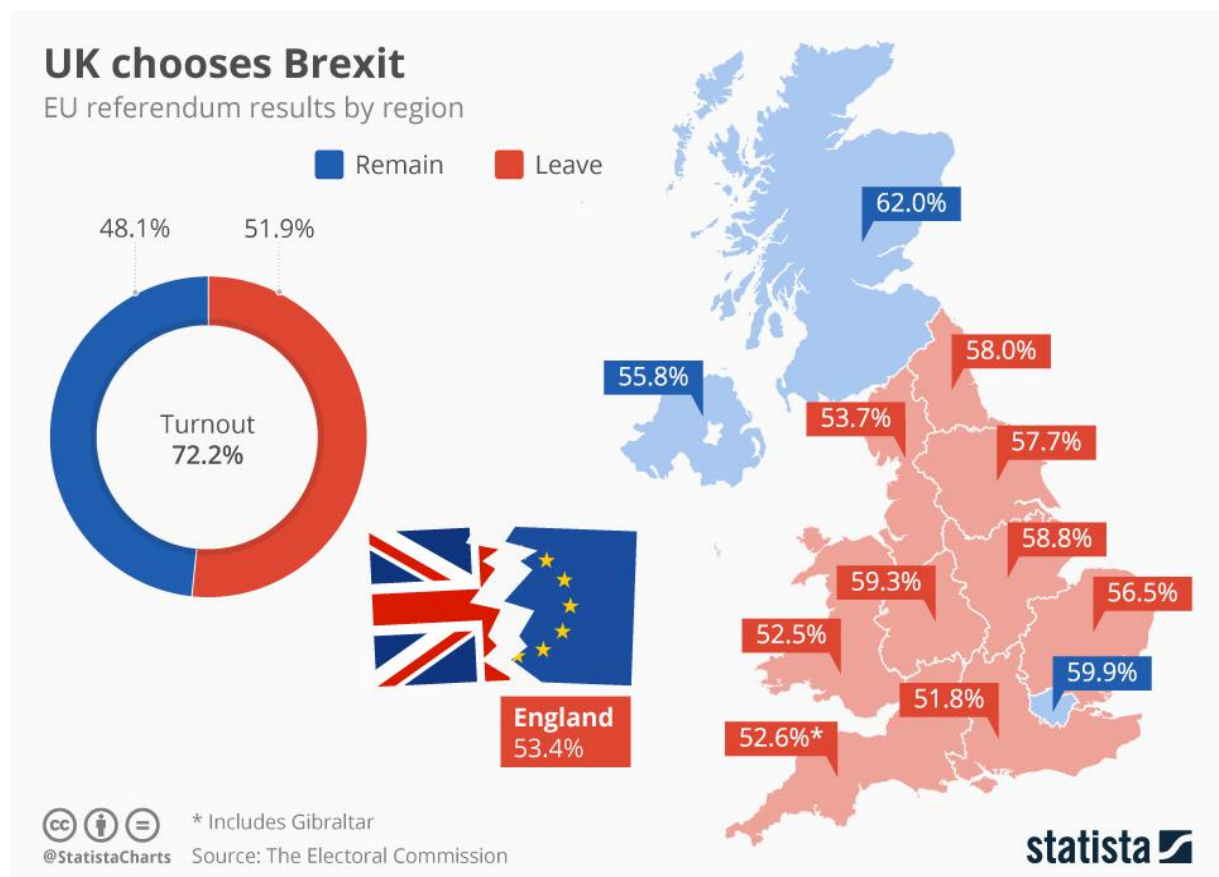
However, the Leavers soon understood that, aside from fostering people against immigration, some certainties on future economic aspects should have been introduced in the campaign or the only supporters they would have counted on were Ukipers. And here came the right topic: the NHS. Although many were surprised that the Leavers, represented by right Eurosceptics and far right-wing politicians, were talking about a point close to Labour party (because the NHS was founded during Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee's government in 1948), it had a strong impact on voters' consensus. At the beginning of 2016, the winning argument was that, by divorcing from the EU, the United Kingdom would not have suffered from "health tourists" that drained medical resources any longer. On top of that, by ending EU immigration, queues to NHS and its related deficit would have been reduced by half at least. However, probably the best choice in campaign advertisement was made when Leavers declared that, by leaving the EU, the government would have saved £350 million a week that could have been used to refund the NHS by nearly £100 million per month. In May, as ultimate attempt, Leavers attracted undecided voters by offering the chance to win more than £45 million - the money UK paid to the EU each day for its membership – by giving the exact results of all 2016 European football championships. Actually, this was an excuse that concealed data recollection on the approximate number of leave supporters.

When interviewed, the population stated clearly that the Remain strategy was not completely convincing and that the Vote Leave one looked more truthful. When surveys released the results in the first week of June, it appeared a very confuse scenario in which neither of the two sides had been evaluated the winning one, but Leavers had a slight advantage on Remainers. Despite these critics, "Project Fear" was pushed towards the end of the campaign. The bombarding campaign continued undaunted, with the participation of other important international characters. At the same time, Vote Leave persevered with its three core issues: immigration, restoration of democracy and sovereignty, the NHS.

Until voting day, the predicted outcome offered by several polls conducted in the last months displayed a highly uncertain panorama, in which none of the two sides had never had an absolute majority but differences ranging from 2 to 4 percentage points and alternate phases of preference for the one or the other. Nevertheless, it seemed as though up to the last day Remain would have had a slight advantage in polls, partly due to the tragic event happened to the Labour MP Helene Joanne "Jo" Cox, who was brutally stabbed to death by a nationalist

obsessive in Leeds on 16 June 2016. As a consequence of her death, referendum campaign was suspended as a mark of respect.

On 23 June 2016, 33.577.342 British citizens went to the polling stations casting their vote. Until the last moment, incertitude on the final outcome roamed among politicians. The famous question that Brits found in a white sheet was direct and simple: “Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?”. Whichever side had reached more than half of all votes would have won. The results arrived overnight and saw the triumph of Leave with 51.89% of preferences against 48.11% of Remain.



Source: StatistaCharts, 2016.

As it can be seen from the map, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the city of London voted to Remain and accounted for 48.1% of the population alone. Gibraltar also participated in the polls, but was embedded in the South-West England Leave region. Basically, Leave won the highest percentages where UKIP put more pressure and energies during his campaigns: in Southern and Northern England and Wales. Needless to say that the world assisted to contrasting reaction on the following day: on one side there was a triumphant Nigel Farage, who a week after the official results decided to quit leadership of the UKIP once more

but congratulating to himself and his party for the greatest political achievement, or Boris Johnson was booed when exited his house in Northern London but immediately announced tv broadcasts his contentment for the “great proof of democracy showed by the British people” (BBC, 2016). On the other side of the coin stood a disappointed Remain fringe, with Cameron who had to keep his word on the referendum results and decided to resign a few days after, and Labour politicians who claimed for a “non-confidence vote” for Jeremy Corbyn or Labour MP Diane Abbott who tweeted “The idea that migrants or politicians in Brussels are the problem with modern, unequal Britain was the canard at core of referendum debate”. The rest of the world looked appalled of the British decision and international declarations were pronounced quickly. First of all, the former President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, declared that the EU regretfully took into account the will of the British citizens, but respected it because it was an expression of a democratic process. He also added that the EU27 would have continued and encouraged the United Kingdom to start the exit process by invoking Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty as soon as possible in order to reduce uncertainty. Furthermore, Barack Obama declared that the United States would have respected UK’s decision and the “special relationship” would be preserved, that both the United Kingdom and the European Union remained US’s closest allies in politics, economics and security. Donald Trump, US candidate President at that time, praised the courage and stressed the fact that the UK had always been a great ally of the US. Angela Merkel, instead, invited all the EU27 not to take things with haste and to avoid it, Europe was urged to quell all rifts.

While all world leaders and also British politicians were worried of the near future and the next legal steps to take, Nigel Farage showed up pompously at the European Parliament plenary in Strasbourg on 28 June 2016. As usual, he had the floor to intervene for a few minutes and, while all other MEPs were booing and shouting at him, began his speech with one of his provocative sentences: “Isn’t it funny? When I came here 17 years ago and I said that I wanted to lead a campaign to get Britain to leave the European Union, you all laughed at me. Well, I have to say you’re not laughing now, are you?”¹⁰.

¹⁰ Nigel Farage’s speech (28 June 2016): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7le5GPJpbE>.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has provided the reader with a clear historical-political framework analysis of the new political entity that has managed to attract the attention of world politics and intellectuals: the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). As it has been already discussed, UKIP has been the first one-of-a-kind single-issue pressure group that was defined both Eurosceptic by ideals and populist by discourses. Departing from the distinction of these two broad categories politically speaking, the origins of the party were traced back in a continuum of the previous 1981 Social Democratic Party (SDP), that challenged the British political equilibrium and boasted a big success at that time. Although the party was disbanded and channelled into the Liberal Democrats, UKIP became the worthy successor, born as an experiment inside the London School of Economics (LSE) in 1993. Since the early beginnings, UKIP could count on a prominent activist that, as years went by, has become the status-symbol leader: Nigel Farage. Together with him, the first leader, Mr. Alan Sked, would have been an influential person who made his voice heard by, firstly, devising the first UKIP manifesto, and secondly, on multiple occasions after losing the leadership of the party.

Declaring itself as an anti-establishment Eurosceptic party, it has been more than an uphill battle to affirm its presence at national political level, partly due to the difficulties of the characteristic first-past-the-post electoral system. On the contrary, UKIP began its European journey quite as early as 1999, bringing to light the first signs of Euroscepticism at the core of their dissensus, the European Parliament. In this case, they had more chances to win thanks to the proportional electoral system, which allowed people not to cast a strategic vote. Whereas other parties would have exploited the European success to maximise their national appeal, not only once did UKIP fall into an internal warfare; this contributed to depicting it as though they were not credible as well as not presenting a common-line strategy. The moment in which the party broadened up its electoral consensus was in 2004, when former Labour and journalist Robert Kilroy-Silk joined the party and campaigned for the 2004 European elections. However, the great success took Kilroy-Silk in challenging the leadership of the party against Knapman, but did not find the support he believed to have for he quit the party.

It took a lot to UKIP to learn that single-issue groups had short life in politics, that is why their broad message changed from “Say NO to Europe” to touching also other national issues such as immigration. It was in this particular phase that UKIP identified itself as the defender of the interests for the “losers of globalisation” (Betz, 1993;2012). The supporters of UKIP became a determined social class of over-50, unskilled, ill-educated, blue-collar, Conservative-minded and Labour left-behind workers to whom the effects of globalisation (de-industrialisation, new political values identified with the New Labour, the European integration process) have jeopardised the guarantees of a peaceful future and saw the current political establishment as in collusion with the global system and deliberately disregarded their necessities. Even though UKIP was not the precursor of such a movement (for which a real “contagion effect” cannot be called into cause), it must be highlighted that it was part of a political phase in which Eurosceptic populist parties spread up across the European continent.

Until the moment in which UKIP decided to challenge all by-elections and to create a wide and concrete basin of support, did the party remain a small, short-sighted pressure group which was not deemed important at national level but had a chance to stand out only at European level every 5 years. Also the way Farage spoke to people did change a lot: he claimed not to belong to the political élite as many of his fellow colleagues did, by attending the same undergraduate courses at the same universities and then entering into politics. He was a “man of the people”. Jay Elwes (2014) talked about how Farage’s everyman feature played a pivotal role in fascinating both disillusioned Conservative and Labour voters for his explicit anti-establishment lifestyle.

“He smokes, goes to the boozier, wanders up to people outside pubs for a bit of banter. None of the other three party leaders could dream of doing likewise. The whole Farage character is central to the notion that UKIP is a break with the past”.

The ardour used also within the European Parliament plenary sessions did not go unnoticed.

When UKIP began competing for all possible by-elections from 2010 to 2013, it came up that the party was the largest opposition group. The purple party was becoming a serious contender that political adversaries could no longer ignore. Evidence of this was found in former Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron’s “Bloomberg Speech” in 2013: aware of the pressure coming from UKIP zealots and the changing political landscape, he pledged him and his party to launch a Referendum on UK membership within the European “club”.

However, the highest point reached by Farage's party was at the 2014 European elections, when it affirmed itself as the British most-voted party with nearly 28 per cent of preferences and overcame both Conservatives and Labour. As strange as it may seem, this success did not translate automatically into the national "political earthquake" Farage had been flaunting all the 2015 general elections campaign. True, UKIP alone won 4 million votes, but received only one seat in the House of Commons, and the designate representative was not Farage either. Pure insult on top of injury. Nevertheless, Cameron's re-confirmation as government party equalled to keeping his electoral promise and it did not take long for UKIP to exploit the situation in its favour and carry out the party's number-one mission.

On June 23, 2016, the British people voted to leave the European Union. UKIP and Conservatives' "Vote Leave" campaign won over Cameron and some Conservative cabinet ministers, Labour and Liberal Democrats' "Project Fear". Neither the involvement of illustrious characters from different sectors of society nor Cameron's attempts to negotiate a new UK membership agreement with the European Union did produce the desired effect. As firm supporter of the phrase "Britain is stronger, safer and better off inside the European Union"¹¹, Cameron resigned shortly after the referendum results were published.

5.1 The underlying reasons of a Leave vote

From the official publishing of results, it was clear that only London, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the university towns were in favour of Remain. However, this did not outweigh the rest of constituencies that preferred to cast a vote for Leave. Research showed that the constituencies with the highest rate of Leave ballots were those in which UKIP performed better during the 2015 general elections. In addition to this, it must be highlighted that the average Leave voter was an over-50, white, less educated, lower-class person which reflects also the average UKIP voter! This is extremely important evidence of how the party had built strong local support in anti-EU resentment, whose force was enormously influential, and the fundamental role played in the referendum campaign. As a matter of fact, UKIP with SNP and Liberal Democrats were small parties but, at the same time, deemed more credible by the audience because acted jointly and compacted in the respective campaigns. Farage was not perceived negatively by voters this time: quite the contrary, his alliance with the most Eurosceptic Conservative fringes helped increase Leave coverage, but his likability among

¹¹ Excerpt taken from David Cameron's resignation speech transcript. Retrieved at: <https://www.smh.com.au/world/brexit-vote-transcript-of-david-camerons-resignation-speech-20160624-gprh35.html> .

public opinion remained relatively low. Together with Boris Johnson, another admittedly Eurosceptic Conservative, the likelihood to cast a vote on Leave was higher, partly thanks to his elevated approval rating among the population. By contrast, Labour and Conservatives appeared as extremely divided forces to voters' eyes: evidence of this had already been discussed earlier when Cameron stood for Remain while others in the party, such as the former London mayor Boris Johnson, were explicitly Leavers. Labour was not united either: in this case, the biggest problem was immediately brought to light by the discontinuity of thought represented by the contested leader of the party, Jeremy Corbyn. He has always avoided making official claims for the Remain side due to the presence of numerous interviews in which he unveiled his Eurosceptic attitudes. He had described the European Union as a "bureaucratic device to service the interests of uber-capitalism" (Shipman, 2016).

According to a cost-benefit analysis, the interviewed were homogeneous in regarding an exit from the EU to prove detrimental in economic-financial matters, but perceptions over immigration were pretty "bipolar": if more than half of the interviewed declared that immigration rates would have crumbled dramatically after leaving the EU, another wide group admitted that immigration filled those job post gaps that nationals would have never done otherwise. If on the one hand UK having less influence at international level by leaving the EU was common thought, more than 50 per cent of the opinions agreed on UK losing sovereignty by lingering in the EU. In a broader sense, when asked which word could best describe the relationship between the European Union and the single British citizen, the majority of the interviewed chose "uneasy". In sum, Brexit was felt bad for the economy but good for halting immigration flows and regaining national sovereignty. It is safe to say that the British vote had been a balanced weighing of economic and immigration effects, perceptions over the EU and the leadership of the various political parties; it is not safe to say, instead, that there was a "Boris Johnson's effect" that tipped the balance towards Leave.

5.2 And so, what?

After Cameron's resignation, the Conservative party had to elect a new Prime Minister. The character who was deemed more "fit" to play the role was found in Mrs. Theresa May, former Cameron government's Home Secretary. She was the second female Prime Minister in UK's history, after Margaret Thatcher. Supporter of the popular will, she declared that "Brexit means Brexit", that all "are Brexiters now" and that there would have been "no second referendum during my government" on 14 July 2016 (BBC, 2016). When she chose her government ministers, nine from former Cameron government were changed in favour of more Eurosceptic representatives, such as Boris Johnson as Foreign Affairs Minister and David Davis as Brexit Secretary. As commented by ITV political editor, Robert Peston (2016): "Her rhetoric is more left-wing than Cameron's was, her cabinet is more right-wing than his was". She began her

mandate by invoking the famous Article 50 of the European Union's Lisbon Treaty, whereby a set of official procedures for requesting the withdrawal of a Member State from the European Union must be followed. An official letter containing the formal request was sent to Brussels on 29 March 2017, then a 2-year perilous and excruciating transition negotiation period began.

2017 began with a lot of novelties for Mrs. May: she was the first foreign leader to meet the newly-elected US President, Donald Trump. After submitting the request to the EU, she announced a snap general election due in June 2017, in order to get as much support for the Brexit negotiations as possible. Actually, the snap general elections turned into a problem for Conservatives with a new hung parliament: they lost the absolute majority in the Commons and were obliged to agree on a coalition government with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). In all of this, UKIP lost its seat because Douglas Carswell did not stand for re-election and the candidate Paul Nuttall did not manage to get enough votes. However, May's approval rating soon began to drop as she frequently changed her mind in political promises. This was also noted by the press, with the Financial Times (2017) wrote a harsh attack against what she had acknowledged as "strong and stable" government, describing it as a series of political U-turns that made her appear as "a habit of retreating from policies". On 13 December 2017, Theresa May saw her proposed EU Withdrawal Bill rejected by the Parliament. To make matters worse, if the domestic climate was not favourable, at European level negotiations did not go forward: at the end of 2017 an agreement was far from being reached. One of the reasons for the deadlock was the Irish border: being the Republic of Ireland an independent state of the EU and Northern Ireland part of the UK, all necessary steps to avoid the re-imposition of a barrier or border check between the two had to be urgently taken. What politicians wanted to prevent at all costs was the awakening of another sectarian war as it happened in the past.

At the end of August 2018, after more than 2 years from the Referendum vote, nothing had changed except for one event: with the deadline of March 2019 underway, economists were predicting the effects of a more plausible "No Deal" Brexit scenario: a situation in which the United Kingdom would be leaving the European Union with no legal settlement under any viable issue and risking disastrous economic effects to be intensified by triple. In an attempt to take the edge off, Theresa May announced that exiting from the EU without agreements of any sort "wouldn't be a walk in the park", but at the same time "wouldn't be the end of the world" because the United Kingdom may prove an economic success instead and she was not intended to sign an unsatisfactory "divorce" (The Guardian, 2018). On 14 November 2018, the EU and UK finally found an agreement on Brexit deal, called the Chequers Agreement. The problem now was to make it ratify in the House Commons. The immediate reaction of Boris Johnson was declaring it "utterly unacceptable to anyone who believes in democracy" and saying he would have voted against it. As a matter of fact, the

plan was utterly rejected and remained in history as the largest majority against a British government in history; but there is a plus for Mrs. May: she had to face a motion of no-confidence both from her party and from the Parliament. Luckily enough, she managed to survive both, but her political career as Prime Minister was put under serious jeopardy as her support was actually narrow. She tried to revise the deal but was rejected again. After a long period of further negotiations between UK and the EU, a provisional extension of withdrawal day was granted up to 31 October 2019, on condition to participate in the 2019 European Parliament elections. In a last desperate attempt, she promised to resign shortly after the Parliament would have approved the deal in March 2019, but also this move proved an utter failure. On 24 May 2019, she announced her resignation as Prime Minister. Needless to say that the European Union made absolutely clear that an amendment of former agreement would have never taken place with the next British leader. If one was to ask whether the Withdrawal Agreement was exceedingly dreadful for the British side, here is a quick review provided by former Governor of the Bank of England, Lord Mervyn King (2019), at a conference in Genoa last 10 September 2019: “This Agreement – which would become a binding international treaty with, uniquely for such treaties, the European Court of Justice as arbitrator – would mean that the UK would hand over £39 billion without any assurances about the long-term trading relationship with the rest of the EU, and commit to the so-called “backstop” from which the UK could not exit without the agreement of the EU. The “backstop” would mean that the UK would have to continue in the Customs Union and accept all EU regulations without having any say at all in their design. Being unable to leave the Customs Union unilaterally – and being bound in it by a treaty – is actually worse than being a member of the EU. At least in the EU it is possible to invoke article 50 and leave”.

On 23 July 2019, the newly appointed Conservative Prime Minister was an old acquaintance: Mr. Boris Johnson (also known as BoJo), who received strong praise words also by Donald Trump. On the occasion of his first speech as Prime Minister, he firmly declared that the United Kingdom is going to leave the European Union next October the 31st, with or without a deal, the time cannot be extended any further. On 21 August, Johnson met with Chancellor Angela Merkel, who was extremely concerned on the backstop position regarding Northern Ireland. She set a 30-days deadline to overcome the Irish conundrum. Her reference to 30 days may just have worked as an alarm clock that, if there is going to be a Brexit deal, the elements of it will have to be in place well in time for the next EU summit scheduled in mid-October (The Guardian, 2019). Not receiving the necessary support for carrying on towards a no-deal Brexit, BoJo came up with a further suspension of the Commons for three weeks beginning from 10 September and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II approved his request: in this way, there would not be enough time to discuss nor to find an alternative solution to a forced departure without a deal. The speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow, called Mr. Johnson’s decision a “constitutional

outrage.” Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the opposition Labour Party, denounced it as “reckless”. The British pound fell on the news, and a “#StoptheCoup” hashtag began trending on Twitter as protesters gathered outside 10 Downing Street, the prime minister’s residence in London (New York Times, 2019). As a last retaliation resort, the House of Commons passed a bill against Boris Johnson last 4 September, for which the Prime Minister will have until 19 October to either pass a deal in Parliament or convince MPs to forcefully approve a no-deal Brexit. Once this deadline is passed, he will have to request a further extension to next 31 January 2020. Such decision provoked a break-up point in the government majority, and Johnson was obliged to convene general elections, but this motion did not pass. In any case, the Parliament was closed last 10 September, and protests did not miss. The British Supreme Court ruled that the Parliament block imposed by Johnson was unlawful last 24 September, *de facto* annulling also the approval of Her Majesty. On 18 September, the European Parliament approved the resolution for which the EU may support a further extension of the Brexit deadline “*if there are reasons and a purpose for such an extension (such as to avoid a ‘no-deal exit’, to hold a general election or a referendum, to revoke Article 50, or to approve a withdrawal agreement) and that the work and functioning of the EU institutions are not adversely affected*” (European Parliament, 2019). Any further evolution of circumstances is still expected even after the end of this dissertation.

Interviewing Min. Plen. Ken O’ Flaherty, the incumbent Chargé d’Affairs at the British Embassy in Rome, on the possible scenarios in case of a no-deal Brexit, he agreed on the fact that the United Kingdom has the duty to get out at this stage; “There are no ifs and no buts”¹², he says. He suggests that the United Kingdom is still hoping for a renegotiation of the Withdrawal Agreement with the European Union, especially because both actors are called on eliminating the “anti-democratic backstop”, for which “a time limit is not sufficient”. He reassured that the government is taking the necessary measures to be prepared in case of a no-deal scenario, and that the ordinary life of people will be disrupted as less as possible in this operation. Among the list of things the British government has achieved, items include:

- o Reached trade agreements with partners worth around £70 billion of current trade, and agreed in principle an agreement with South Korea which represents another £15 billion.
- o Signed bilateral voting rights agreements with Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg and approached all other Member States for similar agreements.
- o Laid over 570 EU Exit Statutory Instruments.

¹² Interview to Min. Plen. Ken O’ Flaherty, conducted by the candidate via e-mail.

- o Publishing approximately 750 pieces of communications on No Deal since August 2018, including over 100 technical notices explaining to businesses and citizens what they need to do to prepare.
- o Secured air services agreements with countries like Canada and the US permitting passenger flights.
- o All agreements required to ensure continuity in civil nuclear trade are in place, including Japan, Canada, US, Australia and the International Atomic Energy Agency.
- o Border Force increased its headcount by around 900 officers between March 2018 and March 2019. During summer priorities will include providing resilience at ports with summer pressures, backfill for officers undergoing training and inland clearance activity.
 - Undertaken steps to secure additional freight capacity, and worked on preparations with suppliers and partners, meaning these plans should ensure the supply of critical goods, including medicines and medical products, remains uninterrupted.

5.3 *What about UKIP?*

For much of this concluding chapter, UKIP has been somewhat anonymous. How come such an important party, after the referendum results, does not have a word in future politics of its country? Actually, as mentioned above, Farage decided to resign as party leader shortly after the referendum results, justifying his act because “my political ambition has been achieved” (op. cit. 2016). He stated that his party was still in a good position and would have fought to attract new voters and, primarily, to defeat Labour. He thanked once more Ukipers, because they “will have been the turkeys who voted for Christmas”, with reference to the European Union. Paul Nuttall substituted Farage as new leader of the party, but his appeal could not be compared to Farage’s. It resulted into an immense fiasco at 2017 general elections invoked by Theresa May. Not only did UKIP lose its seat in the House of Commons and did not regain one, but also barely got 600.000 preferences. The good times of the 2015 general elections, with nearly 4 million votes, were over. Losing his face, Paul Nuttall immediately resigned. From here began a long, persisting decline of the party, resulted into the party having only 5 per cent of preferences at polls. Disorganisation has always been and will always be the party’s major flaw. Unfortunately, UKIP has become irrelevant in the British national panorama and

the latest 2017 general elections proclaimed the voters shifting back to bipartisanship between Conservatives and Labour. As Ferdinando Giugliano, a Bloomberg's European affairs and economics columnist, declared: "UKIP is kind of dead right now. The party was self-destructed by its own success"¹³. After accomplishing its mission, the party remained without diversified arguments to present the public and be perceived as credible. Now every party is talking about Brexit, it is not a UKIP's exclusive prerogative anymore. When the party was on the verge of collapse, the new leader Gerard Batten saved it from an inglorious end. The party reacquired vitality, as well as human and financial support. In November 2018, he appointed the former criminal and anti-Islam activist Tommy Robinson as his new adviser.

If UKIP as party *per se* is still alive but with relatively low activity, Nigel Farage is more active than ever. He has never given up his seat in the European Parliament, from which he continued arguing passionately about leaving the European project and the high demonstration of democracy performed by the British people. Within the party, he contested vigorously Batten's appointment of Mr. Robinson, for whose action he invoked a no-confidence vote as sign of protest. Gerard Batten survived as leader, and Nigel decided to leave the party for good on 4 December 2018. He worked tirelessly for the party that gave him celebrity and fame, but the odd turn to extreme right politics – that is, Batten's obsession towards Islam in general – has changed the shape of the party, unrecognisable in Farage's eyes: "UKIP was not founded to be a party fighting a religious crusade", he affirmed (BBC, 2018). In the meantime, he conducted two radio programmes on LBC: "The Nigel Farage Show" since 2017 and "Farage against the Machine" from March to July 2018. On 8 February 2019 the Electoral Commission formally approved Farage's new party: the Brexit Party. He immediately campaigned for the 2019 European elections held at the end of May: his party was the most voted one, winning 29 seats with 31,6 per cent of national vote, replacing entirely UKIP in the European institution and confirming itself as the British most voted party on that occasion. The party name has changed but his most well-known character's provocative features were still there: at the opening ceremony of the newly elected European Parliament, the whole Brexit Party MEPs turned their backs during the European national anthem as sign of protest against not only the institution but also the concept of European Union as a whole. In addition, as confirmed by MEP Brando Benifei, EFDD group did not reach the seven different European nationalities in order to grant its existence in

¹³ Interview to Bloomberg columnist, Dr. Ferdinando Giugliano, by the candidate during a conference held in LUISS on 10 October 2018.

the European Parliament and was dissolved last 2 July. The Brexit Party channelled into the Non-Inscrit members; due to this condition, the party often remains on the sidelines of the political debate, has lost considerable economic resources, staff members and functionality. However, this time not only Farage but almost all Brexit Party MEPs have recently increased their oral and behavioural aggressiveness for the sole purpose of generating stir and, subsequently, enhancing their visibility. In addition, former European Parliament President and current President of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs Antonio Tajani, declared: “The party’s resounding gestures and harsh tones were just a small part of EFDD representation: I will never forget when MEP Nigel Farage dared to compare the European institutions’ way of working to the Old Soviet Union in 2018. However, the party appeal fell so bad inside the European Parliament that they are completely isolated at the moment: if they could count on the Italian Five Star Movement’s approval once, they managed to push them away. They are alone at present; the same British Conservatives do not want to interact with them neither in Strasbourg nor in Brussels”¹⁴. When asked about future Brexit scenarios, he confidently replied that the next weeks would be followed by the European Parliament with top priority, as an incandescent atmosphere lingers over Westminster Palace: all the cards are on the table, nothing would be excluded. In his views, the European Union is “sitting on the fence”, waiting for a non-excludable turning tables in the United Kingdom.

¹⁴ Live interview to MEP Antonio Tajani, current President of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs at the European Parliament, by the candidate during “Itaca” conference held in Formello, Italy, on 29/09/2019. Excerpt translated from Italian oral declarations.

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Executive Summary

If the European Union was a step-by-step, visionary political project, born at the end of World War II aimed at bringing peace, stability, cooperation, integration, inclusiveness and, mostly, trade, what did go wrong in this idyllic process that caused an important Member State, the United Kingdom, to leave it? First things first, the discussion in Chapter 1 opens with a clear distinction between Eurosceptic and populist meaning, in order to identify which definition fits best the nascent United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP): the detailed investigation provided that yes, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) fully falls into the Eurosceptic category, but of a hard-line one. Not only does this party take part in the Eurosceptic spectrum, but his most important former leader, Mr. Nigel Farage, has been and still is one of the politicians embodying the concept of populism.

The origins of UKIP come directly from a British grassroots movement that first appeared on 26 March 1981, called Social Democratic Party (SDP). It was founded by some senior Labour Party moderates, after the split at the summit of British politics, and reached more than seven million Brits during 1983 and 1987 general elections. The party merged with the Liberal Party in 1988 and formed the Social and Liberal Democrats (at present abbreviated Liberal Democrats). From that moment onwards, British politics was shaped into a tripartite system, opposing the “*status quo*” parties of Conservatives to Labour but with the more and more important presence of the Liberal Democrats. The SDP was nothing but just a parenthesis destined to be vanished soon in the British political panorama. Actually, before arriving at UKIP’s birth, an early attempt also occurred in 1991, under the name of the Anti-Federalist League, led by Dr. Alan Sked and backed financially by Sir James Goldsmith; however, the 1992 elections proved a veritable disaster and the party was dismantled. UKIP was born as a Eurosceptic political experiment in the minds of some professors, scholars and political obsessives within the dusty offices of the London School of Economics (LSE) in 1993. The party had a single-issue objective: to get Britain out of the European project, because it was no longer the simple “trading agreement” initially signed by the United Kingdom during the 70s, the European Union now was counting on a “deeper integration” and an “ever closer Union” process that frightened the British population. Since its very beginnings, the party could count on a prominent character, who would soon turn into an unreachable

and uncontested leader of the party for years to come: Mr. Nigel Farage. He supported the party since its early beginnings and chaperoned it up to the accomplishment of the mission.

Not only did the party face a dark period since the birth of the party, also a new danger came out of the blue: in 1994 the “Referendum Party” was born from an idea of the rich Sir John Goldsmith. Sir Goldsmith was an experienced politician, who used his fortunes to print pamphlets, hire activists and engage celebrities for his campaign. By contrast, UKIP were not as much organised and well-oriented, also due to the lack of funds in the party and not so many militants on the ground. Even though they presented at their first parliamentary elections in 1997 with the slogan “THE ONLY WAY IS OUT” and with confidence that Euroscepticism grew in UK after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the results reached a petty 1.7 per cent. The fact that the party was concentrated only on the withdrawal from EU membership and this political view alone (in short, a single-issue party group), having nothing else to say in other subject matters of relevant significance to the country, already resulted in a heavy fiasco. UKIP was believed to be like a comet in the British political sky: it could have had some sort of success at first, but it could not live long-lasting. Moreover, whether quoted by journalists on rare occasions, they were depicted as amateur hours. For example, the Daily Record scoffed them by comparing as a “*kamikaze parties doomed to spend their lives on the fringes of politics*”.

An interesting historical moment banged on UKIP’s doors only three months after the defeat at 1997 parliament elections: Sir James Goldsmith died, and the Referendum Party was dissolved right afterwards. UKIP could have exploited the favourable situation, merging and maximising their consensus. Instead, the first of a series of internal conflicts broke out. A coalition conducted by a young Nigel Farage managed to eventually ostracise Alan Sked and place a newcomer, Michael Holmes. The 1999 European elections, instead, rewarded UKIP’s efforts by attracting 700.000 British voters, reaching 7 per cent and gaining three seats. One of these, was Farage’s who, triumphantly and ironically at the same time, declared that “For a parliament I want no part of, under a system I despise, I found myself blinking into the cameras at one in the morning saying how proud I was”. But gaining attention once every five years was not the maximum aspiration. The party lived in a constant paradox, in which its voice was powerful and heard outside the national borders, but went isolated and unheard within national borders. Another internal warfare broke out, terminated with Farage ousting Holmes and placing Titford.

Unfortunately, UKIP's major sin was immodesty: 2001 elections gave a hard (figurative) slap to the party, which saw its broad consensus of 1999 elections basically cut in half, especially in those regions deemed fortresses. Some activists blamed again the disorganisation of the party and the "nothing else except Europe" strategy. Clouds do sometimes have a silver lining, however: despite the discouraging results, UKIP still held its position as fourth most-voted party in the United Kingdom. But surprises are not finished here: UKIP fascinated a specific portion of the electorate, mainly from the countryside or rural parts, the elderly and people with low levels of education. Another change in leadership took place in 2002: Titford gave way to Roger Knapman. In order to carry out a radical change of direction, Knapman hired US President Bill Clinton's former adviser, Dick Morris, who changed the party slogan in "SAY NO". Moreover, thanks to the arrival of Robert Kilroy-Silk, a national day-tv broadcaster and former Labour MP, gave a tremendous boost to the party at the 2004 European elections, by taking a good national result home. Nonetheless, Mr. Kilroy was convinced that he had to be the leader and challenged Mr. Knapman: he soon realised how low support he had inside the party and resigned.

UKIP was once again not ready to embark into 2005 national elections. As a matter of fact, results were scarce with minimum improvement margin. Although a hot topic was immigration at that time, Ukipers tried to distance from it in a first period to not look like BNP nor to make voters assume that they were aligning with the Conservatives. 2005 soon came to an end and so did Roger Knapman's leadership. The only successor capable to stand the party together was Nigel Farage. The hard question was how to shrug off the single-issue party appearance, but before that he had to settle the dispute with BNP and managed to distance his party from the extremists and to steal their votes in the 2009 European elections. At international level, it was an extremely harsh moment due to the global financial crisis that began in the US and spread across the Old Continent and made it difficult for Southern European States (starting with the Greek risk of default) to save themselves. Eurozone entered into crisis and went against the European Treaties by offering bail-out programmes for insolvent countries. It was the only possible move in order to save the European project and the single currency. The worldwide economic downfall obliged populations in tightening their belts to make the ends meet, but viewing the EU as the source of their problems; by riding the wave of dissent, many Eurosceptic and populist right to left-wing parties popped out like mushrooms.

If everyone may have thought that this situation was congenial to UKIP's support for the upcoming elections, actually it was not. What did come in handy to UKIP was a singular event happened in the United Kingdom one month before the official date of elections. The Daily Telegraph printed a series of extracts from leaked computer discs, which contained the documentation of some Commons MPs' second-home claims. From the 8 of May 2009, investigations went further and involved all the three British main parties' MPs: it revealed that they were repeatedly committing abuse of the expenses system, such as "flipping" homes to maximise claims and avoided to pay capital gains tax by continuously changing the domiciliation of second homes. Although apologies by main party leaders arrived immediately, the fury of the population transformed into a protest vote against the establishment at the 2009 European elections; and Ukipers had all to benefit from. Even if the turnout was relatively low (only 43%), the Conservatives confirmed to remain the most voted party, with 27.7% and gaining one seat compared to 2004. Surprisingly, the second most-voted party was no longer Labour but UKIP: they scored 16.5% and bypassed another British secular party after the Liberal-Democrats, winning another seat in EU Parliament. Conversely, the scandal leaked by The Telegraph punished severely Labour, which resulted in a loss of nearly 7 percentage points compared to the 2004 elections and lost 5 seats in the European Parliament. Overall, it can be affirmed that the United Kingdom continued its shift to right/far-right political parties when it comes to Europe. UKIP has reached to urban and local areas whose population was largely composed of people aged over 65, fewer people with a degree and higher proportions of self-employed. The party's best-performing results came from non-urban areas of southern England, especially coastal and rural areas. However, the acclaimed success did not find fertile ground in Scotland and, more generally, Northern English cities.

But exactly, what were the arguments that induced people in casting a vote in favour of UKIP, if European obsession is left out for a while? The purple party was clever enough to drive voters' minds on a specific core matter: by exploiting the immigrant situation, the leadership gave examples of how the concept of national culture and identity, in strong connection with the national sovereignty one, were endangered due to the increasing presence of the European Union breaking into national affairs. British hard-line nationalist voters assisted to the decline and, possibly, "surrender" of national sovereignty objectives (represented by both Labour and Conservative governments' delegations in Brussels) to major European institutions. Eurosceptic parties such as UKIP (but also the Five Star Movement in Italy, for instance) had also strongly emphasised how the European Union has an indefinite mass of bureaucrats headquartered in Brussels who proclaim their "diktat" and the Member States must obey with no consent to dissent. Populist parties could easily (and legitimately) mouthpiece the people's anxiety, intolerance towards uncontrolled unskilled-labour immigration from "A8" countries, and sense of failure of Labour and Conservative governments to, at least, amend this dysfunctional relationship with the European Union or to call

on a public referendum because the European Union “manipulated” national governments’ decisions. UKIP has been impressively brilliant into embedding an “uneasy coalition” within its core electorate. On the one hand there are the “Strategic Conservatives”, that is older disaffected Conservatives who gave their vote to UKIP in order to express their resentment over the EU-established *status quo*; on the other there are the “Polite Xenophobes”, that is to say economically-weak blue-collar voters with a hint of populist ideals on several issues (e.g. immigration, Islamism and against the established political élites) and considered UKIP an outlet for their views. UKIP seemed to have learnt from past mistakes and launched a clear-cut message to all British voters, and this time it covered more than one issue, mixing up Euroscepticism with populism and anti-immigration: although it was not the only British political party talking about a EU withdrawal, UKIP’s 2009 European elections campaign was built around a simple message, “Say No to European Union”. Regarding immigration, UKIP proposed a five-year-freeze on immigration and brought the case during a political confrontation television programme in 2009. They clearly specified that this policy was embedded in their electoral programme, while reprimanding the older British political parties for deliberately turning a blind eye on the social problem the population was suffering, claiming that a resolution could be found but it involved getting rid of the European Union. Once the enthusiasm for the 2009 European elections was coming to an end, it was high time for the party to get ready for the next general domestic elections and urged to come up with a strategic political plan capable to lure more public interest towards the party

Farage’s first quit of the leadership hit like a bolt from the blue after the great results at the last European elections. The replacing figure was found in the controversial Lord Malcom Pearson of Rannoch: he was highly criticised because if UKIP had to represent the normal blue-collar people, the party’s leader should not have been a person with peerage! Not only were his private life habits a problem for the party survival, but also some declarations and his intentions (to compromise with the Conservatives, so as to not interfere at next general elections for UKIP and to promise a referendum on the EU withdrawal for Conservatives) were exasperating even his closest supporters. To make matters worse, Lord Pearson was hit by the same 2009 scandal that hit major political parties on second-home claims. As reported in an investigation of The Telegraph, the new leader of the UK Independence Party claimed more than £100,000 in publicly-funded expenses on the basis that his £3.7 million house in London was his second home while also owning in a 12.000-acre estate with servants in Scotland. Moreover, as fervent anti-Islam representative, he wanted to remove the benefits of the welfare state to those Muslim men who broke bigamy by bringing more than a wife in UK. He invited the Dutch politician known to be Islamophobic, Geert Wildert, to the House of Lords and watch his documentary, *Fitna*, against Muslim people in 2009, but was denied the access. Definitely, Pearson represented the most extreme beliefs against Muslim people, up to the point that he affirmed: “It does worry you sometimes when you drive through parts of the

country and you don't really see a white face very much". It must be pointed out that his extremist views were not shared by all the party, because UKIP fought a lot to be detached from racist, extreme right-wing parties and his declarations did not simplify the hard work carried out so far.

As the 2010 general elections were fast approaching, finally UKIP took the field with a fully-fledged political campaign covering multiple areas. This time, in plus, the slogan used by UKIP was of powerful magnitude: in a white paper representing the faces of Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg, UKIP stated "sod the lot": the party was telling citizens not to vote for the three traditional parties but instead vote for the party that advocated no public-sector cuts and withdrawal from the EU. The leadership of the party was more than welcome to open up to coalitions for the elections (for instance, with Conservatives who declared themselves openly Eurosceptic), but totally misread the intentions of UKIP members and activists, who instead advocated to remain independent. The campaign strategy was yet again miscalculated, as Ukipers found their leader represented alongside Conservative contenders in some constituencies. Needless to say, this lack of coherence in the campaign strategy produced a great deal of chaos and turmoil, undermining all huge efforts made earlier. This paved the way to an internal rebellion against the leadership. On top of that, a private recording clearly heard Lord Pearson apostrophise his UKIP companions as "Neanderthals". On the election day, to save what can be saved, a Nigel Farage in a pinstriped suit hopped on a light aircraft at Hinton-in-the-Hedges, Northamptonshire, with a banner saying, "Vote for Your Country – Vote for UKIP". It took a few minutes for the plane to begin its descent and realise something was not going right: the banner got caught between the rudder and the tail. The lightweight aircraft crashed to the ground shortly after, but miraculously Farage emerged unscathed. Immediately the rival parties exploited the situation to create advertisements against UKIP with blood and horrific scenes, in order to scare the voters. All the purple party's great efforts were vanished as the leader was not in line with the rest of the party any longer. The result was not highly dramatic: UKIP saw a slow but continuous progress, with victories in historically famous Conservative constituencies. However, the party did not manage to get into Westminster again. In August 2010, realising that the majority of party members were against him and badly prepared for party politics, Lord Pearson resigned as UKIP leader.

One of the political mistakes that many scholars and political experts have always criticised against UKIP is its persistence in underestimating the power of the British first-past-the-post electoral system, tailored in a way that always castigates small-based parties. UKIP was strong in Europe because people would have cast a vote with carefree minds in a proportional system like the European elections environment. However, this carelessness could not be repeated at national level, afraid to "waste" a vote for a "wrong horse" and, thus, give

advantage to rival parties. Yes, first-past-the-post voting is based on tactics. By bearing this in mind, UKIP's "barriers to entry" to Westminster can be emphasised and resumed as follows:

- 1) UKIP's voters were divided into those who support the party with their eyes closed when it is European elections time and those who are sceptical in the party's victory and suffer from the "wasted vote" syndrome when it is national elections moment.
- 2) UKIP has always showed itself as a weak party with unresolved internal problems that culminated with internal warfare. Evidence of this are the continuous changes at leadership front.
- 3) UKIP's message was uncertain and meagre: before 2010, UKIP only focused on its obsession for EU withdrawal, which could interest a wide range of voters during the European elections every five years, but was totally detached and unsympathetic for British national concerns, thus pushed consensus away.
- 4) UKIP did not build a "stronghold" for national support as the other long-tradition parties did, but boasted small victories scattered here and there. They could not count on a certain electoral basin, which makes enormous difference when it is time to face first-past-the-post system.

But things were going to change drastically after 2010. The "earthquake" in British politics announced by Farage was about to enter in action.

Nigel Farage returned at the helm of the party with 60% of votes on 5 November 2010. The way the party would have approached to national elections, under the second leadership by Farage, would have changed significantly. Farage's plan was centred on a double objective: first, the party would have won by-elections and then focused on local elections. Actually, this strategy was nothing new as it had been employed for years by other parties. Throughout 2010-2013 by-elections, UKIP showed a great capacity in involving voters in their campaign and, thus, positioning second on multiple occasions, cementing its role as major political opposer to secular Labour and Conservative parties. Nevertheless, the party's most monumental joyful moment came in 2014 at the European Parliament elections: Farage led his purple party to securing the pole position as the British most-voted party, with more than 4 million preferences on national basis, overcoming Labour and Conservatives, and winning 24 seats in the European institution. They nearly obtained 27 per cent of the total vote. Nothing could stop UKIP from that moment onwards, neither the threat represented by the new "An Independence from Europe" party created by a former disgruntled UKIP activist, Mike Nattrass, as sign of revenge. It must be

noted that UKIP deserved the victory for the large-scale, far-reaching campaign the party had organised. Inevitably, media and secular parties tried to minimise UKIP's impact, stating that European elections were not seen as of high salience as the domestic ones, but the fact that UKIP reported a landslide victory having to fight against all odds of the case was something truly outstanding and highly impacting. And the "cool part" was not over yet: thanks to the high appeal of the party after these results, on the same day UKIP won 160 seats in local elections. The party was riding an extremely positive wave of events. With this success as source of fostering, UKIP was preparing the guns to enter at the House of Commons with the 2015 general elections. The transformation from a single-issue to a fully-fledged, credible political contender on equal terms with the others was finally complete. It is however observable that support for UKIP's 2014 European elections came mainly from skilled blue-collar voters (such as electricians) and those who run routine jobs (e.g. drivers). It was also more feasible that voters carrying semi-routine jobs (e.g. store clerks) cast a vote for UKIP than for Conservatives, LibDems and Labour. At the same time, UKIP could count on middle-class and professionals' votes as well as from financially insecure lower classes (those with technical employment, for example): basically, the party stole Miliband's largest portion of the electorate. In sum, UKIP shared the portion of electorate who would easily turn to the most widespread right-wing populist groups throughout Europe: low or poorly-educated, middle-aged, blue-collar and disillusioned Conservative/centre-to-right-wing voters afraid of uncontrolled immigration, a more intrusive European Union in national affairs and enraged towards the "ruling class" who, instead of protecting their interests, just simply ignored their existence and surrendered to European interests.

UKIP managed to position second in another by-elections turn in 2014, but surveys on 2015 general elections made them invisible to public opinion. It was not alarming because the party was used to it. When media leakage revealed that Farage was competing for Thanet seat (in South-East England), Farage dropped another "bomb": a former Conservative MP, Douglas Carswell, was defecting to join UKIP. He was placed in representation of Clacton – the same constituency that elected him under Conservative label. However, friction between Farage and Carswell arrived quite soon, to the extent that Carswell was kind of emarginated inside the party. What had created a downfall in preferences for UKIP were not a series of scandals, which – as was the case in the past – did not have a serious impact on opinion polls, but the evident confusion regarding one of its core themes: immigration. The fact that the immigration number to target changed

from an initial 50.000 to 30.000 and then lowered again in only a few days, undermined considerably the credibility of the party.

The official date of the 2015 General Parliamentary election was on Thursday, 7 May 2015, the first held at the end of the five-year fixed term imposed by the 2011 Fixed-Terms Parliament Act, with an incredible turnout peak at 66.2%. The harsh defeat for UKIP was soon revealed: a seat was gained with nearly 4 million votes, but in Clacton – Douglas Carswell’s seat. Farage was held outside Westminster Palace yet again, but his pompous rival had made it. It is the case to say this added insults to injury. When the celebration of the first moment had passed, the party realised that their support increased to almost four million votes but not in the right concentration nor in the desirable places. It was a harsh defeat: the purple party won only one seat for almost four million voters! This was one of major critics made by Farage to the first-past-the-post system in the aftermath of the election results. But in all of this, UKIP could be proud to have survived against all those who anticipated its “bursting of the bubble” effect.

The victory of Conservatives as leading government party alone led David Cameron to fulfil his electoral promise to launch a popular consultative referendum on the UK membership in the EU. The Conservative leader first tried to formulate a compromise on a revised membership with EU leaders during the several EU summits in Brussels, concluded with a satisfying agreement for Cameron but disappointing for all the rest of his party and the oppositions. The European Union Referendum Act was passed in both Houses of Westminster and finally approved by Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II on 17 December 2015: it stated clearly that an official date for the referendum would have taken place no later than 31 December 2017. David Cameron announced the official date of the referendum on 20 February 2016: it would have taken place on Thursday, 23 June 2016. Pleading his fellow Conservative MPs to use sense of duty wisely, he let them free to join whatever side they would have preferred the most. In total, 17 Conservative ministers (among these, 6 in his Cabinet) promptly declared siding the Leave campaign; the most well-known were, for instance, former London mayor Boris Johnson, Justice Minister Michael Gove or Northern Ireland Secretary Theresa Villiers. Famous Conservatives who sided Cameron’s Remain campaign, instead, were former Home Secretary Theresa May and the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne. Both sides created their special motto: it was “Britain Stronger in Europe” for Remainers, while “Take Back Control” was chosen by Leavers. Remainers were formed by Labour, Liberal Democrats, the Greens, Plaid Cymru and some Conservatives in line with Cameron. Leavers

were formed by UKIP, Eurosceptic Conservatives, SNP, Democratic Unionist Party. David Cameron tailored a pretty specific and bombarding campaign aimed at augmenting economic and financial concerns in public opinion by involving the most illustrious representative for each important political, economic, financial, banking, legal, environmental sector: it was called “Project Fear”. Unfortunately, although his thoughts on the success of “NO” winning vote in the 2014 Referendum in Scotland and LeDuc’s theory for which people tend not to change the *status quo* in referenda votes when the stakes are high and there is wide uncertainty, his strategy revealed a heavy fiasco, but Cameron continued undaunted using it until the end of the campaign. Leavers concentrated their campaign on the benefits of leaving the EU (namely, less immigration), a restoration of legitimate democracy and national sovereignty and, in the last months, also NHS was involved. Surveys on the preferred side by voters were unclear up to Referendum Day, with no manifest advantage for neither side. However, the results of the referendum let the Leave side win by 51.90 per cent of preferences against 48.10 of Remainers. UKIP had completed its mission: the United Kingdom was saying goodbye to Brussels’s bureaucratic apparatus that stole British national sovereignty.

Unable to stand as Prime Minister after such results, David Cameron resigned on the following day. Theresa May was the chosen Conservative character to embark into the difficult and long-lasting exit negotiations with the European Union, especially when it comes to the Irish backstop as well as the Single Market issue and the legal protection of European foreigners in British territory and vice versa. After two and a half years of basically nothing, Theresa May came up with the Withdrawal Agreement reached with the EU27 to present at Westminster for the ratification in November 2018. Clearly, not only did the Parliament reject the deal but she was under a double no-confidence vote (from the Conservative party and the House of Commons). She managed to survive, but the situation did not find a better ground for amicable solutions. The official “exit date” was requested to be delayed at next 31 October 2019, and the EU approved it, in this way the United Kingdom could participate also in the 2019 European Parliament elections. On 24 May 2019 Theresa May announced her resignation because the government was no longer supporting her. The new British Prime Minister is Boris Johnson, but he is trying to carry out a hazardous move to pull UK out of the EU at all costs, making the worst-case scenario of “No Deal Brexit” more and more likely. In the meantime, Farage quit UKIP for good at the end of 2018 because he did not recognise his party anymore and formed his Brexit Party in February 2019. His new political subject outperformed the competitors by

polling first with more than 5 million preferences and replacing completely UKIP seats in the European institution and gaining another 5 more (in total, 29 seats). Theoretically, UKIP is still politically active but suffered from political implosion.