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THE BREXIT EFFECT: THE UK CITIZENS' ATTITUDES
IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING THE REFERENDUM

Supervisor: Martin Mölder, PhD

Tartu 2021

I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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ABSTRACT

According to the rational choice theory, political parties seek to maximise their utility in gaining extensive support of the electorate. Hence, after the Brexit referendum 2016, the Conservative party was supposed to strategically encompass Eurosceptical policies - which correspond to the electorate's demand - and secure its capacity to cope with the Brexit negotiations and delivering the withdrawal. In parallel, the Labour party was heavily criticised for the party leader's vague position on the issue, insufficient and lacklustre work, and poor criticism of the Conservatives. Therefore, there is an assumption that the issue of Brexit caused aligning the two major political parties with the electorate in the context of the withdrawal.

This Master's thesis examines how the two major parties reacted to and aligned with the voters' political demands to secure the state's economy, control the influx of immigrants, and reform the UK-EU relations in light of Brexit. Three waves of European Social Survey data sets were selected, which made it possible to track how the two parties started encompassing the European issues in the context of the Brexit negotiations. In the logistic regression models built for 2012, 2016, and 2018, the increasing inter-parties gap, i.e. polarisation was revealed, concerning the key policy dimensions linked to the Brexit process. Over the timespan, the differentiation has become much clearer, meaning that the Conservative party - by securing its position as the party delivering Brexit - responded to the political requests of a concrete segment of the electorate demanding to "Get Brexit Done". In opposite, the Labour party did attract voters (in the aftermath) with a lower level of economic satisfaction and rather positive attitudes towards immigrants and European integration.

1. Introduction

In 1973, the UK had joined the European Economic Community (EEC) without the express consent of the British People. Due to the fact that within the European project the UK was given rather limited capacity to keep dominating in Europe and its global affairs, it led to "prejudice and Brexit" (Crozier, 2020, p. 656). Even though the British unwritten constitution did not demand the public vote on any foreign policy issues, the European issue has been, one way or another, influencing the political agenda and playing field in the state over the last 50 years. During the Brexit political campaign, Eurosceptics argued that the UK had joined the EEC with "no suggestion that we would suffer any loss of political and economic sovereignty" (Williamson, 2015), whereas "the British people were not getting what we were led to believe we were voting for" (Farage, 2012). Hence, the referendum 2016, on the one hand, might impress by the fact that the British system exercised direct democracy and ensured the public decision on the highly-demanded issue. However, on the other hand, in reality, Brexit demonstrated the vulnerability of British democracy and long-lasting electorate's awareness failure, having simplified the strategic future of the state by a binary nature (Dunin-Wasowicz, 2017) of the vote and politicised the Brexit issue (Hobolt, 2016) as the parties' tactical reason for subsequent elections.

In 2016, "the anti-elite-anti-EU combination"(Gifford, 2006) had masterly mobilised the electorate to cast protest votes against David Cameron who was a Europhile. Furthermore, the Conservative government's financial support, provided exclusively to the pro-Remain campaign, became a substantial reason for the electorate with anti-establishment attitudes to vote against the current regime, rather than on the European question itself. It demonstrated that the referendum was framed as a chance for David Cameron to reconcile inner controversies within the party giving a promise to conduct the referendum. So, the referendum itself was narrated as a "battle of the people against the political elite" (Landale, 2016).

Hence, the very basis of the British political tradition of "wise government" was questioned as "Britain have had enough of experts" (Gove, 2016). Hence, voting "to leave" entailed fighting the current, pro-remain political elites and standing for leaders which were much distant from the political experts' environment, having mainly shared

messages on threats of migrants' influx, worsening public opinion on the EU in general (Gavin, 2018).

English exceptionalism has been framed into a public discourse of the EU reformation demands meant to demonstrate a particular "British superiority" (Gifford, 2006, p. 329). However, a lack of such reforms, as Glencross (2014) argues, has been used by Eurosceptics leading to the British scepticism growth.

Brexit was not the intention of either of the two leading parties, the Conservatives nor Labour. In parallel, third parties did address the EU referendum and European issues in the parliament before 2016: e.g. the Liberal Democrats proposed a call for the in-out referendum in 2007, while UKIP was gaining momentum after the party won a majority in the European election 2014. The very decision to hold the referendum in 2016 became a failed gamble for David Cameron. He failed to reconcile Eurosceptics within the party, the pro-European coalition with the Lib Dems, and other pro-European allies, i.e. trading off the European question (Cowley, 2012). Hence, Brexit became an unexpected event due to multiple circumstances coming together and resulting in the main parties having to cope with it.

For the last 95 years, the share of votes of the two major parties, the Conservatives and Labour, had been exceeding any other political rivals (Clark, 2021). Hence, the political discourse in the British political system had been dominated by the two parties, whereas any alternative viewpoints or perspectives have never been rooted into the "governmentality" and political consciousness, because of the first-past-the-post system. Thus, both prominent players, the Conservatives and Labour have come to the fore in shaping political agenda and evolving the political demand to react to the referendum itself, and position themselves accordingly to newly re-shuffled electorate's attitudes.

Apparently, the EU financial and immigration crisis had an external influence on the voters' perceptions of the European Union, having entailed particular requirements to the domestic parties to secure "British sovereignty", values, and economic prosperity. So, it was argued that since 2017, the citizens have been choosing the party based on the subsequent party position on how Brexit will be agreed upon and implemented. So,

taking into account the fact that Brexit did change the British political agenda (Evans, Menon, 2017), it leads to an assumption that the electorate's preferences changed as well in light of much clearer and demanding issues to be tackled by the government. So, it entails a presumption that the re-shuffled citizens' predispositions caused the parties' reactions, i.e. shifted parties' strategies in the policy areas directly linked to the EU withdrawal.

It is claimed that the Brexit referendum did result in the electorate's demands shifts, illuminating "the gap between the two Englands" (Hunt, Lockey, 2016). However, what remains unsolved is whether and how the two major parties reacted to these newly proclaimed demands in terms of the official manifestos of the parties. In particular, whether they corresponded with the distinctive segments of the electorate the parties sought to obtain support from and the electorate's desires and requests. Hence, ***the main research question*** of the thesis is whether the two major parties and the electorate aligned with each other, concerning the state's economy, control of immigration, and reforming the EU integration, and in what way.

The two major parties strategies would be re-defined after the referendum in line with the state's economy flourishing and benefits (or disadvantages) of the EU unification and immigration in order to place the parties in particular dimensions of the political space, appealing to a wider electorate. Subsequent parties' strategies became much differentiated on the issues directly related to Brexit, i.e. independent and sovereign economy, reduced immigration, and reformed yet limited European integration. Hence, since 2016, the two major parties have been clearly distinguished on these policy aspects, attracting different segments of the electorate.

According to the interest-model of vote choice (Green, 2007), the segments of the electorate holding negative attitudes towards immigrants and European integration are considered to vote the Conservatives as the party that best represented its interests. Hence, the party had been evolving sceptical and anti-European stances to retain this segment of the electorate, i.e. securing its position to deliver Brexit and negotiating Britain's priorities for leaving the EU single market and customs union (The UK

Government website, 2017). So, seeking to maximise the utility of the electorate's final choice in the general elections, the Conservative party, within the rational choice theory (Strom, 1990), is considered to propose anti-European ideology after the referendum, bringing it to the forefront of their policies. The Labour party, in turn, kept campaigning for much liberal immigration policies and further relationship with the EU, refusing a "no deal" scenario, not being capable to secure the party proficiency to cope with Brexit. In contrast to the mean voter positions, the parties have been concentrating on their well-defined segments of the electorate, intensifying a cosmopolitan divide in Britain based on the voters' age and domicile. Furthermore, there was a notable amount of switching between the two main parties "along Brexit lines" (Mellon, Evans, 2018, p.719) after the referendum and it is argued that this led to major restructuring of each party's strategies in attracting voters.

This is to scrutinise whether the two major parties adapted to the electorate's demand - according to the interest-model of vote choice - and if the parties divergence on the critical factors of the Brexit referendum had become their strategy to appeal to the different segments of the electorate after the referendum. The logistic regression models were built for years 2012, 2016, and 2018 predicting a vote either for the Conservatives or the Labour party. The core aspects of EU integration, derived from the pillars of the EU, were used as independent variables. These variables are economic cooperation, coordination of the immigration policies regulations, and intensified European unification. Furthermore, controllable variables of the voters' welfare and demographic characteristics were incorporated in the extended regression models which allowed us to see actual effects of the three attitudes, not being affected by other variables.

Following this introduction, the thesis contains four main chapters. The first chapter outlines theories of voting and representation to find out how voters and parties come together and how the voters relate to the party in case the latter changes its position in some dimensions. The second chapter details the nature of the Brexit referendum and its aftermath, shedding light on English exceptionalism and Euroscepticism which played a fundamental role in how Brexit unfolded. Additionally, the two parties' official manifestos and the general elections of 2010-2017 results are to be analysed. The third

chapter covers how the UK-EU relationship was framed, inter-election vote switching, and political change. As the outcome of the three chapters, expectations of the parties evolving with the electorate's demand in light of Brexit will be built. The fourth chapter presents the logistic regression analysis and the results of the study. Final conclusions are then presented.

2. Theories of voting and representation
2.1. Theory of rational choice

Petracca (1991) examined the rational choice approach to politics and referred to Downs (1957) as one of the most prominent scholars on the economic underpinnings of voting behaviour. This theory refers to the profit-seeking economy paradigm, which links economic parameters - resources and goods - with a particular political choice (Petracca, 1991). Hence, the voting behaviour theory draws an analogy between voters as consumers and political parties as enterprises. While voters seek to maximise utility of their final choice and vote, parties strive to obtain the most significant electoral gains. On this basis, the approach considers both voters and parties behaving rationally in politics, i.e. political behaviour, which is justified by self-interest and utility maximisation. The rational choice theory also addresses an aspect of calculations of the expected value by voters: in case of a governing party, citizens are considered to calculate the value on the basis of the previous actions of the party, i.e. presuming continuity and consistency of policy the party would pursue - which is not an indicator for an opposition party, however.

The rational choice theory illuminates adjusting of parties proposals to attract the majority of electorate. It is claimed that voters tend to predict their behaviour in the future based on the current political discourse and concerning the actions done in the past (Antunes, 2010). Party ideologies are considered to secure coherence and inertia of parties over time, so voters can relate concrete actions of parties, make generalisations, and produce forecasts of actions that will be carried out effectively.

Feddersen (2004) elaborates that within the rational choice theory, voters are seen as "like-minded people" who share preferences of political parties and candidates; citizens vote, according to the approach, only if they will be given consumption benefits. Mavrogordatos (1987) revisited spatial models of party competition which were suggested in 1957 by Downs. According to the fact that voters prefer parties closer to their political position, parties are claimed to position themselves "at a point on the scale that maximises the number of electoral votes" (Feddersen, 2004. p. 161). Hence, parties will seek to approach voters by putting themselves according to these modes.

Fisher (2001) argues that the rational choice theory overlooked voters' characteristics and their response to the strategic situation they face, which might be significant in describing the voting patterns. It is said that people might vote strategically (or tactically) once they decided to cast aside their first preference and support another party that is perceived to more likely to win, i.e. cast a vote more effectively. Fisher (2001) refers to Duverger's (1963) law, which contends that people who support and prefer small parties would not "waste" their vote for such parties as it will not have an impact on the outcomes under a plurality system with single-member districts. Besides, Mavrogordatos (1987) quoted Downs who claimed that "every citizen has a fixed conception of the good society and has already related it to his knowledge of party policies in a consistent manner" (Mavrogordatos, 1987, p. 58), hence voter's preferences are fixed.

Within the rational choice theory, there are three developed models of political parties objectives. The first, **the vote-seeking party model**, attributes a party purpose "to maximise their electoral support for the purpose of controlling government" (Strom, 1990, p. 566). In case of a single district, Strom (1990) refers to Hinich and Ordeshook (1970) arguing that the model is related to maximisation of pluralities, whereas, in a multi district context, a party leader seeks to maximise his likelihood "to win a majority of the contested seats" (Strom, 1990). However, it is claimed that the model does not fit "the desertion of the median voter" (Strom, 1990, p. 568) in some cases, disconfirming the "catch-all" strategy applied by parties, while some of them are serving social groups in decline. **The office-seeking party model** tackles a party vision to gain control over an elected political office. As such, office benefits are pursued over the party electoral and political effectiveness. However, as supporters of the policy-oriented coalition theory argue, there are cases when parties "willingly forgo the benefits of holding office" (Strom, 1990, p. 568) and, in the case of coalition governments, resign the post. "Office-shyness" is argued to be a consequence of minority governments in parliamentary democracies. **The policy-seeking party model** focuses on the maximisation of a public policy impact. So, parties aim at government portfolio and ideological arrangements within the coalition it is usually included to (Strom, 1990). It is claimed that policy pursuit is seen as a supplement for office motivation. This model

is seen to delegate authority to other institutions when it is beneficial for parties policy objectives.

Within the rational choice theory, it might be assumed that the Conservative party leaders after the referendum sought to maximise their utility in gaining a larger electorate support, therefore narrating an anti-European direction, promising to deliver Brexit, and minimising any external influence coming from the EU. In order to secure the party winning the majority and attracting anti-establishment followers of UKIP, the Conservative party secured its position in the no-deal Brexit.

2.2. Signalling model and expressive voting

Glazer (1987) suggested another theory of voting where people tend to project a particular image of themselves to their associates, while successful parties manage to stand on the projected images and symbolic issues, being preferred by the majority. Within the theory, ideology plays a significant role: voters support a particular party on the ideological basis, meaning that conveying a specific image to others - e.g. pro-family or liberal - becomes crucial for voting for the party, in comparison to "narrow economic interests" (Glazer, 1987, p. 266). So, Glazer argues that people might vote not to impact the electoral outcome but rather display certain information to others. It is said that political parties tackle only those issues which are not taken for granted and are not supported by all people. Instead, only aspects the electorate is divided on will be raised by parties. As such, voters intending to project a distinct image will support the party, promoting the same image and sharing their views.

The expressive voting approach considers a process of voting as an act to demonstrate someone's preferences rather than to influence the possible outcome (Clark, Lee, 2018). Within the approach, parties are evaluated and characterised by their attitudes on different issues in current political agenda. Also, Klein (2020) refers to Aragones who argued that parties are being moved to extreme positions on the agenda issues to indicate their stances on each topic "and stand out from their opponents" (Klein, 2020, p. 3). In contrast to the instrumental account of voting (strategic voting and rational approach to voting), the expressive perspective takes voting as a process, which enables expressing a person's beliefs and identity (Hamlin, Jennings, 2011).

Within the framework, the Conservative voters might have expressed their party support to demonstrate abolishment of the European economic and political dependency. After the referendum, this expressive vote can be examined as a confirmation of the party being consistent in its ideological stances on the European withdrawal. In contrast to the Labour party, which had not clearly placed itself on the Brexit debates - rather arguing on the state's economic disadvantages of the EU leave - the Conservative party supporters are assumed to be more sceptical towards the EU unification (as it threatens their party ideology, which secure the UK sovereignly and values) as well as more satisfied with the British economy due to the state's economic independency from any constraints of Brussels.

2.3. Preference-shaping theory

Stubager (2003) argues that political parties might bring voters' preferences in line with the party positions. According to the approach, it is claimed that parties are capable of shaping voters' preferences in cases where it is advisable (Stubager, 2003). There are two ways parties can shift public preferences. Firstly, parties can impact social structure of society and manipulate it. Stubager (2003) mentioned cases when voters' structural locations (e.g. class positions) are linked to political affiliations. As a second strategy, parties may try to adjust social relativities (Stubager, 2003). This means that parties seek to strengthen their positions by making their followers to feel superior in comparison to those supporting opposition. Also, by relative improvements of marginal voters, a party may attract new supporters on its side.

Due to the fact that after the referendum, a majority of pro-leave voters cast the vote for the Conservative party, while most of the pro-remain - for Labour (Moore, 2016), the preferences on the EU-related issues arguably have not been shaped, but rather strategically accepted by the two major parties, cherishing the gap between the two opposite segments of the electorate. As such, those manifesting rather negative attitudes towards immigrants and the EU unification remained Conservative party supporters after the referendum. While the citizens with more liberal attitudes towards non-British residents and striving to secure a cooperation with the European allies to combat common threats (i.e. environmental problems) might have switched to Labour.

2.4. Interest-model of vote choice and party strategy

It is assumed that political parties adopt their policies according to public interests and preferences, while the electorate casts votes for parties which better represent its interests. So, Green (2007) argues that the interest-model of voting assumes that once the party shifts its ideology and policies, it should lose voters which have been supporting the party ideological position and policies. Hence, political parties strive to hold two positions, i.e. seeking to appeal to the existing supporters and attract the median voter. Green (2007) mentioned Hirschman's research proving that voters who wish to penalise a party for policy shifts can abstain, which is considered as a loyal form of protest in comparison to exit, i.e. rejecting the party in favour of a "lesser rival" (Green, 2007). At the same time, as Whiteley and Seyd (2002) claim, a link between voting and policy positions is not unidirectional: while there is a probability that voters support a party because it shares the voters' demands and positions, another option would be that a voter takes an issue position because they support a particular party. This connection is analysed with regard to the strength of party identification. Fisher and Fieldhouse (2018) illuminated several explanations of voters' intentions to support a party: firstly, voters choose a party based on their feelings of closeness to the party position, i.e. rational selection; secondly, voters may follow the party message and accept it, meaning the party influence on voters' self-placement; thirdly, voters' self-placement can influence a party choice. Hence, as Green (2007) summarises, for voters who have been supporting a particular party over time, changes in its policies or ideological stances "may be mediated by "conditioning" or "assimilation" of the party location" (Green, 2007, p. 8). Since differences between ideological views of party supporters have recently decreased (Green, 2006), the interest-model might not be associated with changes in party loyalty. Instead, identity-based attachments such as social class and party identification are to be strongly associated with party loyalty. Therefore, strong party identifiers are assumed to be less likely to exit, while this type of identification is more stable than "instrumental benefits gained from one party at one given time" (Green, Schickler, 2002 p. 201).

Due to the expected high level of scepticism towards immigrants and further European cooperation among the Conservative party supporters, the party is assumed to adopt its

after-referendum strategy to appeal to UKIP voters as well as retain its traditional followers. Hence, by building up the party strategy around the Brexit deal, the Conservatives secured its capability to actually fulfil their promise. This strategy was strengthening the party leader's image as well as the party loyalty. In turn, Labour's vague position on Brexit in 2016 might have caused a protest vote against the party or abstention, which also entailed a smaller vote share for the party in the years after the referendum.

2.5. Policy positions altering the voter's image of the party
Petrocik (1996) proposes a statement that there is a relatively strong connection between a party issue agenda and party supporters' social characteristics. Hence, what is claimed is that a person supports a party in order "to alter or protect a social or economic status quo which harms or benefits him" (Petrocik, 1996, p. 828). So, a party image is being formed subjectively based on a party reputation to handle issues. This is built on a basis of a socialisation process, information coming directly from parties and other competing resources (e.g. political organisations or media), shaping individuals' perceptions of parties and, consequently, their vote preference. It is suggested that political parties adopt and re-shape their image in order to "keep up with the changing face of the political landscape" (Petrocik, 1996, p.13), hence influencing electorate's perceptions of the party.

If a party image is considered as a form of party evaluation, this image can be changed only if the party shifts its position on salient issues (Petrocik, 1996). Alongside, information inconsistency (information which does not correspond to already existent stereotypes related to party) entails the party image update as well as realignment of "the new version of the party with the old" (Petrocik, 1996, p. 17). Another component of the image re-shaping is political issues or events framed by party, which is applied to mobilise electoral support in favour of the party. Hence, as Petrocik (1996) argues, parties must know "when and why individuals will reject the newly framed version of the party" (Petrocik, 1996, p. 19). Predispositions of individuals might impact their willingness to adopt the re-framed party image.

So, this section has illuminated the most prominent theoretical frameworks examining electorate and political parties relations. The Conservative party, strategically encompassing Eurosceptical policies secured its capacity to cope with the Brexit negotiations and delivering the withdrawal. Simultaneously, the voters, upholding anti-European attitudes, perceived the mobilising party image to vote for the Conservatives in the upcoming elections. In turn, due to the the Labour party's lack of a clear-cut pro-European position during the Brexit debates, former supporters of the party might have voted the Conservatives instead or abstained. Alongside, the Labour party is supposed to secure an opposite party image manifesting much liberal immigration policy and cooperation with the European partners after the UK withdrawal.

Hence, it is expected that after the referendum, the parties placed themselves accordingly to the particular demands of the distinguished segments of the electorate: either to get rid of any European constraints (thus cancelling any EU regulations and agreements as well as restrict migrants coming to the state, which were considered to exploit the state's services and economic benefits) or manifest an alternative plan of seeking a cooperation with the European Union after the withdrawal, support migration policies based on solidarity, and cherish a viewpoint that non-British citizens are beneficial for the state's economy and life in the UK in general.

3. Analysis of political campaigns and general election results 2010-2017
3.1. Nature of referendum 2016

In 1973, the UK joined the European project without a referendum as the unwritten British constitution had not demanded a public vote on any foreign policy issues. Forty years later, during the Brexit political campaign, Eurosceptics argued that the UK had joined the EEC with "no suggestion that we would suffer any loss of political and economic sovereignty" (Williamson, 2015), whereas "the British people were not getting – and have never got – what we were led to believe we were voting for" (Farage, 2012). Hence, the referendum 2016, on the one hand, might impress one by the fact that the British system exercised direct democracy and ensured the public decision on the highly-demanded issue. However, on the other, in reality, Brexit demonstrated the vulnerability of British democracy and long-lasting electorate's awareness failure, having simplified the strategic future of the state by a binary nature of the vote (Dunin-Wasowicz, 2017) and politicised the Brexit issue (Hobolt, 2016) as the parties' tactical reason for subsequent elections.

There has been no well-established tradition of national-level referendums in the UK: only three of them were held across the whole history of the state. Moreover, representative design of British democracy does not imply direct citizens' involvement in the decision-making processes. In contrast, the British political tradition cherishes the concentration of power in central government (Hall, 2011) and public legitimisation of elite rule and "strong and wise government" knowing best, thus authorised to decide foreign policy issues. Due to the fact that the referendum has been barely introduced to the political system, this tool might have led to unanticipated outcomes, i.e. public not answering the question, but rather expressing their attitudes towards current political elites and state affairs. Hence, it is argued that Brexit referendum in 2016 has become a lever to express a protest vote for those having a low level of trust in government.

During the political campaign, the Conservative government distributed the leaflets "to every household in the UK" (White, Johnston, 2016), describing reasons why the UK should have remained the EU member. However, in contrast to referendum 1975 - when the government financially supported both campaigns - in 2016, "Remain" campaign exclusively was supported by government (White, Johnston, 2016). Hence, it

demonstrates that the referendum was framed as a chance for David Cameron to reconcile inner controversies within the party (giving a promise to conduct the referendum) rather than purely let the public decide the future of the country. Furthermore, the referendum itself was narrated as "battle of the people against the political elite" (Landale, 2016). Hence, the very basic of the British political tradition of "wise government" was questioned as "Britain have had enough of experts" (Gove, 2016), thus voting "to leave" entailed fighting the current political elites - the majority of which promoted a pro-remain position - and standing for leaders which were much distant from the political experts' environment and media resources having mainly shared messages on threats of migrants' influx worsening public opinion on the EU in general (Gavin, 2018). So, referendums can supplement traditional democratic instruments, not substitute them. In contrast, the referendum in 2016 demonstrated that the absence of parliamentary discussions and political decision entailed a vacuum where the populist political campaign was given a momentum.

The gap of insufficient knowledge might have been masterly used during the campaign period by parties and candidates. As such, opinion poll surveys have shown that English citizens know little regarding the EU, compared to other Europeans (Gowland, Wright, 2010), while the Google statistics have demonstrated a significant increase among Britons in searching for "what the EU is" and "what will happen after the EU leave" after the referendum, though (Fung, 2016).

Apart from the event of referendum itself, the Brexit positioning of parties has been reshaping the political spectrum in the UK since 2016. Traditional class-division has been substituted by cosmopolitan values divide: the Conservatives managed to obtain "issue ownership" on the Brexit deal which entailed the party narrative having unified and consolidated Leavers' voters. Hence, the Brexit referendum re-defined the major parties' strategies during the subsequent elections as well as re-aligned the electorate according to the party's position on further UK-EU relations. In the case of the parties' strategies, it is claimed that since 2017, the political campaigns of the parties have linked the state's economy flourishing and benefits (or disadvantages) of the EU unification and immigration to the party's position in the Brexit debate (thus the proc and cons for the UK being a member of the Union or not). So, the citizens chose the

party based on this position and, subsequently, how Brexit will be agreed upon and implemented.

3.2. The referendum aftermath

The UK has voted to leave the EU, in particular, the majority, 51.9% cast to leave the Union versus 48.1% voted to remain (The Electoral Commission, 2016). As far as David Cameron supported the UK membership in the EU, he was compelled to resign the post as "the country requires fresh leadership to take it in this direction" (Cameron, 2016). In July 2016, Theresa May became the new Prime Minister, while in January 2017, the Government's "Plan for Britain", negotiating Britain's priorities for leaving the EU, was settled out (The UK Government website, 2017). Later on, in winter 2017, the Government published the White Paper, which consisted of the UK strategy to leave the Union, and Theresa May triggered Article 50 of the Treaty on the EU. In order "to strengthen her hand in Brexit negotiations" (BBC, 2017), Theresa May called for a "snap" election in April 2017, having expected to regulate intragovernmental divisions among parties on the Brexit issue. The general election 2017 resulted in a hung parliament where the Conservatives managed to get the most seats and "confidence-and-supply" (Travis, 2017) support from the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland. During June-October 2017, there were five rounds of the UK-EU negotiations, after which the UK government declared "a new Bill to enshrine the Withdrawal Agreement" (Walker, 2021, p. 22) between the EU and Great Britain stated in domestic law. After the Bill was read in the House of Lords in January 2018, Britain's ambitions to implement a transition period following Brexit were pronounced. A framework of the UK's post-Brexit relations was soon adopted by the European Council, emphasising further trade, economic cooperation, and potential risks for the partnership if the UK was leaving the Customs Union and Single Market. At the beginning of 2019, Theresa May discussed the UK's terms leaving the EU with the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and presented the Government's "Plan B of withdrawing the EU" (Hall, 2018). The Labour party, in turn, were announced to be backing a second referendum if the proposed amendments - on the customs union, alignment with the single market, and Britain's access to the EU agencies and shared datasets - would not be taken into account as an alternative to the Conservatives No Deal withdrawal. After the MPs debating the UK's withdrawal, what was announced is a commitment to negotiate

"permanent and comprehensive UK-wide customs union with the EU" (Drewett, 2019), a continuation of Britain's participation in the Single Market, and "Confirmatory public vote", i.e. required a public vote on any further Brexit deals to be approved. In May 2019, Theresa May delivered a speech on the new Brexit deal where the UK was outside the Single Market, while there would be a vote for MPs whether the deal was subject to a referendum. After Theresa May's resignation, in July 2019, Boris Johnson formally took over as Prime Minister. In the general election 2019, the Conservative party won a majority while the EU Ambassadors agreed on a Brexit extension to 31 January 2020. Hence, The Withdrawal Agreement was ratified, and the UK left the EU at the end of January; alongside the transition period, which ended on 31 December 2020, the UK left both the Single Market and the Customs Union. In February, 2021 the EU-UK Partnership Council extended "provisional application of UK-EU trade and co-operation agreement to 30 April 2021" (Practical Law Brexit, 2021).

3.3. British exceptionalism and Euroscepticism in the context of Brexit

Crozier (2020) argues that British exceptionalism has played a fundamental role in unfolding Brexit. What is claimed is that the British Empire's triumph has unleashed a sense of superiority within the society, while an image of Britons being "more exalted than ever" (Crozier, 2020, p. 656) was cultivated. Having joined the EU in 1973, Britain has been provided with a limited ability to dominate in Europe and its global affairs, which, subsequently, led to "prejudice and Brexit" (Crozier, 2020, p. 656).

As Hall (2011) argues, British exceptionalism is distinguished by many studies of Britain's political system. Also, the concept interrelates with a "sense of Britishness" (Hall, 2011, p. 48), referring to the peculiar identity and nationalism aspects. European integration is approached as an issue which has been manifesting British exceptionalism. Scepticism towards the EU political and legal superiority and the politicisation of intra-EU migration (Gifford, 2014) entailed an extension of exceptionalist mindset (Glencross, 2014). Alongside, scepticism enhanced a demand for the referendum 2016 as a consequence of "four-decades-long debate or neverendum" (Glencross, 2014, p. 8) since the UK has become a member of the European Economic Community.

The Brexit referendum on EU-related affairs does not make the UK case distinctive: in Europe, there have been other countries holding referendums of the EU affairs, e.g. on the EU enlargement in Norway and Austria, on the European Constitution in Spain, or Danish EU opt-out referendum. However, what does make the British case unique is that the most popular political elite - not only "nationalist populists as with the Front National in France" (Glencross, 2014, p. 9) - cherished the public discussion on the EU leave and delegated the "in-or-out" decision to the public. Besides, the discussion of the withdrawal triggered not only Eurosceptic attitudes within the Conservative party but also has been reflected in the manifestos of other parties. Apart from a widespread perception that the EU membership restrains Britain's global trade (even though the country had an opt-out of the EU fiscal coordination), there has been a deficiency of general consent on the membership (Glencross, 2014). Alongside, Glencross (2014) claims that European integration aspects, in general, provoke internal divisions within parties across Western Europe, while these issues might lead to structural shifts and new cleavages being built upon a nationalist/cosmopolitan divide.

British exceptionalism in 2016 has been significantly different from Scottish exceptionalism: while in 1975, a potential Scottish voter would reject the EEC (Glencross, 2014), 40 years later, the stances have reversed. Political elites in Scotland (primarily Scottish nationalists), in contrast to the Conservatives and UKIP, having appeared to be weaker in the region, did link Scottish independence with remaining in the EU and called for a Scottish veto on Brexit. Thus, it is claimed that Euroscepticism "can fuel divisions between mutually exclusive claims of Scottish and British exceptionalism" (Glencross, 2014, p. 17).

It is also important to mention that recently established populist opposition to the EU integration has been manifesting "the anti-elite-anti-EU combination"(Gifford, 2006) seemingly well-mobilising political force. British exceptionalism has also been framed into a public discourse of the EU reformation demands meant to demonstrate a particular "British superiority" (Gifford, 2006, p. 329). However, a lack of such reforms, as Glencross (2014) argues, is being used by Eurosceptics that are entailing the British scepticism growth.

Spiering (2004) claims that British Euroscepticism should be examined as a broader phenomenon of rejecting not only political and economic integration but non-acceptance of Europe in general. Blagoveshchensky (2019) distinguishes several factors having been determined British Euroscepticism, in particular - an idea of British exceptionalism and uniqueness; negative historical experience of cooperation with Europe; a remarkable and influential role of British media (which is owned by proponents of the major parties), specific relations with the US, and public ignorance on the EU in general. The last factor is going to be discussed in detail.

Sociological data collected in the 2010-2012 period has shown that what worried the citizens the most "was housing, mortgages, rents, pensions, the NHS, wages, public transport, and professional qualifications" (British Social Attitudes, 2012). So, questions related to the EU were placed lower in a list of political priorities, thus had little influence on the general agenda during the years. However, the European debt crisis 2010 and European refugee crisis 2015 are argued to boost the EU-related topic, while a position on it - being for or against the EU - became crucial, having been embedded into the public discourse and covered by media.

Due to the Conservatives "issue ownership" of the withdrawal, it entailed the party consolidating votes amongst those with sceptical and anti-immigrant attitudes. Moreover, with the help of the sense of Britishness, embedded in the Conservatives narrative, securing the state's sovereignty and values, the European crisis and an urgent need for the European project reformation were narrated in line with the UK distancing from any European cooperation to preserve the state's prosperity.

In the next section, the general election and the parties manifesto 2010-2017 will be discussed to examine the election outcomes, the key issues for the electorate at that time, and, consequently, how the two parties address these issues in their manifesto. This timespan signifies how the European issue, in particular the Brexit referendum, was gaining momentum as the central component of the parties' strategic campaigns. Alongside, the central issue of Brexit is to be linked with the state's prosperity in the policy dimensions of economy, immigration, and further European unification.

3.4. General election analysis
3.4.1. General election 2010
The general election 2010 represented a case of the coalition government emergence as either of the two major parties - the Conservatives nor Labour - has won a majority since 1974. The Conservatives defeated Labour while the latter had been in power for thirteen years (Dunleavy, 2010). Nevertheless, at the end of the election campaign, the Labour party managed to hold a significant number of seats at the parliament, in particular - 258 seats, having limited the vote loss to 6% comparing the results to the General elections 2005. The Conservative party became the largest British party, "thanks to the operations of Britain's famously unproportional voting system" (Dunleavy, 2010, p.2). Comparing the party vote share to the previous general election, it has slightly improved, having grown by 4% in 2010 (Appendix 1), even though the Conservatives appeared incapable of winning a majority. Thus, the party was considered to convene a coalition deal in order to hold onto power.

Interestingly, as Dunleavy (2010) demonstrates, foreign observers, as well as local British media, have named the UK party system in 2010 as "a formed two and a half party system" (Dunleavy, 2010, p.3), which recognises the presence of the Liberal Democrats and the nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales. However, as it is argued, the media and the British political tradition have been denying the fact that the UK might be scrutinised as a multi-party system due to the general ignoring of such smaller parties that have gained a minor vote share (Dunleavy, 2010). Even though the proportional voting system does cause the smaller parties not getting the parliament seats, it does not eliminate the smaller parties regional representation of interests or attitudes. Moreover, in 2010, the Greens were able to break "this barrier for the first time" (Dunleavy, 2010, p.4), having obtained 1% vote share, while the UK Independence Party has not been granted any seats with a 3.1% vote share (Appendix 1). Nevertheless, the general election 2010 has shifted a pattern (and partially a viewpoint) of dominated two-party power-sharing between the Conservatives and Labour. According to the general election results (Rhodes, McGuinness, 2011), the swing of those who have voted for Labour before the election 2010 towards the Conservatives in 2010 has been 5%; turnout amounted to 65%, which has been 4% higher comparing to the election 2005.

Considering the political issues the parties were divided by, the British Election Study (2010) revealed that economic issues have predominated for voters, which has been explained by recession and financial crisis. As an example, three-fifths of the respondents engaged in the British Election Study indicated that "the economy" is the key issue plus a further 11% citing government debt - a strong Conservative theme in the campaign" (Dunleavy, 2010, p. 7). As it is analysed, Gordon Brown, a former leader of Labour and Prime Minister, was blamed for the economic crisis, having taken place in the state, as Brown at that time was holding a high-ranked position at the Treasury and became the PM in 2007. However, as Dunleavy (2010) suggests, he was also seen as a competent leader, having an eye for the economic sector and a decent opponent to the Conservative party representatives. An issue of immigration was ranked by one in six of the respondents as the most critical issue and called "a much more toxic issue for the government" (Dunleavy, 2010, p. 7). According to surveys (Dunleavy, 2010), working-class respondents expressed resentment towards immigrants coming to British cities and smaller towns and a growing level of competition on the labour market for low-paid jobs. Other issues such as the National Health Service (which has been intensively addressed by Labour during the political campaign) having been rated top by "only one voter in twelve" (Dunleavy, 2010, p. 8), environmental concerns, and terrorism were rated with a low significance. Within the British Election Study (2010), what has also been investigated is a feeling of closeness towards any of the two leading parties. The study has not revealed any significant changes in the identification, comparing the distribution of the responses to the previous general election in 2005.

3.4.2. General election 2015
A year after the EU parliament election, the Conservative party has won a majority in the general election conducted in 2015. From the first sight, a one-party government should have stabilised the political system in general within its majoritarian model. However, in reality, the elections demonstrated enlargement of political system plurality in the state mirrored in the regional dynamics. As such, the Scottish National party managed to enter Westminster, having been given a larger percentage of the voters' support, while UKIP gained an unprecedented vote share around 12%, having notably increased the party support for 9,6 points in comparison to previous elections (Appendix 1).

In the general election 2015, the Conservative party has won 331 seats, or almost 37% vote share. What is important to mention is the voters' flow between the two leading parties and attracted voters having cast their votes for other parties in 2010. As Green and Prosser (2015) investigate, the Conservative party did attract UKIP voters far better in comparison to the Labour party, as well as the Conservatives having succeeded in "winning over former Lib Dems" (Green, Prosser, 2015, p. 56) contrasting to the Labour campaign. The former UKIP voters, who have ended up voting for the Conservative party in 2010, are considered as those casting "a tactical vote" (Green, Prosser, 2015) to defeat Labour. Mellon and Prosser (2015) claim that the Labour party in 2015 has managed to gain a support from those who were likely not going to vote at all. Alongside, Labour have focused on the young generation, as 41% Labour voters represented the youth vote, contrasting to 24% youth votes for the Conservatives or 10% - for UKIP (Jackson, Thorsen, 2015, p.35). Apart from that, as it might be seen from the Appendix 1, such parties as the Scottish National Party (gained 4,7% vote share), UKIP (12,6% vote share), the Plaid Cymru (0,6% vote share), the Greens, and the Liberal Democrats (7,9% vote share) can also be considered as "challenger parties" (Green, Prosser, 2015) for Labour which might have lost the voters having switched to the aforementioned parties. In the general election 2015, the turnout was 66.4% which has been 1.3% higher than in the election 2010.

Similar to the previous elections, the general election in 2015 was determined by the economic factor (Jackson, Thorsen, 2015) - the state of the economy, as well as an issue of immigration and asylum were top-ranked by 52% of citizens (Statista Research Department, 2015). However, this year, as Dennison (2015) argues, the political leaders' personality also played an inevitable role in the citizens' final vote in the elections. These two significant factors might explain a gap in trust the Conservatives and Labour. As Jackson and Thorsen (2015) investigated, the citizens blamed the Labour party and its leader for economic stagnation. Moreover, "if they saw an improvement in the economy, they gave credit to the Conservatives; but Labour received no credit, only a share of the blame" (Jackson, Thorsen, 2015). So, what might be noticed is observer bias of the voters: they tended to explain the incumbent's failures by some internal factors (i.e. incompetency). At the same time, the Conservative party was seen as the

one being capable of restoring economic stability and rise. Apart from that, as Jackson and Thorsen (2015) claim, the Conservative party kept blaming Labour for the economic troubles in the state, which also might have been a factor influencing social attitudes and lack of support towards Labour. Apart from the distinctive pattern related to the state of economy, the British Election Study (2015) revealed the same tendency of social attitudes to immigration or crime: "people who thought things were going well gave very little credit to Labour, while those who thought things were going badly gave Labour at least some of the blame" (Jackson, Thorsen, 2015). The state of health service was placed in third place, having been indicated as the most critical issue by 46% of respondents, while the issue of Europe, environment, and other aspects were rated with a low significance.

Scottish Independence referendum taken place in 2014 is considered as another significant event that influenced the dynamics of the general election 2015. The referendum has rocked the political debates around the welfare continuation, focusing on "issues of social justice, concerns about the direction of the economy, and welfare issues" (Mooney, 2015). So, another flow of social movement has appeared, having continued "to influence and shape Scottish politics in the aftermath of the 2014 referendum and also before and since the 2015 General Election" (Mooney, 2015). Hence, the UK kept moving away from a two-party system towards multiplicity of political actors on the arena, which caused an increase of the electorate's fragmentation.

3.4.3. General election 2017
In the snap general election 2017, the Conservatives have lost the majority, though having gained the most considerable amount of seats - 318 and the largest 42,5% vote share (Appendix 1). Thus, the election resulted in a hung parliament with no single party winning an overall majority (Maer, Kelly, 2017). The result was controversial for the Conservative party. It had not gotten the majority of the seats which led to its agreement with another party, the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland. The agreement did not pursue a coalition formation. Instead, "confidence-and-supply" support in the parliament was established. The general elections in 2017 reflected a re-polarisation of the two main parties, which had been competing for the electorate's support on the same centrist battle-field (Smith, 2017). Accordingly, it can be seen that

the political centre was blurred. Smith (2017) highlights that the Conservatives have gained support from those who considered the party a capable political entity to finalise the Brexit negotiations positively (21% of the respondents). In comparison, voting for the Labour party has been motivated by the electorate's positive attitudes to the party program and manifesto (28% of the respondents). Due to a cleavage between Brexit supporters and opponents, in August 2017, a request to create a new centrist, cross-party (which would have united the two sides) was suggested. Moreover, as Ananiyeva (2017) argues, in 2017, there was no consensus on the Brexit issue within the two parties as well as among ministers. Thus, the smaller parties, which were considered as much unified on their main strategy and vision, supposedly might have influenced the electorate's attitudes which remained volatile. The Labour party has gotten almost 40% vote share, which constituted 262 seats at the parliament - this year's vote share is considered the highest since 2001 (Apostolova, Audickas, 2019, p.12). The two leading parties experienced a slight rise in the vote share, comparing to 2015 election results, for 5,5% in the case of the Conservative party and 9,5% - in the Labour party. Support for the SNP (with 35 seats) and the Liberal Democrats (with 12 seats) slightly declined for 1,7% and 0,5% respectively, while the total number of votes for UKIP significantly decreased, having fallen by almost 85%; thus, the party lost the only one seat it had won in 2015. Turnout was 68.7%, which is 2% higher than in the previous elections and the highest turnout since 1997 (Appendix 1).

As The British Election study (2017) shows, Brexit became a reason of concern for citizens and determined a way they voted in the election. So, as the British Election Study revealed, the issue of Brexit has become dominant among citizens, being followed by economy, immigration, and terrorism issues. Besides, the study shows that the general election 2017 revived the two-party loyalty "at the expense of the challenger parties that had done so well in 2015" (The British Election study, 2017). According to the results, more than a half of voters which had supported UKIP and cast a vote "to leave" in the referendum 2016, switched to the Conservative party, with only 18% who had supported the Labour party and switched to the Conservatives as well. Expressing a pro-European position, the Liberal Democrats, however, failed to catch many pro-remain voters, whereas the Labour party won a large number of remainers, which

switched from the Conservatives after 2015. Thus, Labour "was seen as the best bet for those wanting to keep closer ties with our European neighbours" (The British Election study, 2017). A general discourse of the Brexit debates was built around ways to leave the EU, not the two alternatives of whether to remain or leave. So, as The British Election Study Team (2017) presented, "a striking correlation between wanting to control immigration and voting Tory on the one hand, and wanting access to the single market and voting Labour or Lib Dem on the other". UKIP decline can be attributed to the fact that both major parties had accepted the major campaigning issue of leaving the EU. Moreover, the referendum allowed the Conservative Party to adopt a similar hard-line position on reducing immigration post-Brexit, a position that had formed a major part of UKIP electoral appeal (Ford and Goodwin, 2014).

3.5. Analysis of the Conservative party manifesto 2010-2017
3.5.1. The Conservative party manifesto 2010

In 2010, there were minor *references to the EU* itself and no clear-cut party statements on the unification. Nevertheless, a high-tech development of the state's economy, creative industries, and the leading export were vividly related to the UK's prosperous role and position on the European market.

Restoring *economy* was a core focus of the manifesto. As it is proposed, the Conservative party considered "getting the economy moving together" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2010). A modern economy was seen as "greener and more local" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2010, p. 8), reflecting the party vision of fairer redistribution of wealth and opportunities within the British society. According to the manifesto, the UK exposure to the economic crisis was caused by Labour, being opposed to "a new economic model" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2010, p.3), which was seen as a boosting opportunity to renovate the economic sector and reverse Britain's economic decline. The Conservatives proposed eight benchmarks that could be used by citizens "to judge the economic success or failure of the next government" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2010, p. 5). The manifesto encouraged innovations and sustainable development growth, which was considered a step towards "making Britain the fastest place in the world to start a business" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2010, p. 20), stimulating enterprise and innovative businesses.

The Conservative party in 2010 claimed that *immigration* is beneficial for the British economy. However, the immigration process was said to be reduced "to the levels of the 1990s – tens of thousands a year, not hundreds of thousands" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2010, p. 21). Hence, several measures were introduced - such as arranging an annual limit of "non-EU economic migrants" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2010, p. 21), a limited access for professionals which are to bring the largest value to the British economy, and setting a transitional control "as a matter of course for all new EU member states" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2010, p. 21). Apart from the measurements, an integrating cultural mechanism was described: an English test for those coming to the UK to get married was required.

3.5.2. The Conservative party manifesto 2015
In 2015, the Conservatives highlighted a need to run an *in-out referendum* before the end of 2017, supporting the suggestion by the fact that "for too long, the British citizens' voice has been ignored on Europe" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2015). It is distinctly clear from the manifesto that the party promoted an idea of the Single Market and opposed an "ever closer union" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2015, p. 72) based on several reasons: "too bureaucratic" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2015, p. 72) structure of the EU, an increasing level of migration from new members joining the Union, and any kind of further Brussels interference and economic integration of the Eurozone. Also, the manifesto was considered to demonstrate the party's ambitions to influence European treaties related to the UK as a "resistance the EU attempts to restrict legitimate financial services activities" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2015, p. 73). The manifesto mentioned economic uncertainty in the Eurozone among the main challenges that the Conservative government would address.

Tackling an *economic* issue, the Conservative manifesto emphasised the party ambition to "become the most prosperous major economy in the world by 2030" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2015, p. 7). So, the strong economy was considered as a basis to award and financially protect such services as the NHS and education. What is important to notice is that in the manifesto, there were several comparisons to the Labour Government in the economic context, David Cameron's competence to deliver the long-term economic plan was compared to an "economic chaos under Labour, with

higher taxes, more debt and no plan to fix our public finances" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2015, p. 8).

The manifesto 2015 argued to control *immigration* which would bring benefits to the UK. It referred to the Labour Government insufficiency in 1997-2009 years to regulate the influx which had been entailed by an open border policy and "the failure to reform welfare, meant that for years over 90 per cent of employment growth in this country was accounted for by foreign nationals" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2015, p. 29). Alongside, immigration from outside the EU was discussed only in terms of high-skilled professionals with "the skills we really need in our economy" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2015, p. 30) and stricter rules for immigrants applying for the state benefits. This was promised to be put for the British citizens "in a straight in-out referendum by the end of 2017" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2015, p. 30).

3.5.3. The Conservative party manifesto 2017

In 2017, the Conservative manifesto was re-shifted towards the "centre-ground of British politics" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2017), having promised to deliver "mainstream politics". The traditional Conservative free-market approach was replaced by a rhetoric of an "interventionist approach towards economic policy" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2017, p. 3). Already on the first page, what was stated by the party leader is that the UK needed a "strong and stable government to get the best *Brexit deal* for our country and its people" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2017, p. 2), underlining a demand for a clear-cut plan to address the challenges. Alongside, defending Britain's interests was brought into the main focus as an expected result of the EU withdrawn. A further special partnership was to be discussed with the EU, "which will allow free trade between the UK and the EU member states" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2017, p. 15). It is important to notice the general discourse of the manifesto on the Brexit issue going together with "take control again" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2017, p. 25) rhetoric with regard to the British environmental legislation.

The manifesto pointed out that the state of economy was one of the biggest challenges which Britain had been facing and which had to be addressed effectively. According to

the manifesto, the Government should play a vital role, "leading a modern industrial strategy" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2017, p. 8) to ensure its equitability for everyone. The Conservative manifesto claimed on a complexity of the tax system in general, which was promised to be simplified in order to facilitate an access to it for "self-employed people and small businesses" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2017, p. 14).

The rhetoric on *immigration* in the Conservative manifesto 2017 was straightforward - "defending the country from terrorism and other security threats" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2017, p. 7), the party stated on immigration control and its reduction. According to the manifesto 2017, "university students and more skilled workers" (The Conservative Party manifesto, 2017, p. 54) were considered as the most appropriate categories of migrants to be welcome. Nevertheless, a stricter procedure and higher requirements were suggested in order to reduce annual net migration. Having linked the immigrations issue to the EU leave, the manifesto re-emphasised Britain's ability to control immigration from the EU by attracting specific categories of workers the state economy needed.

3.6. Analysis of the Labour party manifesto 2010-2017
3.6.1. The Labour party manifesto 2010
In 2010, the Labour party identified their position towards the *EU unification* in the manifesto: what was claimed is that the cooperation is a way "to fight terrorism, and support practical European cooperation on defense, in partnership with NATO" (Labour Party manifesto, 2010, p. 103). Also, the UK partnership with the Union was prompted as a chance for Britain to succeed and "set the agenda for change" (Labour Party manifesto, 2010, p. 104). The document mentioned the Conservative party anti-European attitudes as ones hindering British influence. The unification was also seen as an opportunity to tackle such global issues as green recovery and low-carbon policy implementation. So, the Labour party manifested "to use leadership in the EU to push for a strengthening of Europe 2020 emission reductions" (Labour Party manifesto, 2010, p. 83).

The manifesto highlighted "the high growth *economy* of the future" (Labour Party manifesto, 2010, p.10). Also, the manifesto claimed to ensure that public spendings

were allocated with a key focus on "strategic investments" (Labour Party manifesto, 2010, p. 14) in digital, transport, and energy infrastructures. The new UK Finance for Growth Fund, created on public and private money allocations, was supposed to play a key role in the state's sustainable recovery. Also, the Labour party claimed "to restore full employment, creating at least one million skilled jobs by 2015" (Labour Party manifesto, 2010, p.16).

The manifesto stated that *immigration* would be controlled under the Australian-style points-based system, whereas "the arbitrary Tory quota would damage business and growth" (Labour Party manifesto, 2010, p.52). The UK was said to "get the migrants our economy needs, but no more" (Labour Party manifesto, 2010, p. 56). Unskilled, non-EU migrants were not considered to cross the state's border, whereas skilled job places were to be prioritised to Britons. The party believed that "coming to Britain is a privilege and not a right", hence the English language competence test was said to become harder, whereas further staying in the state was seen to be dependent on the points-based system with access to benefits and social housing becoming increasingly reserved for British citizens and permanent residents" (Labour Party manifesto, 2010, p. 54).

3.6.2. The Labour party manifesto 2015

Labour manifesto 2015 emphasised that the UK had to engage with international partners to resist common threats, contrary to the state's isolating and "the Conservatives, damaging the interests of the country by turning their backs on Europe" (Labour Party manifesto, 2015, p. 99). The manifesto reinforced the *state's membership* in NATO and the EU as a principle to boost long-standing alliances as well as to ensure the UK was not coping with threats on its own. Hence, UK security was embedded into the EU membership discourse, which was accompanied by a necessity to re-engage with the European allies. The trade aspect with the Union was linked to a prominent opportunity for British living standards to grow. Also, the manifesto considered driving reforms at the EU level, which would save money at the UK national level. Re-emphasising Labour's intention not to leave the Union, the manifesto 2015 mentioned an aspect of power transference which could not be done without the British public vote on the in-out referendum.

Labour manifesto 2015 claimed to build an "*economy* that works for working people" (Labour Party manifesto, 2015, p. 20). Thus, the social category's prosperity was put in the very heart of the successful functioning of both the economy and the state in general. Apart from that, it was emphasised that Britain's current economy was led by "the culture of short-termism" (Labour Party manifesto, 2015, p. 27), which was to be converted into a long-term strategy for governing, prioritising mutual obligations, public interest test, and promoting financial inclusion.

Immigration was embedded into the manifesto as a process that had been making "an important contribution to our economic and social life" (Labour Party manifesto, 2015, p. 14), however, one which should have been controlled and reduced, being also linked with a sense of general security of British people. Emphasising on benefits of staying in touch with the external world, the manifesto suggested controlling the system in a way of "low-skilled migration coming down" (Labour Party manifesto, 2015, p. 66). Having planned to secure the state's border and stop illegal migration, Labour in 2015 were to keep the cutbacks on non-EU workers. Nevertheless, a distinctive feature of the manifesto rhetorics was to "enforce immigration rules humanely" (Labour Party manifesto, 2015, p. 67), ensuring refuge for persons who were persecuted, cooperating within the UN framework on Syrian refugees support.

3.6.3. The Labour party manifesto 2017

In 2017, Labour highlighted the further *partnership with the EU* in terms of tackling such issues "as climate change, refugee crises and counter-terrorism" (Labour Party manifesto, 2017, p. 24). Several benefits for British organisations and students were mentioned as a result of the cooperation with European entities. The European market was described as "the UK's single largest trading partner in agricultural produce" (Labour Party manifesto, 2017, p. 25), meaning its significance for the state's economy. Labour manifesto 2017 also paid attention to EU-derived laws and their applicability in the Brexit context to ensure the UK's protection of consumer rights and trade unions, which would not be abandoned in the future. It was also claimed that the party was striving for a Brexit deal, transferring power from the EU level directly to the level of particular regions; it aimed to "put powers as close to communities as possible" (Labour Party manifesto, 2017, p. 27), rebalancing both power relations and the economy. An

arrangement to prevent any drops in the EU Structural Fundings (as a result of the EU leave), no return "to a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland" (Labour Party manifesto, 2017, p. 27), and the significant role of parliament in the final deal of withdrawal were explicitly depicted in Labour manifesto 2017.

The rhetorics on the state's *economy* was embedded into a discourse of "creating an economy that works for all" (Labour Party manifesto, 2017, p. 7). The National Transformation Fund was promoted as a mechanism to boost Britain's potential and support businesses by responsible economic management, putting "small businesses at the centre of the economic strategy" (Labour Party manifesto, 2017, p. 8). Besides, the party took a position to ensure every region of the state benefited from the economic reforms and investments. Hence, the only way to re-build the economy was seen to be in fair incorporation of shared investment strategies, beneficial "for every region and nation of the UK" (Labour Party manifesto, 2017, p. 11).

Being focused on an idea of a fair and transparent *immigration* system for everyone, the Labour party in 2017 supported non-discriminating policies, which were supposed to "end the exploitation of migrant labour undercutting workers' pay conditions" (Labour Party manifesto, 2017, p. 28). Moreover, the manifesto underlined immigrants' economic and social contributions, pointing out that this social category determined both public and private sectors. The Migrant Impact Fund was to be re-established in particular districts where immigration "has placed a strain on public services" (Labour Party manifesto, 2017, p. 28). International students were distinguished among immigrants, being approached as ones strengthening the British educational sector.

3.7. Discussion
So, while in 2010 and 2015, economy and immigration were the top-ranked issues for the electorate, in 2017, Brexit became the citizens' reason of concern and determined how they voted in the election (British Election Study, 2017). The general election in 2017 revived the two-party loyalty. Hence, the Conservative party, appealing to the former UKIP followers, had adopted the social demand of a particular segment of the electorate to control immigration and reduce any possible cooperation with the EU. In parallel, the Labour party, striving to secure its positions among pro-remain voters -

mostly pro-European Labour and the Lib Dems followers - proposed a continued access to the single market and more liberal immigration policies.

In 2010, when the Conservative party created a coalition with the Liberal Democrats, the Tories upheld moderate Eurosceptic views (and did not articulate the clear-cut party position on the EU integration in the manifesto), which arguably might have caused the party losing its support amongst voters holding more negative attitudes towards the EU as well as those having switched to UKIP (Bruslyck, 2016). Importantly, the Labour party manifesto did articulate that the EU membership was beneficial for the UK. It entails an assumption that those who shared the party's views on EU unification strengthening Britain's position had also voted for the Labour party in 2010. In this year, the Conservative party was striving to reduce and control immigration flux, minimising it to the extent that is beneficial for the UK's economy - which is relatively similar to Labour's position on the issue.

In 2015, the Conservatives positioned themselves in a much more radical way to reconcile the intraparty divisions over the EU unification and attract the Eurosceptical electorate. As a result, the party did get a majority, having promised to hold the referendum and demand reconsideration of the UK membership rules. Bruslyck (2016) argues that a level of Euroscepticism within the society has risen (possibly due to the European refugee crisis, immigration influx to the UK, and the debt crisis). Hence, the Conservatives, having shifted the party position towards the right-wing dimension, managed to form a single-party government. Such a "reboot" in relationships with the EU, i.e. the party's initiative to hold the referendum, is claimed to be one of the ideological fundamentals of the Conservatives program (which had not been implemented due to the "restraining" coalition with the pro-European Lib Dems). Thus, since 2012, the Conservative party is considered to roll back to Thatcherism (Bruslyck, 2016): insisting on Britain's distinctive identity, in 2015, the Conservative party tactically managed to gain the majority as well as defended one of the critical aspects of British conservative ideology.

The analysis of the Conservative party manifesto 2015 revealed that the party addressed the EU refugee crisis and insisted on re-negotiations of the UK-EU

relationships by promising to conduct the in-out referendum. At the same time, the Labour party defended a stance to "enforce immigration rules humanely" (Labour Party manifesto, 2015, p. 67) and argued on the UK's economic benefits of remaining in the European Union. However, as Vendyk (2019) analyses, the Labour party was criticised for insufficient agitation and argumentation of staying in the EU.

Hence, the Conservatives radicalisation, i.e. relatively right-wing stances on cutting down immigration and opposing an "ever closer union", is proposed to be a valuable factor predicting a vote for the party: those that consider the EU unification to have already gone too far are to be the Conservative voters in 2015; at the same time, those citizens who believe that migrants make the UK a worse place to live are to choose the Conservative party in 2015.

In 2016, the Conservative government distributed the leaflets "to every household in the UK" (White, Johnston, 2016, p.3), having included information on the referendum itself and the government's recommendations, facts, and reasons why the UK should remain an EU member. However, as Gladstone (2016) notices, citizens supporting the EU withdrawal reacted mostly negatively to it, complaining that taxpayers' money was used for the materials distribution, while UKIP leader, Nigel Farage, and London Major, Boris Johnson argued that "it was wrong to try to stampede voters" (Landale, 2016), re-emphasising on the EU referendum as a "battle of the people against the political elite" (Landale, 2016). Alongside, an e-petition ("Stop Cameron spending British taxpayers' money on Pro-EU referendum leaflets") about the EU leaflet, which had attracted more than 200,000 signatures, became a subject for the debates by the House of Commons in Westminster Hall. So, due to the fact that in 2016, the Government financially supported only one campaign - which has been a notable difference in compare to 1975 referendum where both "Yes" and "No" campaigns were supported - this might have been another reason for people with anti-establishment and anti-elite attitudes to cast a protest vote.

For 2016-2017, it is suggested that the Conservative party secured its position as the party of Brexit, targeting the "left behind" electorate and managed to gain the largest amount of seats in 2017. Instead, in 2016 the Labour party was heavily criticised for the

party leader's vague position on the issue, insufficient agitating work, and poor criticism of the Conservatives and the EU (Vendyk, 2019).

The general elections in 2017 reflected a polarisation of the two main parties, which had been competing for the electorate's support on the same centrist battle-field (Smith, 2017). According to this, it can be seen that the political centre was blurred. Hence, the Conservatives have gained support from those who considered the party as a capable political entity to finalise the Brexit negotiations positively. It might be concluded that in the 2017 general election, the Conservative party supporters stood for a "hard" Brexit, while the Labour party voters supported a"soft" Brexit approach.

In the next section, prior research done on British politics in the context of Brexit will be highlighted. It will help to reveal how the Conservative party leaders' narrative changed over time, i.e. radicalised in a Euro-scepitcal dimension, as well as examine if there really have been political realignments in the electorate after the referendum as a result of the two major parties' opposite positions on Europe.

4. Context of Brexit in the British politics: political discourse and electorate's realignment in line with the UK withdrawal
4.1. The UK-EU relationships framing and campaign
This section is dedicated to qualitative studies which have been done on the European discourse or, more specifically, on the UK-EU relationships framing illuminated by the British PMs, David Cameron and Theresa May, in the 2010-2017 period.

Meislová (2018) analysed 60 official speeches of David Cameron, following the critical constructivism approach. The researcher argued that the PM's narrative not only shaped an internal political landscape of debates on Britain's future relationships with the EU, but also "had direct implications for the practice of the UK's EU policy" (Meislová, 2018). So, three key sub-discourses of integration, differentiation, and reform have been distinguished, illuminating that the UK-EU partnership was perceived and framed by Cameron as a multi-layered battleground.

Table 1. Key words and phrases associated with Cameron's sub-discourses

Integration sub-discourse	Differentiation sub-discourse	Reform sub-discourse
• Cooperation • Partnership • UK at the heart of the single market • UK's leading role • Prosperity • National interest	• National identity • National interest • Island character of the country • EU's deficiencies and mistakes • High rate of EU nationals' migration to the UK	• Reform • Efficiency • Flexibility • Deregulation • Autonomy • Renegotiation of EU membership • In/out EU referendum

* Meislová, M. 2018. Table 1. Key words and phrases associated with Cameron's sub-discourses

The sub-discourses might be distinguished due to the fact that Cameron's rhetoric was built around multiple aspects. Hence, several issues of Britain's foreign policy - as the EU membership or immigration regulations - were framed differently according to a particular sub-discourse. As Meislová (2018) shows, the integration sub-discourse tended to be the most positive, reflecting the PM's viewpoint of the UK-EU relationships as "complementary" and incorporating shared interests. Besides, the UK was viewed as a leading state within the Union, whereas the latter was portrayed as "a means to an end" to promote and preserve Britain's interests. The differentiation sub-

discourse, in turn, intended to indicate differences, contradictions, and "antagonisms" between the UK and the EU. It pointed out such problematic issues as contrasting identities of the two entities and Britain's contraposition to the European "others". Hence, the UK was depicted as an outsider to the EU, while Cameron mentioned "a low level of European self-identification among the Brits" (Meislová, 2018, Table 1). The sub-discourse on reform was seen "to redefine status quo", i.e. illuminating a need to reform the UK-EU relationships, particularly in renegotiating greater autonomy and a much more flexible membership for the UK. It is important to note Cameron's self-positioning as one upholding "a clear, logical and practical plan to achieve this change" (Cameron, 2014).

So, the used sub-discourses are contradicting and inconsistent, to some extent: the EU membership was considered to be a constructive and beneficial project, within which relationships were built on the basis of mutual interdependence. At the same time, Cameron emphasised an exclusive role of the UK within the Union, demanding greater rights and freedoms, contrasting the UK and the EU identities and values, and positioning the UK as a European outsider. The most notable tensions can be seen between the integration and differentiation discourses which frame contrasting arguments and statements. The same conflicting messages were included in the Bloomberg Speech 2013, which was named "a speech of contradictions" (Fryer, 2013), where Cameron "tried to be all things to all men and managed to fail on every possible count" (European Movement UK, 2013).

It is concluded that the EU was a "discursive battleground" (Diez, 2001) for Cameron, who had ambiguously framed the UK-EU relationships. Such a contradicting narrative was supposedly applied to catch a wider public support for the Conservative party (luring those who held much more nationalistic and far-right views and had cast their votes for UKIP). Alongside, one might remember the internal tensions the Conservative party was facing on the European issue: the Conservative leader was seen to be locked in a so-called triangle (consisting of the pro-European coalition partners, Eurosceptic

Conservatives, and other European allies), having been tried to trade off the European question (Cowley, 2012).

Amelsvoort (2018) followed an approach of critical discourse analysis and revealed the usage of power which was embedded and presented in texts. Hence, language was examined as a purposeful tool to achieve particular aims and, as a result, shape existent power relations. In the research, Amelsvoort (2018) examined public speeches and statements (made by David Cameron and Theresa May) as it corresponded to Hansen's (2006) criteria, entailing "high political authority, articulation of both identity and politics, and reaching a wide audience" (Hansen, 2006, p. 82). The research showed "how British prime ministers have *de-Europeanized* the national identity through their discourse before and after the Brexit referendum – or in other words – how they turned away from the EU by using language" (Amelsvoort, 2018, p.3).

The EU migration issues, as one of the main reasons the majority voted "to leave" the EU (Clarke and Goodwin 2017) had been overlooked by Cameron before 2014, as Amelsvoort (2018) proved. Instead, the Prime Minister addressed non-EU migration in speeches made in 2010-2013 (Ágopcsa, 2017). Due to an increasing public support interest for UKIP, citizens' demand for Britain's control over migration was intensified. So, Cameron's narrative on migration policy had become negatively coloured as he appealed to reform the EU migration rules "for the first time during a major speech in March 2013" (Amelsvoort, 2018, p. 12). Hence, since 2013, the issue of migration has been politicised, whereas the EU migrants were depicted "as a threat and a security issue" (Stritzel 2007). Alongside, in 2014 during the Conservative party conference, Cameron claimed that "migration would become his main negotiating topic with the EU" (Cameron, 2014), meaning that the issue had reached the scale of foreign policy discourse. While scrutinising Cameron's narrative on migration through the 2010-2014 timespan, significant amendments in the rhetoric might be noticed: while in 2010 he called immigrants as "skilled workers" or "best talent" in his speeches (Cameron, 2011), in 2014, they were linked to statistical numbers, being "too large for local authorities to cope with" (Amelsvoort, 2018, p. 13). Moreover, migration was seen as - and blamed

for - a "pressure on social housing" (Coulter, 2014), and social and public services functioning. Hence, "othering" was implied in relation to the native welfare state system in the UK and migrants coming from the EU and "abusing the welfare system performance" (MacLellan, Osborn, 2014). So, migrants coming from the EU were discursively constructed as the ones threatening the British borders, being labelled as "a swarm of people" (Elgot, 2015).

Furthermore, the discourse has been "internationalised by Theresa May by constructing the UK as Global Britain" (Amelsvoort, 2018, p. 3). The majority of citizens, who had cast their vote for the UK withdrawal, demanded the state's border control and tightening of migration policies. Thus, the government was given legitimate power to implement stricter international migration policy and procedures, acting "on its behalf without the EU by virtue of the democratic decision of the British people (Machin, Mayr, 2012, p. 172).

Another research captured Theresa May's political discourse on delivering Brexit (Leung, 2018). Systematic functional linguistics analysis revealed that Theresa May intended to avoid contrasting the UK and the EU. In most cases, within her speeches, Theresa May was using "we", which represented not only the speaker and the addressee, but generally the British government and the EU. Thus, according to Scollon (2012), an "in-group membership" was to be established with the addressee.

Theresa May, similarly to David Cameron, confronted "a strong, self-governing Global Britain" (May, 2017) to negatively coloured "Brussels" or "our European partners". Nevertheless, as Amelsvoort (2018) summarised, Theresa May relaxed the migration discourse as migrants have never been referred to as a "bad" or "unwanted" social group. In contrast, they were approached as a group with "significant contribution[s]" (Amelsvoort, 2018, p. 29). Moreover, migration has been framed positively, stimulating the state's economy, which was benefiting "from what they have put in" (May, 2017). A negative connotation of the EU migration was noticed only in relation to an increased level of net migration, as Theresa May emphasised on the pressure on social services.

Overall, the narrative on migration in 2017 is characterised as vague according to the fact that Theresa May was striving to keep a fragile equilibrium in language, manifesting "migration control as a central interest of the British people" (Cooper, 2017) and arguing "to guarantee the rights of EU citizen" (May, 2017).

4.2. Constituency-level patterns of voting in British politics

Jennings and Stoker (2017) conducted a quantitative study to reveal longer-term constituency-level patterns of voting in the UK, which were disclosed by the Brexit vote. They have proven that the general election 2017 outcome illuminates a new divide within the society based on area of residence. As such, a dividing line goes between those who live in "locations strongly connected to global growth" (Jennings, Stoker, 2017, p. 360) and those which are not. In prior research, Jennings and Stoker (2016) have also shown that residents from urban-metropolitan areas held much more positive attitudes towards the EU, ethnic minorities, and immigration, in comparison to residents from peripheral coastal areas. Alongside, the Brexit referendum 2016 vote has demonstrated a similar division: while urban areas tended to vote to Remain, the regional towns cast a vote to Leave. Hence, the authors argue that the general election 2017 is approached as "a symptom of the longer-term geographical bifurcation of politics" (Jennings, Stoker, 2017, p.359) rather than a pure Brexit realignment.

The study explicitly shows that, when comparing 2005 and 2017 years, Labour support in metropolitan centres and economically dynamic towns has grown, reaching more than 60% vote share. In opposite, in these years, the Conservatives succeeded in gaining over 65% of vote share from regional-coastal constituencies (Jennings, Stoker, 2017, Figure 1-2).

At the same time, the research revealed a gap in Labour support between the two types of residences, which has doubled between 2005 and 2017 from around ten points to over twenty points. Instead, the Tories support from the two types of residences had little change over time, having rocketed substantially in 2017 (by over ten points). The outcomes are linked to Goodhart's approach to define the two groups of people as ones from "anywhere" and "somewhere". The first category depicts socially mobile, liberal

people upholding a cosmopolitan identity with no affiliation to a particular place; the people from "somewhere", in contrast, are characterised by a deeply rooted affiliation to a nation or a way of life "that have been lost or are under threat" (Jennings, Stoker, 2017, p. 363).

The research also highlighted patterns of political support in 2017 among those employed in different occupations. Jennings and Stoker (2017) show that there has been a downward trend in supporting the Labour party in areas with a larger proportion of people engaged in routine occupations and with an income lower than the national wage. At the same time, there has been no decrease in Labour traditional working-class support, i.e. routine, manual occupations. Besides, the Labour party succeeded in gaining support from those employed in "cosmopolitan sectors" (e.g. science, education, health, finance), with a growing trend to appeal to graduates. Hence, it is concluded that the party attracted "the voters who are central to the modern British economy" (Jennings, Stoker, 2017p. 364), representing the younger generation.

As a plot of changes in the two major party's support against the Leave share vote shows (Jennings, Stoker, 2017, Figure 5), the Conservative party in 2017 did target the constituencies having voted to Leave. The Labour party gained more considerable support in areas with a stronger intention to Remain. Moreover, due to the fact that the research covered and presented the timespan 2005-2017, the Brexit vote is argued to be associated with longer-term social and political changes "rather than being the focus of an immediate Brexit realignment of English, and British, politics itself" (Jennings, Stoker, 2017, p. 365).

The regression model revealed the Brexit support association with increasing support for the Conservatives and declining support in Labour vote between 2005 and 2017. Alongside, it depicts increased Labour support amongst precariat workers and people self-reporting poor health. Thus, it is somewhat related to the party still being attractive to the "left behind" electorate. The Conservative party, in contrast, gained a larger

support from constituencies with a lower level of ethnic diversity (thus prevailing white British population) and areas where manufacturing employment declined recently.

Jennings and Stoker (2017) suggest that an extent of these trends persisting in the political dimension will largely depend on the parties' future strategies to attract voters, particularly the centre-ground of British politics. Hence, the scholars refer to debates "to bridge the gap between the two Englands" (Hunt, Lockey, 2016) and suggest that for the future, the parties would have to develop much more sophisticated and diverse strategies, avoiding simplistic responses to "a bifurcation of politics", countering one side against the other. While the Conservative party did gain the electorate support by becoming the party of Brexit and emphasising on the prominent role of the electorate "left behind", this is argued not to be a "straightforward path to future electoral success" (Jennings, Stoker, 2017, p. 367). In case of Labour, instead, the enthusiasm of younger voters, which were targeted the most, might be challenged and eliminated by the changing nature of the young generation's political support.

4.3. Political change and realignment in general election 2017
Mellon and Evans (2018) suggest to consider the election campaign 2017 "as a strong switching along Brexit lines" (Mellon, Evans, 2018, p. 719) with a notable flow of UKIP supporters; thus, the Conservatives were provided with credibility to give grand promises on immigration. In turn, Labour in 2017 largely won among those who were undecided in previous elections. The snap elections in 2017 were meant to stabilise "the government's Brexit plans" (Mellon, Evans, 2018, p. 734) by securing the majority in the parliament. Instead, the issue was relatively omitted by leaders of the two major parties and substituted by other core policy aspects as social services, responses to terrorist attacks, and austerity.

While comparing the vote switching, Mellon and Evans (2018) refer to the British Election Study Inter-election panels. The panels demonstrated that during 2015-2017, there was the highest level of the switching between the Conservatives and the Labour party since the 1960s, exceeding 10%. Hence, notable changes in the political strategies of the parties are assumed to explain the flows. The BES panel investigate that two-

thirds of the Conservative supporters in 2017 had voted for the party back in 2015 and intended to vote for the Conservatives before the election campaign 2017. At the same time, around 50% of Labour 2017 voters had supported the party in 2015 and sought to do so before the campaign 2017.

As far as UKIP party's main objective was to run the EU referendum, the party lost a remarkable number of votes due to the fulfilled key purpose of the party. Thus, as the BES survey shows, around 47% of UKIP voters in 2015 have switched to the Conservatives. While the Conservatives mainly attracted Leave voters (54% of all voted to leave the EU) at the beginning of the electoral campaign, around 11% of Labour and 12% of the Conservatives supporters, who had been pro-Remain, were "undecided" (Mellon, Evans, 2018, p. 727). Even though the Liberal Democrats secured the party position as "the party of Remain", it has not managed to consolidate the Remain vote: it did gain 13% of those who had voted for Labour in 2015, and 11% of the Conservative Remain voters 2015, but lost around 40% of their own Lib Dems 2015 Remain voters. The Labour party was successful in attracting Green Remain voters in 2015, particularly 42% of them switched to Labour. Hence, what is claimed is that the Conservatives substantially benefited from both former UKIP voters and mainly from pro-Leave voters "from all 2015 origins, including from Labour" (Mellon, Evans, 2018, p. 727), having consolidated Leave electorate. However, it has not been a case for Labour due to inter-divisions in the party, whereas the Lib Dems were competing for the same electorate.

In addition to the party position on Brexit and its correspondence to the voters' preferences, Mellon and Evans (2018) argue that the party leaders' performance entailed flows of the electorate support between the two major parties. The study demonstrated how the electorate perceptions of Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn changed during the campaign 2017. So, this was a downward tendency for May's appeal and Corbyn's rising throughout the campaign. By a day before the election, ratings of the two leaders were relatively equal. Hence, it is suggested that Labour's leader popularity ensured

minimised Labour party's switches in 2015-2017 with the help of the re-attracted former Labour voters.

Furthermore, the flows of votes in 2017 contrast with a theoretical background on effects of political campaigns. Mellon and Evans (2018) refer to Finkel and argue that campaigns have relatively small effects on voters, while elections are likely to be predicted "months ahead of time" (Mellon, Evans, 2018, p.730). Alongside, a party competence to deliver reduction of immigrants' influx played a crucial role in the consolidation of Leave voters. As such, The BESIP survey (Mellon, Evans, 2018, p. 720) revealed that before the referendum, most respondents considered UKIP as a party capable of reducing immigration, being given 25% over the Conservatives. However, the gap decreased just to 4% by the start of the campaign in 2017. This is analysed due to the fact the UK has left the Union, and the Conservatives, "with that barrier removed" (Mellon, Evans, 2018, p. 734), could have adopted hard Brexit stances.

So, it is considered that the general election 2017 has shown how the leading parties were competing for the majority of votes based on a particular issue of Brexit, which might have presumably led to the Brexit realignment in British politics. In particular, the debates which were driven mainly by "a liberal-authoritarian issue such as immigration" (Evans, Mellon, 2017) are seen to signify a cosmopolitan divide in Britain. After the referendum and during the subsequent election campaigns, the Conservatives, having positioned themselves as the party of Brexit, "reversed the trend towards party system fragmentation" (Mellon, Evans, 2018, p. 732). Instead, the noticed rise of the two-party share and the party system "concentration" was conveyed by the newly established cosmopolitan divide.

4.4. Discussion: formulated expectations for the data analysis

The analysis of the UK-EU relationships framing revealed that David Cameron's rhetoric differed and consisted of rather contradicting sub-discourses. Hence, the EU narrative - encompassing both the UK-EU future cooperation and its reformation in light of crisis - was assumed to catch a wider public support for the Conservative party, appealing to those who held nationalistic and far-right views and cast their votes for

UKIP. Furthermore, before 2014, David Cameron overlooked the EU migration issues. However, due to the rising public interest for UKIP in light of the European refugee crisis 2015 in particular, what was intensified is citizens' demand for Britain's control over migration. Hence, the national identity has been de-Europeanized, whereas immigrants were framed as "others" coming to the UK to exploit the British welfare. Those holding negative attitudes towards immigrants and seeing no benefits of the UK retaining any relations with the EU have justified the immigration policy tightening manifested by the Conservatives.

So, what is going to be examined is how particular factors of satisfaction with economy, attitudes towards immigrants and further European cooperation differ between Conservatives and Labour supporters, tailoring the two parties' political strategies.

It is hypothesised that in a year after the referendum, the Conservative party has been defining its political strategy in line with the public demand to ensure economic and political independence from the EU, denying any benefits of migrants for the country. Hence, in a year after the referendum, the Conservatives consolidated the Eurosceptic electorate, manifesting to preserve the state's sovereignty by proclaimed anti-immigrants views. At the same time, it is suggested that after the referendum, the Conservative party managed to attract those much more satisfied with the state of the economy because of the promised, and ultimately gained, economic independence from Brussels' interference.

Scrutinising of the constituency-level patterns of voting after the referendum has proved that the Conservatives and the Labour party targeted different types of residencies as well as representatives of different occupations. Maxwell (2019) claims that urban areas have been alienated from multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism values of big cities. So, it is argued that rural areas, where manual jobs prevail over technological and creative sectors, tended to be much conservative due to a potential feeling of being "left behind" the globalised economy. It has shown that those living in metropolitan centres, i.e. economically dynamic cities, and engaged in "cosmopolitan sectors" have voted for Labour, while residents of regional-coastal constituencies, engaged in routine occupations, cast their votes for the Conservative party (Maxwell, 2019). Hence, it is

hypothesised that a type of domicile and household income has intensified over time in predicting a vote for either of the two parties and differentiating these parties' support.

Furthermore, Inman (2019) claims that there has been a generational gap during the Brexit referendum. In particular, younger Britons tended to vote to remain, while older citizens - to leave. This tendency took place during the general election as well, having reached its peak in 2017 and kept growing in 2018. Hence, it is hypothesised that the respondents' age became a significant factor predicting the vote for either of the two leading parties due to the different issues the political campaigns addressed to appeal to different generations of the electorate.

Curtis (2019) argues that education was another prominent factor predicting voting behaviour in the referendum 2016: in particular, the Leave campaign (promoted by the Conservatives and UKIP party) succeeded amongst citizens with a lower level of education. So, a lower level of obtained education is assumed to predict a vote for the Conservative party again in a year after the referendum, iterating the tendency of 2016.

5. Data analysis
5.1. Used data and methods
In order to fulfill the research goal, European Social Survey data sets of Round 6 (2012/2013), Round 8 (2016/2017), and Round 9 (2018/2019) are to be analysed. The data sets are appropriate as they consist of attitudes, beliefs, and political behaviour variables on the country of interest, the United Kingdom, in the years before the Brexit referendum and in the immediate aftermath. In order to trace how the two parties started addressing and encompassing the European issues in the context of Brexit unfolding, the year 2012 was accounted as one securing a relative distance from David Cameron's speeches on the reformation of the UK-EU relations as well as the European refugee crisis in 2015. Hence, based on the two major parties' manifesto analyses and the Conservative party leader's framing the UK-EU relations before 2013, the ESS Round 6 was chosen as at this time, there were no proclaimed linkages to the European imperfections in the context of the UK-EU cooperation (reflecting British politics "as usual"). However, later on, it started gaining momentum during the defined timespan and shaped the major parties' strategies in light of the Brexit referendum.

The samples are representative of all persons aged 15 and over who reside within private households in the UK. The respondents are selected by strict random probability methods (ESS official website). A declared minimum "effective sample size" was achieved, i.e. N = 2286 (Round 6), N = 1959 (Round 8), N = 2204 (Round 9). The data was collected via computer-assisted personal interviews.

The independent variables for the logistic regression models were chosen to prove an assumption that the Brexit referendum has fundamentally redefined the electorate's political demand to deliver particular policies.

Hence, the core aspects of the EU integration - economic cooperation, coordination of the immigration policies regulations, and intensified European unification - became the key factors that voters evaluated political parties on when deciding who to vote for. So, the independent variables, being included in the three logistic regression models, will allow for the scrutinisation of whether the two major parties adapted to the electorate's

demands and if the parties divergence on the critical factors had increased over time and became their strategy to appeal to the different segments of the electorate after the referendum.

Dependent variable:

- B24. (B18. for ESS6) which party do you feel closer to?
  The variable was recoded, i.e. 1- the Conservative party, 0 - the Labour party, other values - system missing.

Independent variables:

- satisfaction with the economy

- B28 (B 21. for ESS6) On the whole, how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy in the UK?

00 (extremely dissatisfied) - 10 (extremely satisfied)

- immigration

- B43 (B34. for ESS 6) Is [Britain/the UK] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?

00 (worse place to live) - 10 (better place to live)

- EU leaving incentives

B37. (B28. for ESS6) Now thinking about the European Union, some say European unification should go further. Others say it has already gone too far. Using this card, what number on the scale best describes your position?

00 (unification has already gone too far) - 10 (unification should go further)

Logistic regression is a means to predict the outcome variable (party respondents felt closer to either the Conservatives or Labour) from the three predictors (independent) variables. While predicting which party the respondent felt closer to, the logarithmic odds ratio are used, to express probabilities.

5.2. Outputs and results discussion
5.2.1. Characteristics and attitudes of voters in 2012-2018 yy.

In order to trace general tendencies over the timespan within British society, several charts will be presented and discussed. This information highlights the electorate's general characteristics as well as the attitudes from 2012 to 2018.

*Figure 1. Electorate turnout in the General elections
according to the age categories*
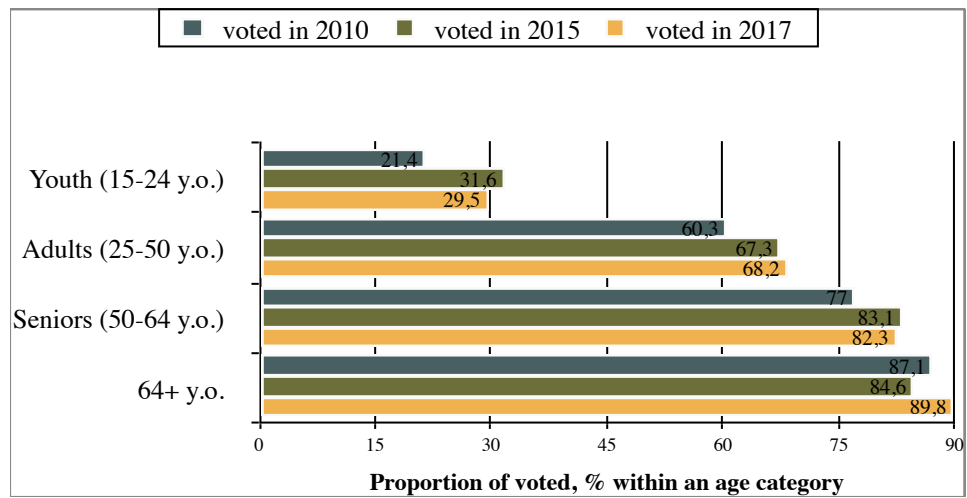
The key tendency over the timespan has been a notable turnout of the population aged at 25+. As such, more than 60% of adults and older adults have voted in the elections, with an increasing trend over the three elections. Moreover, almost 90% of voters over 64 y.o. have cast their votes in 2017. In contrast, youth in the UK have voted less actively, also possibly due to a factor of voter eligibility. Nevertheless, there has been a striking twofold rise in the youth turnout in 2015, while in the next elections, these 30% remained voting as well.

*Figure 2. Proportion of voters in the General elections
according to their place of residence*
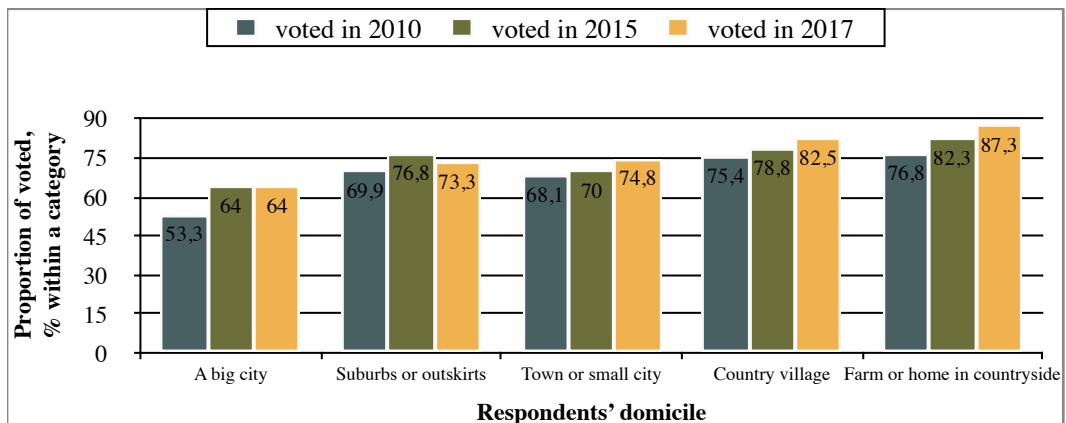
The majority, i.e. more than 70%, of those who resided out of big cities voted in the general elections 2010-2017. It is also seen that there has been a growing tendency of

voting – which reached its peak of around 87% in 2017 - of those who lived in the countryside. Overall, there has been a growing amount of people from every type of domicile (except a slight 4% decrease by 2017, comparing to 2015, in voting of those residing in suburbs) who cast their votes in general elections. What is also essential to notice that the most prominent growth between 2010-2017 might be seen among voters living in the countryside (around 16% increase). In contrast, the number of residents of big cities has increased by a minor 6% between 2010 and 2015 and remained stable in 2017.

Figure 3 below shows voters' attitudes towards immigrants and EU unification, as well as their satisfaction with the state of economy over the timespan. Figure 3 illustrates how the voters' satisfaction with the economy has changed over time. First of all, it is seen that the voters tended to express rather moderate satisfaction, i.e. choosing centrist categories (satisfied for 4-5 out of 10) over the timespan. Overall, throughout the period, the voters' satisfaction remained roughly the same, having fluctuated for 0,4-0,9%.

Figure 3. Mean values of satisfaction with the state of the economy, attitudes towards immigrants, and the EU unification of those voted in the general elections
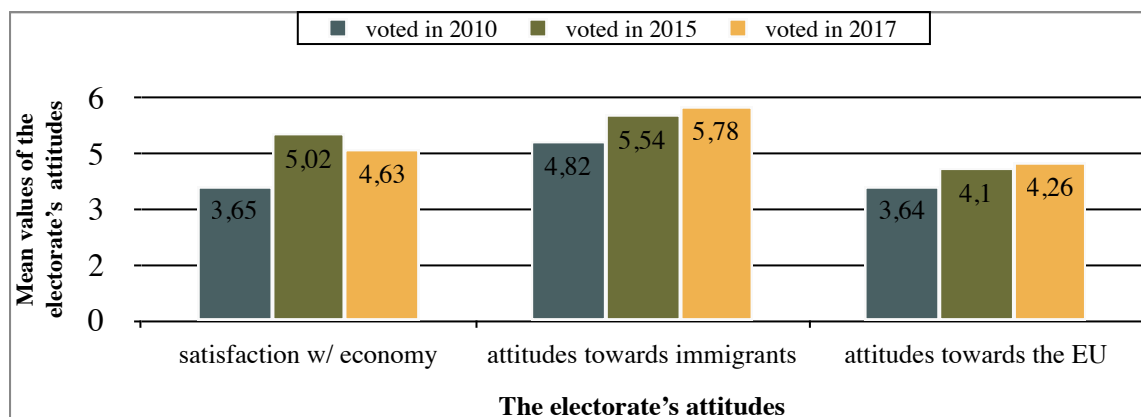
Nevertheless, it did considerably increase between 2012 and 2016 possibly due to the economic recession that took place in the UK in 2008-2013 and its potential consequences which caused the lower electorate's economic satisfaction in 2012.

Figure 3 demonstrates a graduate increase in positive attitudes towards immigrants through the timespan among the voters. At the same time, the attitudes have been rather

moderate due to the mean values that equalled 5-6 out of 10, where the maximum value means the strong belief that immigrants make the UK a better place to live.

Regarding the voters' attitudes towards EU unification, it is seen that since 2014, there has been a moderate upward tendency of voters to consider further unification. Nevertheless, the voters might be characterised as rather sceptical towards the EU as they chose 3-4 values out of 10 during the timespan, where the minimum value means a strong belief that the EU unification has already gone too far.

Table 2 presents the same mean values of the voters' attitudes and perceptions, with regard to a party they voted for, either the Conservatives or Labour. So, the table highlights particular variables separately and compares the means. What is striking is that depending on the party choice, the attitudes significantly differ, and evolves over the timespan. In particular, while in 2012, the difference was minor 0,3-0,7% in relation to all three variables, after the referendum, the gap has notably increased by 1-1,75%.

Table 2. Mean values of satisfaction with the state of the economy, attitudes towards immigrants, and the EU unification of the two major parties' voters

| | Conservative party | | | Labour Party | | |
	2012	2016	2018	2012	2016	2018
Mean values						
Satisfaction with economy	3,95	5,70	5,36	3,48	4,59	4,07
Attitudes towards immigrants	4,30	5,24	5,18	4,64	5,92	6,30
Attitudes towards the EU	3,35	3,56	3,38	4,02	4,76	5,13

From the table it is possible to draw a conclusion that the voters differentiate in their attitudes towards the key policy dimensions related to Brexit. Thus, the political parties are assumed to accommodate these demands and address them to attract these two opposite segments of the electorate.

5.2.2. Regression model outcomes predicting a vote for the Conservatives or the Labour party in 2012-2018: analysis and discussion

In order to look at the effects of each of the the three main variables, and to consider the effect of other variables as well, logistic regression models were used. Table 3 includes

the models' outcomes which allowed the tracking of the effects of the variables throughout the timespan. From Table 3, what can be noticed is that throughout the years, the Conservatives appeal to the voters, which are more likely to be satisfied with the economy, compared to Labour party supporters. Detailed regression model outcomes for each of the years are included in Appendix 2, illustrating not only odds ratio, but also percentages of explained variances, standard errors, B-coefficients for each of the years.

Voters that have rather sceptical attitudes towards the EU unification and immigrants preferred the Conservative party over Labour.

Table 3. Regression model outcomes predicting a vote
for The Conservatives or The Labour Party

Factors	2012	2016	2018
	Exp (B): odds ratio		
Satisfaction with the economy	0,743*	0,687*	0,621*
Attitudes towards the EU unification	1,086*	1,269*	1,353*
Attitudes towards immigrants	1,131*	1,122*	1,210*

Dependent variable: which party do you feel closer to? 1-Labour; 0 - Conservative.
*Logistic regression model. * p<0.05*

The tendency is especially noticeable for the factors of attitudes towards immigrants and the EU. The difference has become considerably large after the referendum, compared to 2012. Hence, the results demonstrate how the two parties diverged along the lines of the issues which became prominent in light of Brexit. So, it shows how the two parties' electorates differ according to the parties' position on the particular attitudes. Alongside, there have been 29-39% of variances explained in 2018 year (Appendix 2), meaning that the model, considering the particular factors, is notably strong.

Table 4. Extended regression model outcomes predicting a vote for
The Conservatives or The Labour Party in 2012-2018

Factors	2012	2016	2018
	Exp (B): odds ratio		
Satisfaction with the economy	0,747*	0,681*	0,620*
Attitudes towards the EU unification	1,071	1,230*	1,296*
Attitudes towards immigrants	1,173*	1,165*	1,170*
Age	0,977*	0,981*	0,965*
Gender	0,598*	0,781	0,921
Domicile	0,749*	0,570*	0,626*
Years of full-time education completed	0,953	0,976	1,004
Household income	0,840*	0,826*	0,855*

Dependent variable: which party do you feel
closer to? 1-Labour; 0 - Conservative.
Logistic regression model. * $p<0.05$

Apart from the three key factors the initial model (Appendix 2) was built with, the extended regression model considers other controllable variables that presumably would increase the model explanatory effectiveness, i.e. checking the credibility of the results from the initial logistic regression models. Detailed extended regression model outcomes for each of the years are included in Appendix 3, illustrating not only odds ratio, but also percentages of explained variances, standard errors and B-coefficients for each of the years.

These extended logistic regression models, that take into account voter demographics and welfare characteristics, highlight the actual effects of the three attitudes. They show no effect on party support. The extended regression models outcomes proved the increasing inter-parties gap in terms of the key policy dimensions linked to the Brexit process. The table explicitly demonstrates that the Conservative party successfully attracted voters with a higher level of satisfaction with the state's economy as well as rather sceptical attitudes towards immigrants and European cooperation. Furthermore, over the timespan, the differentiation has become much more clear, meaning that the Conservative party, by securing its position as the party delivering Brexit, responded to the political requests of a concrete segment of the electorate demanding to "Get Brexit Done". In this case, it is also important to articulate this population segment's

characteristics, such as higher age of the party voters, tendency to reside in rural areas, and a higher level of household income. In opposite, the Labour party did attract voters with a lower level of economic satisfaction and rather positive attitudes towards immigrants and European integration. It was found a person's gender and amount of years of full-time education completed remained insignificant in predicting the vote for the party after the referendum (a factor of gender was significant for 2012 party polling, however).

Therefore the extended regression models have shown that the major parties differ on particular policy demands, reflecting the inter-parties gap increase over time. Hence, the models demonstrated longer-term tendencies within the British political field in accordance to the European crisis, its potential impact on the UK's prosperity, and consequent shifts in the electorate's attitudes and political demands. Furthermore, with the help of additional controllable variables, the electorate's welfare and demographic characteristics, it is possible to argue that the Brexit issue signified a cosmopolitan divide in Britain. This has been deepened by the two major parties strategies appealing to the two opposite segments of the electorate - younger voters, from big cities and a lower income (in case of the Labour party) and older voters from smaller cities with a higher income (in case of the Conservative party). Due to the fact that the extended regression model, predicting the vote in 2018, explained 36-48% of differences (Appendix 3), the controllable variables significantly increased the model's predictability in comparison to the initial model (Table 4).

According to the theoretical background on voting behaviour and preferences, it is suggested that parties shift their positions in response to changes in the mean voter position (Schumacher, 2013). Moreover, as Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009) have proven, parties respond to other parties' policy shifts within the same ideological dimension, i.e parties on the right are likely to respond to other right-wing parties. Hence, this argument strengthens the data analysis outcome for the Conservative party case. While UKIP started actively spinning up after its victory in the European election 2014, the Conservatives re-shifted the positions towards right-wing politics to secure the party's leading role in both the UK's place in the EU and immigration control. Besides, Haupt (2010) adds that parties are to change their positions according to

external influence. In this case, it is assumed that the EU financial and immigration crisis might have influenced the Conservative Party's radical stance, while Labour (supporting the EU reformation too but being more pro-European) were blamed for insufficient arguments for remaining within the EU and agitation against leaving.

In 2017, both major parties addressed economic issues the voters might face because of Brexit. The Conservatives promised to create the economy that worked for all, while Labour presented a strategy of the economy that worked for what was traditionally seen as the working people. However, as Portes (2020) claims, pressure on key public services has increased, while economic inequalities and welfare cuts tended to grow. Citing a reduced GDP growth and "depressed business and consumer confidence" (Portes, 2020), the Conservatives (under May) invoked Article 50 in 2017 to get the withdrawal process started, as a means for economic restoration and "a double dividend". Firstly, it was said that prompt Brexit incorporation would cause the economic boost due to unleashed investment. Secondly, as soon as the Brexit deal is implemented, the government under Johnson would focus on other policy dimensions, as "levelling up" the economic performance of those UK regions perceived to have been "left behind" over the past few decades" (Portes, 2020).

In relation to immigration, it is said that the far-right party position on reducing immigration is primarily linked to "preservation of sovereignty", while migrants are seen as "dangerous others" (Rooduijn, 2020), positioning cultural and economic threats to the native group. So, from 2015 onwards (after the EU refugee crisis), it is argued that the Conservative party sought to establish control over the issue. The radicalised party leader's speeches on Britain's foreign policy throughout 2013-2017 might also complement the issues of immigration and the EU "fusing" (Goodwin, 2017). As such, negative attitudes towards immigration became a significant predictor of a vote for the Conservatives after the referendum.

The models' outcomes proved the interest-model of vote behaviour as the issue of Brexit has been adopted by the Conservatives after the referendum, while the electorate cast the votes for the party as it has been better representing its interests. In particular,

while the Conservative party supporters were striving for less European cooperation and considered immigrants as those making the UK a worse place to live through the timespan (as it has been shown in the Table 3). This party evolved sceptical and anti-European stances to hold this segment of the electorate. Furthermore, due to its secured position as the party to deliver Brexit, the Conservatives kept proposing anti-European ideology after the referendum, therefore bringing Brexit to the forefront. In contrast to the Labour party (which had not secured any positions of the referendum 2016 as well as did not explicitly build the political campaign around the EU withdrawal afterwards), the Conservative party had been manipulating the basis of the electorate's voting decisions to increase the perception of the party's capability to deliver Brexit. This proves the two parties differentiation in building up the strategies to increase voter support.

Overall, it is argued that the Conservative party, striving to obtain the most significant electoral gains in the years after the referendum of 2016, adjusted the party proposals in relation to its core electorate's attitudes. Moreover, due to the fact that the party stance on Brexit delivering might be considered as its ideological pillar (due to the party manifesto analysis), the issue of Brexit is supposed to ensure the party coherence and inertia over time, intensifying Euroscepticism within the political playing field.

Conclusion

The thesis aimed at investigating how the two major political parties, the Conservatives and Labour, reacted to the voters' political demands which had been illuminated in line with the Brexit referendum.

In order to trace how the two parties started addressing and encompassing the European issues in the context of Brexit unfolding, three waves of the European Social Survey data sets were examined, ESS Round 6 of 2012/2013, ESS Round 8 of 2016/2017, and ESS Round 9 of 2018/2019. The independent variables that were investigated showed that the two major parties adapted to the electorate's demand, while the parties divergence on the critical factors has become their strategy to appeal to the different segments of the electorate after the referendum, having increased over the time period.

The extended regression models outcomes proved the increasing inter-parties gap in terms of the key policy dimensions linked to the Brexit process. The model outcome table explicitly demonstrated that the Conservative party much successfully attracted voters with a higher level of satisfaction with the state's economy and rather sceptic attitudes towards immigrants and European cooperation. Furthermore, over the timespan, the differentiation has become much clearer, meaning that the Conservative party - by securing its position as the party delivering Brexit - responded to the political requests of a concrete segment of the electorate demanding to "Get Brexit Done". It is also important to articulate this segment's characteristics, such as the higher age of the party voters, rural residing areas, and a higher household income. In opposite, the Labour party did attract voters with a lower level of economic satisfaction and rather positive attitudes towards immigrants and European integration.

So, the extended regression models have shown that the major parties differ on the particular policy demands, reflecting the inter-parties gap increase over time. The models demonstrated longer-term tendencies within the British political field according to the European crisis and its potential impact on the UK's prosperity and consequent shifts in the electorate's attitudes and political demands. Furthermore, with the help of additional controllable variables it is possible to argue that the Brexit issue signified a cosmopolitan divide in Britain. The divide has been deepened by the two major parties

strategies which appealed to the two opposite segments of the electorate - younger voters, from big cities and a lower income (in case of the Labour party) and older voters from smaller cities with a higher income (in case of the Conservative party).

So, the Brexit vote taken place in 2016 keeps impacting the current British political agenda, not only in terms of the further UK-EU trading negotiations but also by re-aligning the electorate with the major political parties. Based on the analysis, what might be concluded is that British exceptionalism and Euroscepticism, primarily based on superiority of national identity, have been framed into a public demand of the EU reformation to demonstrate British sovereignty. Hence, citizens with anti-cosmopolitan attitudes and aspirations to retain control over the national economy and implemented policies expect the political parties to ensure the state's independence from any closer cooperation with European allies. Thus, the Brexit issue, on the one hand, has demonstrated the traditional British Euroscepticism and on the other - the electorate's attitudes towards the British government. In the end, the public demand for much accountable political system, which would consider the issues within the state and enhance democratisation, has been determining the parties' campaigns. Concerns regarding British identity and security defined the subsequent election outcomes.

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General election 2010, 2015, 2017 results (UK parliament official website data)

Party	Seats			Net			Vote share (%)			Votes		
	2010	2015	2017	2010	2015	2017	2010	2015	2017	2010	2015	2017
Conservative	307	331	318	+97	+ 28	-13	36,1	36,9	42,5	10,726,614	11,334,226	13,636,684
Labour	258	232	262	-91	-25	32	29,0	30,4	39,9	8,609,527	9,347,273	12,877,918
Liberal Democrat	57	8	12	-5	-49	3	23,0	7,9	7,4	6,836,824	1,454,436	2,371,861
Democratic Unionist Party	8	8	10	-1	0	2	0,6	0,6	0,9	168,216	2,415,916	292,316
Scottish National Party	6	56	35	0	+ 50	-19	1,7	4,7	3,0	491,386	1,454,436	977,568
Sinn Fein	5	4	7	0	-1	3	0,6	0,6	0,7	171,942	176,232	238,915
Plaid Cymru	3	3	4	+1	0	1	0,6	0,6	0,5	165,394	181,704	164,466
Social Democratic&Labour Party	3	3	0	0	0	-3	0,4	0,3	0,3	110,970	99,809	95,419
Green party	1	1	1	+1	0	0	1,0	3,8	1,6	285,616	1,157,630	525,665
Alliance Party	1	0	0	0	0	0	0,1	0,2	0,2	42,762	61,556	64,553
Ulster Unionist Party	0	2	0	-1	+2	-2	0,3	0,4	0,3	102,361	114,935	83,280
UK Independence Party	0	1	0	0	+1	-1	3,1	12,6	1,8	919,546	3,881,099	594,068

Regression model outcomes predicting a vote
for the Conservatives or the Labour party in 2012, 2016, 2018 yy.

Regression **model** for the vote in 2012

	B	S.E.	Exp(B): odds ratio
Satisfaction with the economy	-0,297	0,042	0,743*
Attitudes towards the EU unification	0,083	0,035	1,086*
Attitudes towards immigrants	0,123	0,037	1,131*
Constant	0,572	0,213	1,772*

Dependent variable: which party do you feel closer to? 1-Labour; 0 - Conservative. *Logistic regression model.* * p<0.05

Model summary	
Cox&Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
.091	.122

Regression model for the vote in 2016

	B	S.E.	Exp(B): odds ratio
Satisfaction with the economy	-0,375	0,046	0,687*
Attitudes towards the EU unification	0,238	0,036	1,269*
Attitudes towards immigrants	0,115	0,040	1,122*
Constant	0,259	0,324	1,296*

Dependent variable: which party do you feel closer to? 1-Labour; 0 - Conservative. *Logistic regression model.* * p<0.05

Model summary	
Cox&Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
.204	.272

Regression model for the vote in 2018

	B	S.E.	Exp(B): odds ratio
Satisfaction with the economy	-0,477	0,045	0,621*
Attitudes towards the EU unification	0,302	0,039	1,353*
Attitudes towards immigrants	0,191	0,039	1,210*
Constant	-0,058	0,271	0,943

Dependent variable: which party do you feel closer to? 1-Labour;
0 - Conservative. *Logistic regression model.* * p<0.05

Model summary	
Cox&Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
.285	.380

Extended regression model outcomes predicting a vote
for the Conservatives or the Labour party in 2012, 2016, 2018 yy

Extended regression model for the vote in 2012

	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B): odds ratio
Satisfaction with the economy	-0,292	0,049	0,000	0,747*
Attitudes towards the EU unification	0,069	0,041	0,090	1,071
Attitudes towards immigrants	0,159	0,047	0,001	1,173*
Age	-0,023	0,006	0,000	0,977*
Gender	-0,514	0,185	0,005	0,598*
Domicile	-0,288	0,105	0,006	0,749*
Years of full-time education completed	-0,048	0,028	0,088	0,953
Household's income	-0,174	0,035	0,000	0,840*
Constant	4,934	0,735	0,000	138,971*

Dependent variable: which party do you feel closer to? 1-Labour; 0 - Conservative. *Logistic regression model.* * p<0.05

Model summary	
Cox&Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
.169	.228

Extended regression model for the vote in 2016

	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B): odds ratio
Satisfaction with the economy	-0,384	0,056	0,000	0,681*
Attitudes towards the EU unification	0,207	0,042	0,000	1,230*
Attitudes towards immigrants	0,153	0,050	0,002	1,165*
Age	-0,019	0,006	0,002	0,981*
Gender	-0,247	0,200	0,216	0,781
Domicile	-0,542	0,105	0,000	0,570*
Years of full-time education completed	-0,024	0,027	0,373	0,976
Household's income	-0,191	0,039	0,000	0,826*
Constant	4,644	0,819	0,000	103,999*

Dependent variable: which party do you feel closer to? 1-Labour; 0 - Conservative. *Logistic regression model.* * p<0.05

Model summary	
Cox&Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
.292	.390

Extended regression model for the vote in 2018

	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B): odds ratio
Satisfaction with the economy	-0,478	0,053	0,000	0,620*
Attitudes towards the EU unification	0,260	0,045	0,000	1,296*
Attitudes towards immigrants	0,157	0,045	0,000	1,170*
Age	-0,036	0,006	0,000	0,965*
Gender	-0,082	0,195	0,673	0,921
Domicile	-0,468	0,104	0,000	0,626*
Years of full-time education completed	0,004	0,025	0,865	1,004
Household's income	-0,156	0,036	0,000	0,855*
Constant	4,563	0,776	0,000	95,906

Dependent variable: which party do you feel closer to? 1-Labour;   0 - Conservative. *Logistic regression model.* * $p < 0.05$

Model summary	
Cox&Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
.358	
	.477