

# **Brexit: The 2016 United Kingdom European Union Referendum**

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Bachelor's Thesis  
2017



**Tomas Bata University in Zlín**  
Faculty of Humanities

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Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně  
Fakulta humanitních studií  
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur  
akademický rok: 2016/2017

## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Tomáš Zigo**  
Osobní číslo: **H14853**  
Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**  
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi**  
Forma studia: **prezenční**

Téma práce: **Britské referendum o vystúpení z Európskej únie Brexit 2016**

Zásady pro vypracování:

**Zhromaždenie odbornej literatúry k téme Brexit a Post-Factual Age a stanovenie tézy**  
**Naštudovanie zhromaždených materiálov**  
**Formulácia cieľov práce podľa nadobudnutých znalostí z primárnych a sekundárnych zdrojov**  
**Aplikácia teoretických znalostí na tému Brexit**  
**Formulácia záveru práce - vyvrátenie alebo potvrdenie stanovenej tézy**

Rozsah bakalářské práce:

Rozsah příloh:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Boulanger, Pierre, and George Philippidis. "The End of a Romance? A Note on the Quantitative Impacts of a 'Brexit' from the EU." *Journal of Agricultural Economics* 66 (2015): 832–42. Accessed October 17, 2016. doi:10.1111/1477-9552.12120.

Bybee, Carl. *Can Democracy Survive in the Post-Factual Age?: A Return to the Lippmann-Dewey Debate About the Politics of News*. Eugene: Association For Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 1999.

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Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Datum zadání bakalářské práce:

**11. listopadu 2016**

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce:

**5. května 2017**

Ve Zlíně dne 4. ledna 2017

  
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## **ABSTRAKT**

Cieľom bakalárskej práce je bližšie nahliadnutie k problematike Brexitu. 23. júna 2016 sa v Spojenom kráľovstve Veľkej Británie a Severného Írska konalo referendum o vystúpení Spojeného kráľovstva z Európskej únie, pričom 52 percent oprávnených voličov rozhodlo o vystúpení. Mainstreamové médiá, ale aj poprední politici a ekonómovia neočakávali taký proti európsky výsledok. Táto bakalárska práca bude dokumentovať faktory, ktoré ovplyvňovali mienku britských voličov počas kampane pred referendom a v konečnom dôsledku viedli k rozhodnutiu Britov odísť z Európskej únie.

Kľúčové slova: Európska únia, Veľká Británia, referendum, Brexit, David Cameron

## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor's thesis documents issues with regard to Brexit. On 23 June 2016, 52 percent of eligible British voters opted in the United Kingdom European Union Membership Referendum to leave the European Union. The mainstream media along with prominent politicians and sundry economic pundits did not expect such an anti-European outcome. This thesis examines and analyzes factors that influenced British public opinion during the referendum campaign, and ultimately led to the decision to withdraw from the European Union.

Keywords: European Union, United Kingdom, Leavers, Remainers, referendum, Brexit, David Cameron

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Gregory Jason Bell for his supportive guidance and encouragement while I was writing my bachelor's thesis. I would also like to give my deepest thanks to my parents for supporting me while I worked towards my degree. Finally, I am truly grateful to Tomas Bata University and the European Union for providing me the invaluable experience of travelling abroad as an exchange student via the Erasmus+ programme.

I hereby declare that the print version of my bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2 THE FACTORS SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION .....</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 Political factor.....	15
2.1.1 David Cameron's negotiations with E.U. member states.....	16
2.1.2 Referendum campaigns .....	20
2.2 Economic factor.....	22
2.2.1 U. K. budgetary expenditures on the E.U. budget .....	23
2.2.2 The United Kingdom's benefits from the European Union .....	24
2.3 Social factor.....	26
2.3.1 Impact of social media on Britons' decision-making.....	27
2.3.2 Nationalism.....	28
2.4 Demographic and geographical factors .....	29
2.4.1 Demographic division.....	29
2.4.2 Geographical division.....	32
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>36</b>



## INTRODUCTION

The modern world faces many political and economic challenges in terms of preserving its global interconnections and economic stability. After the Second World War, which produced millions of casualties, prominent European politicians and civic leaders were persuaded that a European Community would guarantee an everlasting peace and permanent economic prosperity. The subsequent decades-long process of European integration set an unprecedented example of cooperation in Europe among a large number of nations that had never collectively cooperated with each other on such a grand scale, as they do nowadays. Contemporary tendencies, however, suggest that this political, social and economic achievement is no longer functioning as well as it once was. An increase in radical extremism across Europe, the massive and largely uncontrolled influx of immigrants from the Middle East and Africa, the unsustainable state debt in Greece and the incessant push towards political centralization in Brussels all contrast with the common conception of an integrated Europe, and Brits have taken notice. The United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union, which began on 1 January 1973 with accession to the European Community, has been uneasy. A national referendum held on 23 June 2016, commonly known as Brexit, marked the beginning of its end. On that day, the citizens of Great Britain and Northern Ireland made clear their desire to terminate the United Kingdom's E.U. membership and to reestablish U.K. sovereignty, casting off the supervision and, in their opinion, the meddling of Brussels in British affairs. Such an outcome was unexpected by the mainstream media and political pundits not only within Britain but worldwide. Brexit has become another challenge that the European Union must face, and another factor that puts its very existence in jeopardy. This bachelor's thesis will document several key factors that led to the vote in favor of a British exit from the European Union. It will prove that the decision-making of Britons was largely influenced by populist, half-truth discourses encompassing false and oftentimes misleading information on the European Union. Furthermore, it will document that British voters cast their votes unevenly across the whole of the United Kingdom, based on their age, educational, occupational, and ultimately geographical backgrounds.

## 1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After World War II, Europe was divided into east and west. Eastern nations, liberated by the Red Army from German control, were involuntarily aligned with the Soviet Union and became part of a communist block for more than four decades. Western nations, on the contrary, represented a democratic U.S.-backed polity. In the early 1950s, autonomous Western nations were at a disadvantage against the Soviet Union, and only close cooperation enabled them to confront the constantly-expanding Soviet Union.

Robert Schuman and Jean Monet, who are widely-considered the founding fathers of the European Union, laid the foundations for a common European polity, as they both believed that only tight economic bonds and the unification of nations would provide a guarantee of peace and allow appropriate retaliatory measures against the expansion of the Soviet Union. Their vision became reality with the establishment in 1951 of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), then comprised of France, Italy, West Germany, Belgium, Luxemburg and the Netherlands. Coal and steel were the most essential materials for waging war, and thus economic cooperation within this industry was a cornerstone for peace, since cooperating nations are unlikely to become embroiled in a conflict.<sup>1</sup>

The United Kingdom did not become a member of this European institution even though its representatives were invited to take part in negotiations. At that time, the British coal and steel industrial sectors were under state control, making joining the ECSC unfeasible. Nor did the British significantly participate in talks that led to the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) in 1957. The main sticking point was the British government's objection to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), as it would implement external tariffs on agricultural products, and at that time the United Kingdom was importing agricultural products from the Commonwealth in large quantities. Britain, therefore, along with Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Portugal, established a parallel trade organization called the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1960 as an alternative commercial organization for European countries unwilling to join the EEC. The United Kingdom saw its economic power within the Commonwealth and did not seek European

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<sup>1</sup> John Pinder and Simon Usherwood, *The European Union: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9-13.

integration.<sup>2</sup> As Winston Churchill once said, "we are with Europe, but not of it; we are linked but not compromised. We are associated but not absorbed. If Britain must choose between Europe and the open sea, she must always choose the open sea."<sup>3</sup>

Due to a weak British economy, the United Kingdom, nonetheless, decided to join the European Community (EC), which was actually three European organizations, the ECSC, the EEC and the EAEC, grouped together in 1967 into a single institutional structure. In order to better understand this change, it is necessary to document the basic sequence of events that happened after 1945.

The ruinous consequences of the Second World War could be seen throughout Europe, including Britain. British cities were in disarray as a result of repeated bombardments, hundreds of thousands of Britons were dead or injured, which later resulted in a labour force deficiency, the standard of living plummeted, and the decolonization of Africa and India substantially weakened the economy. In consequence of this economic downgrade, discontented British voters stopped trusting the establishment and opted for a change. The general election of 1945 ended with an unexpected landslide victory for the Labour Party. Winston Churchill, the then leader of the conservative Tories, was ousted by the Labour Party that promoted the idea of a welfare state. Between 1945 and 1951, the British government managed to revive the economy, but this revival diminished the popularity of the Labour Party. No longer in favor of austerity measures, high taxation and an unrighteous distribution of social benefits, the British middle class turned against Labour and restored the Tories to power. The Conservative Tories then repealed the austerity measures, but they sided with Labour in refusing European integration. During the 1950s, the unemployment rate was relatively low and stable, and the national debt was decreasing. A turn for the worse came in the 1960s and 70s, with an increase in unemployment and inflation. Although British economic growth was on the upswing, the British economy was unable to compete with the booming continental economies and other global players such as the United States or Japan. Under these circumstances, the British government reconsidered its stance on European integration.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Chloé Fabre, "The UK and the EU: More than 40 Years of Relationships Unfolded," *The New Federalist*, webzine of the *Young European Federalist*, May 26, 2013, Accessed February 12, 2017, <http://www.thenewfederalist.eu/The-UK-and-the-EU-more-than-40-years-of-relationships-unfolded,05776>.

<sup>3</sup> Winston Churchill, "Speech to the House of Commons" (London, May 11, 1953).

<sup>4</sup> David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain, 1945-1951* (London: Bloomsbury 2014), 143-47.

Britain made a request for accession to the EC twice, in 1963 and 1967, but Charles de Gaulle, the French president, vetoed the British application in both cases. He expressed several crucial reasons for his vetoes. Although, de Gaulle vehemently promoted European integration, he did not appreciate the close relations between the United Kingdom and the United States, which could allow Washington to indirectly intervene in European affairs. He also believed that Britain undermined the CAP. As long as de Gaulle was in power, the United Kingdom was unable to align with the EC. But de Gaulle resigned in 1969, which encouraged the United Kingdom to make a third request for admission. British requests for budgetary expectations and for transitional measures related to the CAP made the negotiations strenuous, but this time its application was approved, and the United Kingdom became an official member of the EC on 1 January 1973 under Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath.<sup>5</sup>

When a European country meets E.U. accession requirements and subsequently aligns with the European Union, it is required to undergo several legislative adjustments to become an official member. European law is supreme over all national legislations and no bill can be inconsistent with the European laws. However, the unwritten British constitution says that the sovereignty of British parliament is one of the cardinal pillars of the constitution. In order to incorporate European law into the British judicial system, the European Communities Act of 1972 was passed. Britain reluctantly consented to meet this requirement and transferred part of its sovereignty to Brussels. Despite the fact that Britain agreed to his condition, the British did not see themselves politically integrating any further.<sup>6</sup>

At that time, the Labour Party was strongly against the EC, and when the Labours came into power in 1975, they held a failed referendum on secession from the EC. The unwelcoming approach to the EC did not change with the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. The Iron Lady openly expressed her opposition to the EC and she was clearly against any political integration. As noted, the CAP policy was a sticking point in the process of the U.K. accession, since most of the European budget was spent on the CAP policy, whereas the United Kingdom's proportion of agriculture was substantially smaller, as

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, "Charles de Gaulle and Europe," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14 (2012): 53-77, Accessed February 12, 2017, <https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/revisionism.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Alistair Jones, *Britain and the European Union* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University 2007), 83-86.

opposed to continental European members. Therefore, Thatcher negotiated a rebate on the British contribution in 1984, and since then the United Kingdom has been entitled to receive a certain amount of money back. As far as the British sovereignty was concerned, she once stated, "working more closely together does not require power to be centralised in Brussels or decisions to be taken by an appointed bureaucracy."<sup>7</sup> She envisaged further European integration and did not desire to get involved in the political convergence. On the contrary, she was promoting a purely economic cooperation among national sovereign European nations.<sup>8</sup>

At the outset of the 1990s, John Major replaced Thatcher and continued in power until 1997. He signed the Maastricht Treaty, also known as the Treaty on European Union, in 1992, which officially created the contemporary European Union. However, Britain again disagreed with several demands in the Maastricht Treaty. Major negotiated exceptions regarding the adoption of the euro and the Social Chapter of the treaty, which would permit the implementation of social European law into British law. These dissentious steps once again demonstrated a British unwillingness to fully engage in the European project.<sup>9</sup>

A pro-European turn came in 1997, when Tony Blair, who was regarded as a pro-European politician, became prime minister and approved the Social Chapter. He even favored adopting the euro, but was dissuaded from doing so by a largely Euro-skeptic constituency.<sup>10</sup> Blair's popularity declined after September 11, 2001, when he engaged British forces and resources in U.S. president George W. Bush's "War on Terror."<sup>11</sup> It further declined after July 2005, when London was attacked by Islamic terrorists. In 2007, he was replaced by Labour Party leader Gordon Brown, who had the misfortune of becoming prime minister just before the start of the global economic crisis. He resigned in 2010 and David Cameron took his place.

In the course of Cameron's premiership, mass immigration of unskilled labor from eastern E.U. countries along with the global financial crisis of 2008 resulted in conservatives' debilitation. The economic deterioration in Britain created a breeding ground

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<sup>7</sup> Margaret Thatcher, "Speech to the College of Europe" (Bruges, September 20, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Jones, *Britain and the European Union*, 23-24.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>10</sup> Stuart Weir, "A 'Fresh Start' for Britain in Europe?" *OpenDemocracyUK*, January 18, 2013, Accessed April 01, 2017, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/stuart-weir/fresh-start-for-britain-in-europe>.

<sup>11</sup> "Tony Blair in Decline," *New York Times*, November 13, 2005, Accessed April 05, 2017, [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/13/opinion/tony-blair-in-decline.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/13/opinion/tony-blair-in-decline.html?_r=1).

for populists who profited from discontentment and castigated the European Union for the adverse situation. In an effort to weaken populist political parties, Cameron called for the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum as a means of allowing the British people to choose their desired direction. Of course, he did so while overly confident in the result.

During the referendum campaign, Cameron advocated Britain's continued membership in the European Union, although while a member of parliament he used to frequently criticize the European Union. He joined the Conservative Party as a researcher when Thatcher was in power and did not express objections to her Euro-skepticism. In the 1990s, he was appointed as an advisor to former Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont, who endorsed leaving the European Union in the 2016 referendum campaign. He even described himself as a skeptic when he was a backbencher. Cameron's change of rhetoric will be documented in more detail in the following chapter. In any case, it is questionable whether Cameron was the right person to represent the Remainers, taking his Euro-skeptic past into account.<sup>12</sup>

Ultimately, the British referendum held on 23 June 2016 went against Cameron and the European Union, as 51.9 percent of eligible voters decided to leave union.<sup>13</sup> Soon after, Cameron resigned, handing over the reins to Britain's second female prime minister, Theresa May, who would be responsible for leading the United Kingdom out of the European Union. Under May's leadership, the government invoked Article 50 of the European Treaty on European Union and launched a formal procedure for withdrawing the United Kingdom from the European Union on 29 March 2017.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Tom McTague, "David Cameron, the Accidental European," *Politico*, May 20, 2016, Accessed March 30, 2017, <http://www.politico.eu/article/david-cameron-accidental-european-brexite-referendum-conservative-tory-euroskeptic/>.

<sup>13</sup> "EU Referendum Results," *BBC News*, Accessed March 28, 2017, [http://www.bbc.com/news/politics/eu\\_referendum/results](http://www.bbc.com/news/politics/eu_referendum/results).

<sup>14</sup> Anushka Asthana and Rowena Mason, "Article 50: Theresa May to Call on UK to Unite after Letter Triggers Brexit," *The Guardian*, March 29, 2017, Accessed April 15, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/mar/28/theresa-may-to-call-on-britons-to-unite-as-she-triggers-article-50>.

## 2 THE FACTORS SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION

Currently, the mainstream media plays a sizeable albeit diminishing role in the distribution of information, which helps to shape public perceptions about politics, society, and culture. Although the mainstream media was a factor responsible for the outcome of the referendum, other various and sometimes unrelated factors were at play. These factors will be identified and analyzed in this chapter.

When Prime Minister David Cameron announced the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum on 22 February 2016, it automatically divided U.K. citizens into two groups: "Leavers" and "Remainers." The Leavers' campaign slogan became "Vote Leave," while the Remainers coalesced around the slogan, "Britain Stronger in Europe." Both campaigns attempted to address as many British voters as possible in order to subsequently initiate either renegotiations of current treaties with the European Union, which was a priority of the Remainers, or an intransigent withdrawal process desired by the Leavers. Campaigners, politicians, economists, and sundry other experts had to tackle a plethora of socioeconomic and political issues and distill them down for the electorate. Furthermore, emotionally-charged and often politically-incorrect discussions on the Internet also influenced opinions of voters.

The ensuing sections will identify and analyze each factor, so as to clarify the referendum results, which were 17 million (52 percent) in favor of Leaving, compared to 16 million (48 percent) in favor of Remaining, with an eligible voter turnout of over 72 percent.<sup>15</sup>

### 2.1 Political factor

Politics generally plays a substantial role in everyday life whether the public takes an interest in it or not, and influences almost every aspect of people's lives. Political discourses in Britain had a considerable effect on voters, as both campaigns shaped opinion of Britons across the whole of the United Kingdom. Over 33 million votes were cast. This section will examine the political climate, which led the masses to the ballot box to determine the future direction of their country.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



In 2010, David Cameron became prime minister as a conservatively-oriented politician and somewhat of a Euro-skeptic, which starkly contrasts with his contemporary pro-European stance. In January 2013 during his premiership, he pledged to call the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum on the condition that the conservatives would be reelected in the 2015 parliamentary elections. The reason why he settled on this option was that Britain has been facing mass immigration from Eastern European countries, especially Poland, since 2000, and contemporaneously with the financial crisis of 2008, the British had grown discontented with the conservatives' governance of the country. Populist political parties such as the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) led by Nigel Farage took advantage of this civic dissatisfaction. Spreading anti-European catchwords, UKIP increasingly gained political sway. Also, Cameron's own Conservative Party (a.k.a., the Tories) was not homogeneous in relation to the European Union insofar as several members were opposed to the union.<sup>16</sup> In pursuit of winning Britons' affections back and unifying the Tories, Cameron promised to call the referendum if reelected, and in this way diminish UKIP's popularity among the British public. His plan backfired, producing disunity instead. The day he announced the referendum, widely-known as Brexit, marked the beginning of the end of Cameron's political career as prime minister. For better comprehension of Cameron's failure, it is crucial to explicate events prior to the referendum.<sup>17</sup>

### 2.1.1 David Cameron's negotiations with E.U. member states

On 22 February 2016, David Cameron delivered a speech to the House of Commons declaring the referendum to be held on 23 June 2016. Despite Cameron's initial Euro-skepticism, he was actually in favor of remaining in the European Union and simultaneously a senior E.U. proponent. He endeavored to persuade the British of his genuine intentions to remain in the European block by his commitment to undergo intergovernmental negotiations with all 27 E.U. heads of state and governments about the

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<sup>16</sup> Steven Erlanger and Stephen Castle, "In 'Brexit' Vote, David Cameron Faces Problem of His Own Making," *New York Times*, June 21, 2016, Accessed April 15, 2017. [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/22/world/europe/david-cameron-brexit-european-union.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/22/world/europe/david-cameron-brexit-european-union.html?_r=0).

<sup>17</sup> Oliver Wright and Charlie Cooper, "The Speech That Was the Start of the End of David Cameron," *The Independent*, June 24, 2016, Accessed March 24, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-eu-referendum-david-cameron-resignation-announcement-2013-a7101281.html>.

role of the United Kingdom within the European Union. In the course of these negotiations, he was campaigning for Britain to stay in the union, provided that all member states would be agreeable to special British demands. Cameron concurrently pledged to resign from his office if the referendum did not go his way. Similarly to Thatcher's and Major's E.U. policies, the governance of the United Kingdom under Cameron once again demonstrated British reluctance in relation to the European Union.<sup>18</sup>

As far as Cameron's Euro-skepticism was concerned, it is noteworthy that Cameron, who used to deplore the European Union, could suddenly become a prominent figure for remaining. In private correspondence from 2000, Cameron laid down his platform: "no to the single currency, no to further transfer of powers from Westminster to Brussels and yes to renegotiations of areas like Fish where the EU has been a disaster for the UK."<sup>19</sup> Moreover, when he was one of the backbenchers in the House of Commons, he defined himself as skeptically-orientated and sternly against E.U. guidelines from Brussels. Unsurprisingly, Cameron was called into question for his past assertions. He obviously did not anticipate that calling the referendum could have more far-reaching consequences, not only for Britain but for his own political career. Whether his intentions were genuine or not, he could not afford to go against the European Union, as doing so would not undermine the populists. Caught in his own trap, Cameron supported the United Kingdom's continued membership in the European Union, competing against political opponents whose anti-European views he once partially shared.<sup>20</sup>

Cameron assessed a set of reforms covering areas such as the mobility of E.U. citizens, competitiveness, economic governance, and the sovereignty of the United Kingdom. He had long voiced discontent over the so-called "ever closer union,"<sup>21</sup> so one of his priorities was to withdraw Britain from further political integration. Insofar as the United Kingdom is one of eight nuclear-armed states of the world and the second largest economy in

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<sup>18</sup> David Cameron, "PM Commons Statement on EU Reform and Referendum: 22 February 2016," Speech, Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, London, February 22, 2016, Accessed March 8, 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-commons-statement-on-eu-reform-and-referendum-22-february-2016>.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Ashcroft and Isabel Oakeshott, *CALL ME DAVE: The Unauthorised Biography of David Cameron*, (London: Biteback, 2016), 40.

<sup>20</sup> McTague, "David Cameron, the Accidental European."

<sup>21</sup> "Ever closer union" refers to the incessant political centralization of the European nations to Brussels. Britain primarily aligned with the EC in 1973 for the purposes of economic cooperation and not for political convergence.

Europe, it was also in E.U. interest to come to a reciprocally-beneficial agreement. Cameron's team and representatives of the European Union collectively outlined a document, which committed to meeting most of Cameron's demands.<sup>22</sup> As far as the sovereignty of the United Kingdom was concerned, the document's final version read as follows:

It is recognised that the United Kingdom, in the light of the specific situation it has under the Treaties, is not committed to further political integration into the European Union. The substance of this will be incorporated into the Treaties at the time of their next revision in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Treaties and the respective constitutional requirements of the Member States, so as to make it clear that the references to ever closer union do not apply to the United Kingdom.<sup>23</sup>

Although the United Kingdom would be excluded from the conception of ever closer union in perpetuity, it was not specified when exactly the revisions would take place. Furthermore, Cameron's negotiating team also helped to strengthen the playing hands of the national parliaments. He negotiated the inclusion of a "red-card" mechanism, which stated that if 55 percent of the national parliaments reach an agreement on a certain issue, they would be entitled to block any proposal from the European Commission.<sup>24</sup>

Another negotiation concerned economic governance and the competitiveness of the United Kingdom within the Single Market. As for Britain, it was essential to outline a comprehensible relationship between euro and non-euro countries. Presently, countries using the euro as their currency hold a decision-making majority, and Britain along with other non-euro countries (mostly in Eastern Europe) are feckless to delay or veto any proposals of the Eurozone. On that account, Cameron required an explicit recognition that the euro is not regarded as the only currency of the European Union and, additionally, the United Kingdom would not be obliged to contribute to Eurozone bailouts. As far as competitiveness was concerned, the British government asked for a reduction in excessive

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<sup>22</sup> John Penrose, "David Cameron's End to Europe's 'Ever Closer Union' Means Britain Should Remain," *The Telegraph*, June 17, 2016, Accessed March 27, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/17/david-camersons-end-to-europes-ever-closer-union-means-britain-sh/>.

<sup>23</sup> *Draft Statement on Section A of the Decision of the Heads of State or Government, Meeting within the European Council, Concerning a New Settlement for the United Kingdom within the European Union*, Report, February 2, 2016, Accessed March 4, 2017, <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:3N1gCBmzBGwJ:www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/02/19-euco-conclusions/&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=sk>.

<sup>24</sup> Ian Traynor and Jennifer Rankin, "Cameron's EU Deal Talks: Potential Wins, Losses and Sticking Points," *The Guardian*, January 29, 2016, Accessed March 27, 2017,

E.U. regulations that incessantly worsened British entrepreneurialism and reduced the United Kingdom's ability to compete in the E.U. marketplace. Cameron got his way, with the European Union promising to pare down the red tape.<sup>25</sup>

The last negotiating area, the mobility of E.U. citizens, was simultaneously the most sensitive and problematic. The free movement of a labour force and the right to reside freely within the European Union are two principal pillars guaranteed by the European Union, and any restriction to welfare benefits and discrimination based on nationality is a serious violation of European laws. Nonetheless, Cameron called for new stringent rules concerning the mobility of E.U. migrants. He insisted that E.U. migrants must reside in the United Kingdom and contribute to social security for a minimum of four years if they want to be entitled to claim tax credits and child benefits. In addition, E.U. job-seekers in Britain would be unauthorized to draw any job-seeking benefits, and if they are unable to find employment within six months, they would have to leave the country. Also, Cameron wanted to stop migrants from sending child benefit money out of the United Kingdom. This part of the negotiations was the most strenuous of all. The European Union strongly objected to Cameron's welfare and mobility demands, since many E.U. citizens (Poles being the largest nationality) work and live in the United Kingdom. Mainly due to strong pressure from eastern E.U. countries, Cameron had to compromise with the European Union. He got a so-called four-year "emergency brake," which could restrict in-work benefits, but migrants would still be entitled to claim tax credits. Also, he partly failed in prohibiting E.U. migrants from sending child benefits to their home countries. They could still send the benefits to their home countries, but payments could not exceed the cost of living of a certain European country. As for the job-seeking benefits, new E.U. migrants would be banned from drawing benefits for three months, and if they were unable to find employment, they would be required to leave Britain.<sup>26</sup>

To summarize, Cameron and E.U. representatives drafted a special status for the United Kingdom that would become legally binding provided the British people decided to

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<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jan/29/david-camerons-eu-deal-negotiations-wins-losses-and-sticking-points>.

<sup>25</sup> George Parker and Alex Barker, "Cameron's EU Deal: What the UK Has — And Has Not — Secured," *Financial Times*, February 3, 2016, Accessed March 04, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/ed0b3516-c9a6-11e5-a8ef-ea66e967dd44>.

<sup>26</sup> *Draft Statement on Section A of the Decision of the Heads of State or Government*.

remain in the European Union. However, despite the renegotiated arrangements, the British voters did not find them satisfactory and eventually voted to leave. Liam Fox, a senior Conservative, asserted that "none of these changes even come close to the fundamental changes promised to the public."<sup>27</sup> After the British turned their back on the European Union, Cameron resigned, as promised, bringing his premiership to an end.

### **2.1.2 Referendum campaigns**

When the referendum was announced, the British political scene divided into two campaigns: Britain Stronger in Europe and Vote Leave. These two leading campaigns differed on numerous aspects such as trade, the E.U. budget, regulations, immigration, British global influence, and sovereignty. Both campaigns were comprised of smaller campaigning groups, political parties, and leading figures from various areas such as politics, business, media, and entertainment. Britain Stronger in Europe promoted the United Kingdom's continued membership in the European Union, whereas Vote Leave vehemently demanded an intransigent withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the union. The ensuing sections will examine variances between these two campaigns.

#### **2.1.2.1 *Britain Stronger in Europe***

Stuart Rose, a former executive chairman of the major British multinational retailer Marks & Spencer, was the chairman of Britain Stronger in Europe and a lobbyist for remaining in the European Union along with David Cameron, three former British prime ministers John Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, and other influential personalities such as David Sainsbury, a former supermarket magnate who donated 2.3 million pounds to Britain Stronger in Europe, and George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who contended that leaving the European Union would cause severe economic damages. Other significant campaigning groups that engaged in supporting the United Kingdom in the European Union were Labour In For Britain, Conservatives IN, the Liberal Democrats, the Green Party, and the Scottish National Party. These campaigns and political parties were

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<sup>27</sup> "Former Defense Secretary Liam Fox Hits Out at Proposed EU Reform Deal," *The Herald*, Accessed March 04, 2017, [http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/14247608.Former\\_defence\\_secretary\\_Liam\\_Fox\\_hits\\_out\\_at\\_proposed\\_EU\\_reform\\_deal/](http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/14247608.Former_defence_secretary_Liam_Fox_hits_out_at_proposed_EU_reform_deal/).

primarily regarded as pro-European and did not desire to leave the European Union, despite calling for reforms of the European Union.<sup>28</sup>

According to the Remainers, the U.K. membership in the European Union brings more advantages than disadvantages. Since the United Kingdom aligned with the EEC in 1973, its GDP has soared, growing faster than those of France and Germany. The European Union currently represents more than 500 million people, which makes it a major player in world affairs and helps it to negotiate better trade deals for Britain too. The Single Market, which Margaret Thatcher helped to build, enables all member states to trade with each other without economic barriers. Nowadays, 44 percent of British exports go to the European Union, and 48 percent of foreign investments come from the union. The Remainers insisted that in a globalized world, Britain is unable to face contemporary problems such as terrorism, climate change, and tax evasion without cooperation with other nations. They tried to make clear that being in the European Union requires compromises with global partners, which means that Britain does not always get what its citizens want. The Remainers were aware of imperfections of the European Union, but they perceived the British membership in the European Union as the best option.<sup>29</sup>

### **2.1.2.2 *Vote Leave***

Boris Johnson, a former mayor of London, became a crucial figure of the Vote Leave campaign. The Leavers' purpose was to withdraw the United Kingdom from the European Union. Similar to Donald Trump's rhetoric in the United States, the Leavers promised the British voters to take back control of their own country. Various politicians from the Conservatives, Labours, and Liberal Democrats engaged in supporting the Vote Leave campaign. Michael Gove, a Conservative cabinet minister and a close friend of Cameron, endorsed leaving the European Union, blaming it for devastating the British fishing industry. Unsurprisingly, UKIP became a distinctive Euro-skeptic political party adamantly promoting the U.K. withdrawal. Nigel Farage, a member of UKIP, who long castigated the

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<sup>28</sup> "The People Hoping to Persuade UK to Vote to Stay in the EU," *BBC News*, June 13, 2016, Accessed April 17, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-34505076>.

<sup>29</sup> "The Arguments for Voting Remain," *Economist*, June 14, 2016, Accessed April 18, 2017, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/buttonwood/2016/06/eu-referendum-2>.

European Union, joined other anti-European politicians in calling for British sovereignty totally independent of Brussels' supranational institutions.<sup>30</sup>

According to the Leavers, the United Kingdom should diversify its trade relations with other global players such as China or India. However, only the European Union is currently authorized to conclude trade contracts, and thus they demanded secession from the European Union. Thereafter, Britain could independently make new trade deals with other world powers. Generally, for the Leavers, the European Union was a hindrance to almost every aspect such as immigration, law, employment, clout, finance, and sovereignty. Immigration cannot be controlled in its entirety by the British government as long as Britain is part of the European Union, and immigration correlates with jobs in their opinion. In the Leavers' view, unskilled labour from Eastern European countries decreased wages, and the majority of immigrants abused British social benefits. They also emphasized that Britain, as a former empire, can still renew its leading position in the world by re-engaging with the Commonwealth. As far as the sovereignty was concerned, the Leavers denounced the concept of ever closer union and called for an ultimate withdrawal. Many times, their arguments were called populist or far-fetched and taken out of context. Nevertheless, the British voters decided to leave the European Union. The reason why almost 52 percent of the British voters made this choice will be examined in more detail in the social and demographic chapter.<sup>31</sup>

## 2.2 Economic factor

The United Kingdom is nowadays the fifth largest economy in the world based on its GDP, which equals 2.65 trillion dollars. Due to today's globalized world, the tertiary economic sector, which is comprised of services such as communication, transport, health care, education, finances, insurance, etc., has become the largest sector of the economy in the most developed countries including Britain. This sector contributes 75 percent to the British GDP. Manufacturing is the second biggest contributor, and agriculture composes only a little proportion of the GDP. After the 2016 referendum, economic outlooks for

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<sup>30</sup> "The People Hoping to Persuade UK to Vote to Leave the EU," *BBC News*, June 13, 2016, Accessed April 18, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-36033481>.

<sup>31</sup> Ben Riley-Smith, "Leave or Remain in the EU? The Arguments for and against Brexit," *The Telegraph*, June 16, 2016, Accessed April 19, 2017,



Britain are uncertain and France, Britain's rival and the world's sixth largest economy, could potentially overtake Britain. After Prime Minister Theresa May activated the formal withdrawal process from the European Union by Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty on 29 March 2017, Britain has to conclude new trade agreements within 2 years with the European Union. However, several experts asserted that this time span will be insufficient for concluding a new contract. In this case, the European Union and Britain are entitled to elongate this period but only with the unanimous consent of all E.U. member states. Otherwise, Britain will simply leave the European Union without any trade agreements.<sup>32</sup> Economists predict that GDP could decrease by 2.2 to 9.5 percent, depending on new trade deals Britain would negotiate with the European Union. However, the International Monetary Fund stated that the British growth could slightly decelerate, but would ultimately stay between 1.05 - 1.09 percent.<sup>33</sup>

The Leavers and Remainers led boisterous campaigns against each other using sundry economic arguments, oftentimes completely dissimilar. According to the Remainers, their opponents frequently manipulated figures and provided half-truths to the public. After that, many inadequately-informed Britons were susceptible to the Leavers' anti-European catchwords. In any case, Britain is presently facing new challenges, and its future as the world's fifth largest economy has become uncertain. This section will document economic arguments used by both campaigns and to what extent they reflected actuality.

### 2.2.1 U. K. budgetary expenditures on the E.U. budget

The most controversial topic during the referendum campaign became the E.U. budget and British contributions to it. The Leavers created an image that the European Union is way too expensive for Britain, and billions that the British are obliged to pay could be spent in their own country instead. As far as British contributions were concerned, the Vote Leave campaign asserted that Britain, as a net contributor, has weekly sent 350 million

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<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/16/leave-or-remain-in-the-eu-the-arguments-for-and-against-brex-it/>.

<sup>32</sup> Ross Hawkins, "Reality Check: Could Brexit Be Negotiated in Two Years?" *BBC News*, March 30, 2016, Accessed April 21, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-35926576>.

<sup>33</sup> Prableen Bajpai, "The World's Top 10 Economies," Investopedia, March 03, 2017, Accessed April 20, 2017, <http://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/022415/worlds-top-10-economies.asp>.

pounds to the European Union and got loads of bureaucracy in return. By contrast, the Remainers accused the Leavers of misleading and taking figures out of context.<sup>34</sup>

The fact is that Britain truly is a net contributor to the European Union, however, figures presented by the Leavers were found to be false and misleading. Each member state must pay a membership fee, which is a contribution to the E.U. budget. In 2015, Britain paid 13 billion pounds for the whole year, which equaled roughly 250 million pounds a week. Incidentally, the British budget in 2015 added up to over 700 billion pounds, therefore British expenditures to the E.U. budget were less than 2 percent.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Margaret Thatcher negotiated a rebate in 1984 on the British membership fee, which amounted to 5 billion pounds in 2015. Altogether, the real U.K. net contribution was approximately 8.5 billion pounds or 164 million pounds a week, and not the putative 350 million that the Leavers vehemently promoted. In addition, they also propagated that Britain got only scores of excessive bureaucratic regulations in return for its payments, which has been found to be false as well. The U.K. membership in the European Union has brought many advantages to its economy.<sup>36</sup>

### 2.2.2 The United Kingdom's benefits from the European Union

The Remainers keenly propagated benefits based on Britain's membership but also proposed reforms in certain areas where necessary, such as Cameron's requirement not to be included in further political convergence. This section will concentrate on the economic benefits that the United Kingdom has received as a member of the European Union.

Membership has its privileges, among them giving Britain access to four guaranteed freedoms: free movement of goods without tariffs, quotas, and border control, free supply of services, free movement of capital, and free movement of labour and people, which means that all E.U. citizens are entitled to reside, live, study, work, and retire in any E.U.

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<sup>34</sup> Caroline Crampton, "Do We Really Send the EU £350m a Week?" *NewStatesman*, June 16, 2016, Accessed April 20, 2017, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/economy/2016/06/do-we-really-send-eu-350m-week>.

<sup>35</sup> Tim Wallace, "Budget 2015 Summary and Highlights: Everything You Need to Know," *The Telegraph*, July 12, 2015, Accessed April 20, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/budget/11724370/key-points-summer.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Crampton, "Do We Really Send the EU £350m a Week?"

member state. As noted, the British GDP is mainly comprised of services, and therefore Britain has significantly benefited from the free supply of services thus far.<sup>37</sup>

According to census data of the Office for National Statistics, 1.2 million Britons born in the United Kingdom presently reside in other E.U. member states, and approximately another 900,000 are long-term residents spread across the European Union. The majority of them live in Spain, France, Ireland, and Germany.<sup>38</sup> Also, all British nationals have the right to retire in any E.U. state and still draw their pension from the United Kingdom. This also applies reversely for Britons, who have resided and worked in any E.U. country and wish to retire in the United Kingdom. European law guarantees that insurance records and social security contributions are recognized in Britain too if a British national worked in any E.U. country.<sup>39</sup>

As noted, 44 percent of exports go to the European Union, and a report from the Centre for Economics and Business Research declared that 3.1 million British jobs are directly linked to the United Kingdom's exports to the European Union. They calculated that the British economy earned 187 billion pounds due to exports to the European Union. This figure could increase by 790,000 by 2030 should Britain remain with the union. The Confederation of British Influence (CBI), which is a British influential business organization representing 190,000 businesses that employ 7 million people, stated that the European Union has had a positive impact on their business. According to the CBI, the British membership in the European Union is worth 4-5 percent of GDP or, alternatively, 62-78 billion pounds per year. Nowadays, the European Union is the world's economy, which makes it a major player in terms of economic power. On that account, Britain alone cannot regain its former economic dominance. As a former president of the European Commission stated, "the largest, proudest European nation cannot hope to shape globalisation – or even retain marginal relevance - by itself. It is only together that we have

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<sup>37</sup> David Kauders, *Understanding Brexit Options: What Future for Britain?* (Cardiff: Sparkling Books 2016), 54-56.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph O'Leary, "Brits Abroad: How Many People from the UK Live in Other EU Countries?" Full Fact, March 23, 2017, Accessed April 26, 2017, <https://fullfact.org/europe/how-many-uk-citizens-live-other-eu-countries/>.

<sup>39</sup> Kayleigh Lewis, "What Has the European Union Ever Done for Us?" *The Independent*, June 25, 2016, Accessed April 26, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/eu-what-has-european-union-done-for-us-david-cameron-brexite-a6850626.html>.

the weight to influence the big picture."<sup>40</sup> Also, Barack Obama, the former president of the United States, emphasized the importance of the United Kingdom's membership in the European Union in order to strengthen transatlantic relations.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the Remainers' effort to persuade the British voters to vote Remain, Britons looked with favor upon the Leavers' arguments. The ensuing section will document that many British voters were deceived and misled by populists who ultimately admitted that they were wrong.

### 2.3 Social factor

Thus far, the previous sections demonstrated that the formation of British public opinion was caused by more factors, which eventually resulted in the ultimate decision to leave. Excluding politics and economics, a social factor also impacted the voters' decision-making. Nowadays, modern technologies and the Internet are an integral part of people's everyday lives and daily provide myriads of pieces of information. Furthermore, in today's fast-moving times, people are easily susceptible to falsehood and unable to differentiate between verity and untruth. If emotionally-charged and politically-incorrect discussions are added, then it becomes difficult to recognize facts from falsity. Such an ambience is today often portrayed as a "post-truth" or "post-factual" society.<sup>42</sup> It has created a breeding ground for populists, whose chief purpose is to disseminate mendacity and half-truths.

In 2016, the world experienced two unexpected shocks. Firstly, Britons decided to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum. Secondly, Donald Trump became president of the United States. In both cases, the mainstream media failed to predict the results. Either the mainstream media falsely informed the public, or the voters lied when surveyed. In any case, it has demonstrated that people have become hostile to the establishment. Alexander Betts, a social scientist, stated that "the fault line of contemporary politics is between those that embrace globalization and those that fear

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<sup>40</sup> José Manuel Durão Barroso, "Ten Years at the Helm of the European Commission: Some Reflections on Europe," Speech, Chatham House, London, October 20, 2014, Accessed April 26, 2017, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-14-701\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-14-701_en.htm).

<sup>41</sup> Lewis, "What Has the European Union Ever Done for Us?"

<sup>42</sup> Ralph Keyes, *The Post-truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 35-39.

globalization."<sup>43</sup> Whether it is Trump's election or the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, people on both sides of the Atlantic identically expressed their desire to take back control of their state borders and put the interests of their countries first. This antipathy towards globalization has not been present only in Britain but also throughout Europe as well.

### 2.3.1 Impact of social media on Britons' decision-making

The influence of the Internet is enormous. Such social networks as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become habitual mobile applications used on a daily basis. Mobile users are presently capable of receiving scores of information in a second, however, they are incapable of sorting them out. Two leading campaign groups profoundly engaged in shaping public opinion in Britain. Among them, the Leavers obviously managed to better communicate their agenda than the Remainers.

According to Vyacheslav Polonski, who is a network scientist at the University of Oxford, based on collected data, the Leavers' campaign more actively communicated with their voters on social networks, whereas the Remainers' campaign quite underestimated this means of communication.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, the Leavers managed to address the British undecided people with their anti-European catch phrases and mendacious rhetoric. To exemplify, Nigel Farage along with Boris Johnson and Michael Grove vigorously propagated a fact across the United Kingdom that the 350 million pounds Britain has weekly contributed to the European Union could be used to fund the National Health Service if Britons opted for a Brexit vote. After the referendum, Farage asserted in one television interview that this statement was a mistake. However, this mendacity was part of the larger Leavers' propaganda in Britain that worked well.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Alexander Betts, "Why Brexit Happened and What to Do Next," Ted Talks, June 2016, Accessed March 26, 2017, [https://www.ted.com/talks/alexander\\_betts\\_why\\_brexit\\_happened\\_and\\_what\\_to\\_do\\_next#/t-251179](https://www.ted.com/talks/alexander_betts_why_brexit_happened_and_what_to_do_next#/t-251179).

<sup>44</sup> Vyacheslav Polonski, "Impact of Social Media on the Outcome of the EU Referendum," EU Referendum Analysis 2016, July 04, 2016, Accessed April 27, 2017, <http://www.referendumanalysis.eu/eu-referendum-analysis-2016/section-7-social-media/impact-of-social-media-on-the-outcome-of-the-eu-referendum/>.

<sup>45</sup> Kate McCann and Tom Morgan, "Nigel Farage: £350 Million Pledge to Fund the NHS Was a Mistake," *The Telegraph*, June 24, 2016, Accessed April 26, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/24/nigel-farage-350-million-pledge-to-fund-the-nhs-was-a-mistake/>.

At present, social media plays a key role in perceiving contemporary politics, since more and more people spend their time online. Accordingly, social networks will evidently become a significant and influential means of shaping public opinion. Evidently, the Leavers' anti-European well-organized propaganda spread massively throughout Britain, and it became difficult for the Remainers to confront and effectively prove the Leaver's falsehoods.

### 2.3.2 Nationalism

Prior to the referendum, the British voters, regardless of their political persuasion, paid predominant heed to the standard of living in the United Kingdom, future outlooks for the economy, the functioning of the National Health Service, and legal autonomy. The Remainers overwhelmingly focused on economic benefits of the European Union and the Single Market. Moreover, they promoted a European identity as part of a British identity, whereas the Leavers, on the contrary, spread their anti-European rhetoric along with strong national messages mainly across the whole of England and Wales. They promised to make the United Kingdom a global independent player again and take back control of British borders. In England, 53.4 percent of voters chose to leave the European Union. Strong Englishness resulted in endorsing the Leavers' national arguments. By contrast, the Scottish voted 62 percent to be embodied in the union, which means that they were more likely to accept the European identity above their own identity. Scotland's relationship with the European Union has been more-comradely in comparison with the British government. Additionally, Nicola Sturgeon, current First Minister of Scotland, asserted that Scotland would try to gain full membership in the European Union, provided the United Kingdom could not access the Single Market. To do so, she would have to call another independence referendum about leaving the United Kingdom. However, based on the Scotland Act 1998, the British parliament would have to give its consent, otherwise the referendum would not be legally binding.<sup>46</sup> Thereafter, Scotland would have to apply for E.U. membership and meet the accession criteria, also known as the Copenhagen criteria, in order to become a member of the European Union. For now, Scotland has to wait until Britain officially

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<sup>46</sup> Ashley Cowburn, "Nicola Sturgeon Says Scotland Will Pursue EU Membership after Independence," *The Independent*, March 19, 2017, Accessed April 27, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nicola-sturgeon-scottish-independence-referendum-eu-membership-back-of-queue-spain-a7638101.html>.

leaves the European Union. It depends on new trade deals and the United Kingdom's position within the European Union whether the Scottish government takes next steps.<sup>47</sup>

Brexit mobilized national identities across the whole of the United Kingdom. The referendum results demonstrated that English nationalism largely helped the Leavers with achieving victory over the Remainers' campaign. Since England is the most populated country in Britain, the Leavers properly aimed at their target audience. Contrarily, the Leavers' argumentation did not work in Scotland. However, taking the size of the Scottish population into consideration, it is apparent that the Scots could not rival the English.

## 2.4 Demographic and geographical factors

It is unsurprising that the referendum campaign divided the British public to a large extent. A division of Britain between the Leavers and Remainers could be seen throughout the whole of the United Kingdom, not only politically but also demographically and geographically. While one region overwhelmingly embraced the continued British membership, another one contrarily declared for a hard withdrawal from the European Union. This section will examine and analyze the demographic and geographical divisions within the United Kingdom, so as to explain the uneven voting patterns.

### 2.4.1 Demographic division

Demography is a statistical study of a population, which encompasses pivotal factors such as age, education, earnings, and occupation. When the referendum results were released, many analyses pointed to a generation gap, along with educational and income backgrounds, which divided Britons in the 2016 referendum.

#### 2.4.1.1 Age

Age was a prominent factor in the division of the British voters. In the 1975 referendum, the British embraced the EEC, with 67 percent of voters consenting in joining the European project. However, Britain entered into a predominantly economic union and not political at that time. Over the last 4 decades, elder nationals have obviously changed their minds on the European Union, as evinced by their vote to leave it. In the early days, reminiscences of the Second World War were still strong, and European cooperation was

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<sup>47</sup> William Outhwaite, *Brexit: Sociological Responses* (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 20-22.



regarded as a key means of eschewing future conflict. Moreover, those who went against the EEC back then were demonized. The contemporary European Union is much more politically integrated than the EEC was. In the 2016 referendum, elders largely voted against the contemporary European Union.<sup>48</sup> As a result, younger British generations started to accuse older voters of betrayal, while the elderly argued that it was youths' fault for not voting in large numbers.

Based on surveys and polls, voters age 18 to 24 predominantly voted to remain in the European Union. However, younger people, generally apathetic over global affairs, did not take as a great interest in voting as older people. Eventually, 64 percent of registered voters age 18 to 34 casted their votes, which may seem to be a large number, but it pales in comparison to the 90 percent elderly voting turnout.<sup>49</sup> As age increased, support for the European Union decreased. Young people between age 18 and 24 expressed a keenly positive opinion of the European Union and voted 71 percent in favor of continued E.U. membership. The middle-aged, from 30 to 50, were divided, with 54 percent voting to remain and 46 percent voting to leave. On the contrary, 60 percent of the elderly voted to leave.<sup>50</sup>

In 2014, 16 and 17-year-olds were permitted to cast their votes in the Scottish independence referendum, but the British government did not grant them the right to vote in the 2016 referendum. The Remainers argued that not allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to vote is a shame, regardless of results.<sup>51</sup> Even so, the influence of their vote would have been minimal and would not have changed the overall result.

#### 2.4.1.2 Education

Level of education influenced Brexit as well. Statistically, less-educated people had an inclination to vote for leaving the European Union, whereas those holding university

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<sup>48</sup> James Walsh, "Britain's 1975 Europe Referendum: What Was It Like Last Time?" *The Guardian*, February 24, 2016, Accessed April 19, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/feb/25/britains-1975-europe-referendum-what-was-it-like-last-time>.

<sup>49</sup> Toby Helm, "EU Referendum: Youth Turnout Almost Twice as High as First Thought," *The Observer*, July 10, 2016, Accessed March 19, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jul/09/young-people-referendum-turnout-brexite-twice-as-high>.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Moore, "How Britain Voted," YouGov, June 27, 2016, Accessed March 19, 2017, <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2016/06/27/how-britain-voted/>.

<sup>51</sup> Ebby Ferguson, "EU Referendum: The Fact 16 and 17-Year-Olds Couldn't Vote on the Most Important Decision of Their Lives is a Disgrace," *The Independent*, June 27, 2016, Accessed April 19, 2017,

degrees were predisposed to support the United Kingdom's continued membership. In this regard, a comparison of two cities, Middlesbrough and Cambridge, is worthwhile. Middlesbrough, an industrial town in north east England, home to 175,000, consist of several districts. Two of them, Brambles and Thorntree, are home to a large percentage of citizens without a university education. Accordingly, 82.5 percent of the voters in these districts voted to leave the European Union. Oppositely, in the city of Cambridge, which has a prestigious and high-quality university and is home to 125,000, 87.8 percent voted to remain in the European Union.<sup>52</sup>

If the British population is divided into two groups, those without a university degree and those with it, then clearly level of education influenced the results of the referendum. Among those without degree, 70 percent voted to leave. Whereas, 68 percent of degree holders voted to remain. Of course, education is also tied to income.<sup>53</sup>

#### **2.4.1.3 Occupation and earnings**

Income did not substantially influence decision-making in comparison with education and age, but it still played a role in shaping British opinion. Along with the Leavers' anti-immigration campaign, the British started worrying about their jobs and wages, which influenced final decision in the referendum. Britons who overwhelmingly embraced the European Union tended to be from the middle and upper classes, with an annual income over 20,000 pounds. On the contrary, working-class people, whose annual income did not exceed 20,000 pounds had a tendency to vote Leave.<sup>54</sup>

Clearly then, age, education, and earnings were three fundamental elements determining voting preferences. In a majority of cases, all three elements were closely related. The elderly, working-class people with low-wage jobs tented to vote Leave, whereas young educated people inclined to vote Remain.

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<http://www.independent.co.uk/student/istudents/eu-referendum-result-brex-it-student-votes-at-16-remain-leave-europe-a7101736.html>.

<sup>52</sup> Paul Waugh, "Revealed: Britain's Deep Divisions in the Brexit Vote, with Education, Race and Age Key Factors," *The Huffington Post*, February 06, 2017, Accessed March 18, 2017, [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/brexit-new-eur-referendum-bbc-analysis-age-race-educational-qualification\\_uk\\_58986ffce4b0a1dcbd02faf7](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/brexit-new-eur-referendum-bbc-analysis-age-race-educational-qualification_uk_58986ffce4b0a1dcbd02faf7).

<sup>53</sup> Moore, "How Britain Voted."

<sup>54</sup> Christopher Hope, "Britain's Ruling Classes Were Only Group to Vote to Stay in the EU at Referendum," *The Telegraph*, September 30, 2016, Accessed March 21, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/29/britains-ruling-classes-were-only-group-to-vote-to-stay-in-the-e/>.

## 2.4.2 Geographical division

The geographical division of the United Kingdom after Brexit became the most frequently analyzed factor. Once the results came out, it appeared that the United Kingdom did not vote uniformly. Northern Ireland and Scotland together voted Remain, whereas England (excluding London) and Wales clearly favored Leave. In this instant, the United Kingdom proved to be a misnomer.

### 2.4.2.1 *England and Wales*

Based on the results, England and Wales are nowadays regarded as rather Euro-skeptic countries that voted against the European Union. However, 60 percent of Londoners voted to remain in the European Union. Such a pro-European outcome was typically expected in Scotland or Northern Ireland but not in England. London is a multicultural city full of immigrants, high-ranked universities, and young educated people with a considerably higher standard of living compared to other parts of England. These facts clearly predetermined a positive attitude of Londoners towards the European Union.<sup>55</sup>

However, the rest of England and Wales largely voted to Leave. The Welsh voted 53 to 47 percent to withdraw from the European Union and the English 53.4 to 46.6 percent. England and Wales together represent approximately 57 million citizens, whereas Scotland and Northern Ireland are home to only 7 million. As for Wales, this part of the United Kingdom is the poorest and is often overlooked by the British government. In addition, Wales has experienced internal immigration of English, many of them right-wing, supporting UKIP. Also, Wales lacks a national media, which would have allowed it to more deeply engage in the referendum campaign. The majority of Welsh have minimum knowledge of the European Union, and debates there were mainly focused on British problems with immigration.<sup>56</sup>

England, on the other hand, is the most populated state in the United Kingdom. Within England, mainly older people voted, and they voted to leave, whereas younger generations,

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<sup>55</sup> Ryan O'Donovan, "EU Referendum: Why did London Vote to Remain Part of the EU While the Rest of the Country Voted Out?," *Getwestlondon*, June 24, 2016, Accessed March 22, 2017, <http://www.getwestlondon.co.uk/news/west-london-news/eu-referendum-london-vote-remain-11521735>.

<sup>56</sup> Ellie Mae O'Hagan, "Wales Voted for Brexit Because It Has Been Ignored by Westminster for Too Long," *The Independent*, June 25, 2016, Accessed March 21, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/brexit-wales-eu-referendum-vote-leave-uk-ignored-by-westminster-a7102551.html>.

who might have voted to remain, demonstrated voter apathy. Also, the overwhelming majority of British industry is situated in England, especially in the north in places like Middlesbrough. Working-class and less-educated people tended to vote to leave the European Union.<sup>57</sup>

#### ***2.4.2.2 Scotland and Northern Ireland***

Scotland and Northern Ireland, contrarily, expressed their aspiration to continue to be embodied in the European Union with other 27 E.U. member states. They collectively profited from the European Union and did not wish to leave it due to advantages that membership has brought to their regions. The Remainers believed that many enterprises would have to be shut down as they could no longer compete with duty free products from the European Union if Britain was out.

Northern Ireland has a small regional economy, which can nowadays do trade across Europe only due to the Single Market. Because of its size, Northern Ireland has to rely on agriculture, tourism, and foreign investments. None of these fields could intensively thrive if Northern Ireland is not a legitimate member of the European Union. In the course of 25 years, billions of pounds have been invested in Northern Ireland which helped to create a competitive environment and thousands of new job opportunities. That is the reason why 55.8 percent of voters desired to remain in the European Union. Also, Northern Ireland would have to reestablish a border between the Republic of Ireland resulting in border control and aggravating cooperation between each other.<sup>58</sup>

As far as Scotland was concerned, 62 percent of Scots also voted to remain in the European Union. This closely correlates with a British-Scottish identity. Scots perceive their country as part of Europe and do not wish to lose a global influence. For such small countries as Scotland, it is more advantageous to be in company with other 27 E.U. member states and form a bigger association. Economically-cooperating nations grow faster than isolated countries. If the United Kingdom would not conclude any trade

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<sup>57</sup> Jonn Elledge and Mike Brown, "Factory Towns: Which British Cities Still Have Big Manufacturing Industries?" CityMetric, October 30, 2015, Accessed April 19, 2017, <http://www.citymetric.com/business/factory-towns-which-british-cities-still-have-big-manufacturing-industries-1540>.

agreements with the union, Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland, would call for independence referendum.<sup>59</sup>

To conclude, England and Wales clearly expressed to leave the European Union, however, Scotland and Northern Ireland feel to be part of the European Union. As a result, the United Kingdom, nowadays, faces an internal crisis caused by Brexit and forthcoming years will show if the current United Kingdom manages to unify present-day divided British society.

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<sup>58</sup> Carmen Fishwick, "Why Northern Irish and Irish Voters Want to Remain in the EU," *The Guardian*, June 20, 2016, Accessed March 21, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/20/why-northern-irish-and-irish-voters-want-to-remain-in-the-eu>.

<sup>59</sup> Ian Johnston, "EU Referendum: Scotland Voted Remain 'to Live in an Outward-looking Country, Not a Diminished Little Britain'," *The Independent*, June 27, 2016, Accessed April 30, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-scotland-eu-referendum-result-snp-scottish-independence-what-it-means-a7106086.html>.

## CONCLUSION

On 23 June 2016, the British people expressed their profound dissent in the United Kingdom European Union Membership Referendum regarding the United Kingdom's continued membership in the European Union. 51.9 percent of the electorate voted for withdrawing the United Kingdom from the union. The referendum results subsequently demonstrated how divided the British public remained over Brexit. Britons who desired to be embodied in the European Union were named the Remainers, whereas the Leavers represented the British people calling for an intransigent withdrawal of the United Kingdom. Additionally, two major leading campaigns were created to lobby either for Britain's ongoing affiliation with the European Union (Britain Stronger in Europe) or for terminating Britain's 40-year relationship with the union (Vote Leave). Both campaigning groups used a plethora of sundry socio-economic and political arguments in order to persuade the British voters to vote Remain or Leave. The Remainers mainly focused on economic benefits within the European Union, and their pro-European agenda predominantly addressed young British voters holding university degrees along with Britons from upper-class backgrounds. Contrarily, the Leavers propagated anti-European rhetoric and vehemently promoted departing from the European Union. They purposely disseminated half-truths and mendacity, which resulted in a deceptively-informed and misled public. Thereafter, less-educated and working-class people were susceptible to the Leavers' anti-European catchwords and voted Leave. Moreover, large numbers of the elderly desired to leave the union, whereas younger generations were unable to mobilize in such quantities. This actuality reflected on a geographical division of the United Kingdom as well. The referendum results demonstrated that Wales and England, excluding London, voted to leave. England is the most populated and industrial state in Britain. Taking the high elderly voting turnout into account along with that of working-class people employed in manufacturing, it is unsurprising that England tended towards leaving the European Union. On the contrary, Northern Ireland and Scotland overwhelmingly voted Remain. The Scots' relationship towards the European Union is more amiable, and Northern Ireland is nowadays closely interconnected with the E.U. member state Ireland. After Prime Minister Theresa May activated Article 50, the United Kingdom's negotiations with the European Union are underway. The future direction of the United Kingdom remains unknown at this time, as the exit procedure is extremely complicated and should take at least two years.

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