UNITED KINGDOM INDEPENDENCE PARTY'S EUROSCEPTIC POSITIONING AND ITS ROLE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM'S IN-OUT REFERANDUM

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Abstract

The United Kingdom continued to question some aspects of the European Union even after becoming a member state in 1973. The country's uneasiness with the European Union increased significantly in the 1990s, when the European Union member states took significant steps to deepen the level of integration in response to the changing dynamics of the international politics. Never-ending unrest in the country eventually led to the withdrawal from the EU, commonly known as the Brexit, after a decision basing upon a referendum in 2016. This paper analyses the role of the United Kingdom Independence Party in the Brexit process till the end of the referendum of 23 June 2016. The study argues that concomitant operation of the current and historical dynamics produced the result of the Brexit.

Keywords: United Kingdom, European Union, United Kingdom Independence Party, In-Out Referendum, Brexit.

BİRLEŞİK KRALLIK BAĞIMSIZLIK PARTİSİ'NİN AVRUPA-ŞÜPHECİSİ TUTUMU VE BİRLEŞİK KRALLIK'IN AYRILIK REFERANDUMUNDAKİ ROLÜ

Öz

Birleşik Krallık, 1973 yılında üye olmasının ardında da Avrupa Birliği projesinin bazı boyutlarını sorgulamaya devam etmiştir. Birleşik Krallığın Avrupa Birliği'ne ilişkin kaygıları, üye ülkelerin uluslararası siyasette değişen dinamiklere cevaben 1990'larda bütünleşmeyi daha derin hale getirme çabası içine girdiği önemli bir artış göstermiştir. Birleşik Krallığın AB'ye karşı bitmek bilmeyen rahatsızlığı en nihayetinde, ülkenin 2016 yılında düzenlediği referandumda alınan karara dayanan Birlik'ten ayrılması, yaygın olarak bilinen adıyla Brexit'i, ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu çalışmada Birleşik Krallık Bağımsızlık Partisi'nin Brexit sürecindeki rolü 23 Haziran 2016 referandumunun sonlamasına kadar olan dönem itibariyle analiz edilmektedir. Çalışmada güncel ve tarihi dinamiklerin eş zamanlı işleyişinin Brexit sonucunu ortaya çıkardığı ileri sürülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Birleşik Krallık, Avrupa Birliği, Birleşik Krallık Bağımsızlık Partisi, Ayrılık Referandumu, Brexit.

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1. Introduction

In 1946 Winston Churchill, the prime minister of the United Kingdom (UK), made his famous Zurich Speech. This speech called for the establishment of the United States of Europe. Considering the UK's response to the integration attempts happening in Europe throughout 1950s, it can be concluded that Churchill did not intend for a European integration including his own country. The diverging past experiences of the UK, from its continental counterparts, played a vital role in this choice. For example, the country was neither defeated nor invaded during the world wars; it was one of the great powers with a pivotal role in the design of the world after the Second World War; it could still be defined as a colonial power; it became a nuclear power in 1952 and its stable political system had endured for centuries. As a combination of these factors, instead of being an original member of the European Economic Community (EEC), which was later transformed into the European Union (EU), it made an effort in order to persuade the Western European countries to participate in its own loose integration project until 1962. When the UK applied for EEC membership in 1962, it accepted the failure of its loose integration project. The poor performance of the UK economy when compared to that of the EEC member states, the lure of cheaper goods, the embarrassment stemming from decolonization and the end of the empire all played pivotal roles changed the UK's approach towards the EEC membership (Crowley, 2015: 84).

The country became an EEC member in 1973. However, the problems of the UK with the European integration did not come to an end with this membership. Due to the UK's membership application being rejected twice in the 1960s, the country was forced to accept all the EEC requirements during accession negotiations. Thus, the UK said yes to bad membership conditions in order to become an EEC member (Troitino, Kerikmäe and Chochia, 2018: 96). As a result, a debate turning around the issues of reforming the EEC in line with the British priorities and the renegotiation of the membership conditions came to the fore. In this setting, the UK conducted its first referendum about EEC membership in 1975; which resulted in clear support for the continuation of the membership. After this referendum, the UK's unrest about its EU membership continued. As the direction of the EU changed in the 1990s, the UK's uneasiness increased. When the EEC, which had started mostly as an economic integration system, began to turn into a binding political and legal system with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the EU member states took several significant steps to deepen the level of integration in Europe through successive treaties. In this context, the UK started to opt-out from the major EU projects, such as single currency and the Schengen visa regime; which are frequently seen as the two of the most important achievements of the EU.

Although it was depicted as a success story for a long time, the EU had been operating in a political turbulence in the last decades. There is a widespread tendency among the EU member states to see the EU as a source of the domestic problems or a factor in making these problems deeper. In this context, Eurosceptic forces started to find more room to operate in the political life of the EU member states. When this EU-wide tendency combined with the never-ending unrest of the UK about its EU membership, it brought about the exit vote in 23 June 2016 referendum.

This paper examines the role of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in the withdrawal decision of the UK from the EU by concentrating on its emergence as a Euroskeptic political party and its activities during the in-out referendum. The paper is a case study basing mostly on a content analysis, which would be in search of underlying themes in speeches or statements of the UKIP people. The content analysis is combined with an enriching list of academic works striving to shed the light on the UKIP and Brexit realities. This study first analyzes the rise of the UKIP as a political party by making a division between its early development and its transformation under the Nigel Farage leadership. Then the Brexit process is elaborated on while

considering both the role of the UKIP in the decision for in-out referendum and the campaign processes separately.

2. UKIP as a Eurosceptic Political Party in the UK Politics

2.1. The Rise and Early Years of the UKIP

The UK has had anti-EU non-party groups since 1960s. These groups, such as the "Keep Britain Out" group, played a vital role in the 1975 referendum. They started to become influential again in the late 1980s (Usherwood, 2003: 223, 225). The 1988 Bruges Speech of Margaret Thatcher, delivered at the College of Europe, became a real turning point in the rise of current UK Euroscepticism; which opened the door leading to the Brexit. In this speech, Thatcher (1988) criticized the pace and nature of European integration and stated her choice for a Europe of nation states rather than a federal Europe with strong supranational institutions. She also stressed her choice for an EU tackling the current problems of the member states in a practical way, encouraging enterprises and staying away from becoming involved in the defence matters.

The founder of the UKIP, Alan Sked, a left-wing professor at the London School of Economics, was a former member of the Bruges Group and shared Thatcher's vision of Europe. The UKIP can be categorized as a part of this Eurosceptic tendency gained momentum with 1980s. However, it deviated from the previous anti-EU initiatives by organizing itself as a political party. The UKIP was founded in 1991 under the name of Anti-Federalist League. The party took its current name, UKIP, in 1993. In comparison to the other parties in UK politics, it is a very young political entity. Sked consciously avoided using the word British in the name of the party in order to maintain a distance from radical right politics. The party was formed as a single issue party, which was set as achieving the exit of the UK from the EU, because the founders of the party believed that the country would be better off and independent with the end of this membership (Goodwin and Dennison, 2018).

The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 brought integration further by putting forth a plan for a common European currency. It also played a vital role in the emergence of the UKIP. The party conceptualized this treaty as the moment where British national sovereignty was destroyed (Sol, 2015: 142). UKIP opposed the transfer of significant powers to the EU, believing that it was undemocratic and excessively bureaucratic (Macmillan, 2016: 159). For Sked, the Anti-Federalist League had two important successes. First, the party ensured the publication of the Maastricht Treaty, which was originally designed to be a secret treaty. Second, it significantly contributed to the defeat of Tory Chairman, Chris Patten, at Bath in the 1992 general election. This was important because Patten was a strong supporter of the EU and aimed to become the next prime minister (Sked, 2018).

Throughout the 1990s, the UKIP competed with the Conservatives and fascist parties (i.e. the British National Party and the National Democrats) for the votes of the anti-EU voters. As a result, the party had difficulty making a name for itself as the only real alternative for British voters who had doubts about European integration in its early life. Despite its stress over the UK's exit from the EU, UKIP gained some populist and radical right party characteristics to gain the support of more people. The party's concerns about issues such as migration, nationalism, and privileged position of the elites within the society should be considered in this context. The collapse of the traditional extreme right, the British National Party, also had an undeniable role in this transformation of the UKIP. However, the UKIP never declared its adoption of an extreme right line formally. After this shift, Sked, the founding leader of the party, resigned in 1997 (Goodwin and Dennison, 2018).

2.2. The UKIP under Farage's Tutelage and Its Eurosceptic Positioning

After Sked's departure, the party was then taken over by Farage. Farage had extremely right tendencies and an obsession with the migration issue. As a charismatic leader, who used populist language effectively, he played a vital role in the increasing popularity of the party. External and internal developments also influenced the continued transformation of the UKIP. In the 2000s, especially after the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks of 2001 in the USA, extreme right tendencies started to become stronger in many Western democracies. The London Bombings of 2005 accelerated this process in the UK. Thanks to David Cameron's attempts for modernising the Conservative Party after 2005, UKIP also became a real alternative for the Conservatives, who felt alienated from their party (Bale, 2018: 3). Yet, party members showed a great concern to maintain a difference from the Conservative line. Especially following the repositioning of the Conservative Party closer to the centre after its coalition with the liberals, the UKIP found a large political space to exploit on the right of the political spectrum (Sol, 2015a: 140). In this setting, the UKIP was able to portray itself as the best party in the UK to handle the EU issue (Lynch and Whitaker, 2013: 287, 306). Under the influence of severe economic problems, intensifying migration, rising terrorist attacks and strong nationalist tendencies, the agenda of the extreme parties became mainstream opinions. Thus, in the last decade, these concerns gained a greater place in the design of political debate within the EU member states. As a reflection of this European-wide tendency, the influence of the UKIP in the UK politics intensified and the party started to get more attention (Walsh, 2016: 12-13).

The UKIP had two types of supporters from the beginning. The first group of supporters was the core group, who backed the party through all conditions and in all kinds of elections. The second group of supporters consisted of the strategic ones, whose support for the UKIP was especially obvious during the European elections (Crines and Heppell, 2016: 232). The number of strategic supporters of the party made a historical peak during the in-out referendum. The first electoral success of the UKIP came in the 1999 European Parliament election. The party secured three seats. High visibility of the UKIP representatives in the European Parliament contributed positively to the appeal of the party in domestic politics (Usherwood, 2016: 27). In the 2004 and 2009 elections, the party got 12 and 13 seats in the European Parliament, respectively. In 2014, UKIP became the first party in the European elections by getting 24 percent of the votes (Vasilopoulou, 2017: 60). While the UKIP has successful results in the European elections, its performance in the general or local elections can be defined as modest or even poor. This was mainly because the electoral system in the UK, which is based on single member plurality, has a tendency to discriminate against small parties and exaggerate the success of the winning party. As a result, in general elections, the party came in as either the third or fourth party (Curtice, 2017: 41).

The UKIP tends to depict the EU as an anti-democratic governance model. This is in great contrast to the ideals the EU claimed to symbolize, and acted against the sovereignty of the member states. The party argued that the EU was continuing to integrate further by developing according to the wills of some un-elected EU elites and without taking the opinions of Europeans into account. For example, they saw the Lisbon Treaty as an imposition, because it neglected to consider the negative results taken in the referendums during the approval process (Farage, 2009). The UKIP have even argued for a similarity between the Soviet Union and EU. To them, both were political regimes acting against freedoms by forming a central control mechanism (Farage, 2018). For example, the EU policies adopted to fight the economic crisis in Greece and Portugal were compared as being similar to the Brezhnev doctrine. This doctrine established that any act, within the Soviet camp, moving towards capitalism was a common problem for the countries of the camp (Farage, 2015a). The EU was also frequently depicted as a system aiming to destroy nation states in Europe, as it was taking sole control of several matters which were previously under the monopoly of national governments (Farage, 2012). Therefore, it was commonly argued that the

EU member states were governed from Brussels. Additionally, UKIP problematized German domination within the EU. It was even argued that the EU was formed to stop German domination, but it turned into a tool serving to it in the end (MacDonald, 2018).

As a party with some anti-establishment and populist tendencies, UKIP did not only have problems with the European elites in Brussels. It also clashed with the British elites and politicians allegedly cooperating extensively with the European elites. These British elites and leaders made decisions without the consent of the people and acted against democratic credentials (Salvati, 2016). As stated by Farage, the national elites were acting in collaboration with the EU elites and hiding the truth from their people. He also argued that they were making a great effort in order to prevent any referendum on subjects associated with the EU (Farage, 2011a). In contrast to these corrupt elite, the UKIP people presented themselves as the ordinary people speaking the same language with the people and who understand the people's concern (Sol, 2015b: 137).

After the 2004 enlargement of the EU, UKIP played a critical role in the formation of a direct link between EU membership and migration (Goodwin and Dennison, 2018: 28). With its low unemployment rate and growing economy, the UK became the primary choice for many migrants from the new EU member states (Ford and Goodwin, 2017: 20). As a result, the "othering" of the migrants from the Eastern Europe intensified in the UK society. To UKIP, thanks to the free movement of labour, EU citizens have right to work and live in another EU country without experiencing any discrimination in terms of working conditions, social rights, etc. (Vasilopoulou, 2016: 222). The UK citizens opted to approach the migration issue as a single-sided favour given by the UK to other member states' citizens. They preferred to forget their reciprocal access to these rights in all of the EU member states. The UKIP made this perception worse with statements built upon the fact that in their country the citizens of other EU member states have the right to access to education, employment and welfare (Glencross, 2016: 52). With the increasing securitization of the migration issue, the tendency to see the migrants from these geographies responsible for crimes such as murder, rape, ATM theft accelerated (Todd, 2016: 95). From the perspective of the UKIP, the EU facilitated the migration of the terrorists and criminals, as well as the economic migrants (Nuttall, 2015).

The UKIP not only criticized the budget transfers made to the EU by the UK, but they also questioned the way the EU budget was used. For example, in a time of severe financial crisis, UKIP MEP William Dartmouth (2010) evaluated the money spent for those would-be-members as an EU waste. This stemmed from the party's doubts about further enlargements covering the countries, which were poorer than existing member states and had a great migration potential. The UKIP also reacted to the use of the solidarity article in the Lisbon Treaty which provided emergency finance to the EU member countries severely affected by the 2008 financial crisis. They even insulted the EU to make the UK liable for Greece's debt. The UK contribution to the loan pool that would be activated under severe crisis conditions was also heavily problematized (Evans, 2016).

Despite all the criticisms targeting the EU, the UKIP could not be classified as anti-European. They defined themselves Europeans, stating their wish to continue to trade and work with their European neighbours, in order to promote peace and prosperity in Europe. Their only problem was with their country's membership to the current version of European integration. Their sole objective was to make their country a prosperous, free, democratic, independent and proud country again; through saving it from the chains of the EU membership (Farage, 2010). They believed that the UK was good and strong enough to continue without the EU (Farage, 2015b).

Once the expected result of "out" was achieved in the referendum, the UKIP transformed into a party putting pressure on the UK government to manage the Brexit process. This pressure was

to ensure the emergence of a hard or real exit deal which met the expectations of completely leaving the EU. In this process, the difference between the Conservatives and UKIP was reduced to the terms of their approach to the EU issue. This made it harder for the UKIP to promote itself as the only owner of the EU matter (Lynch and Whitaker, 2013: 287, 306).

3. UKIP's Role in the Final Decision of Brexit in the In-Out Referendum

3.1. The Decision of an In-Out Referendum and UKIP

The EU integration project operated under severe criticism for a long time. The successive crises that emerged one by one after 2000 challenged the main pillars of the EU project significantly. In this setting, the level of Euroscepticism reached its peak in all member states, even in the traditionally Europhile ones. The level of scepticism became even higher in the EU member states that were already highly Eurosceptic (i.e. Denmark and Austria). As mentioned before, the British society had a high level of anti-EU tendencies from the very beginning of its membership. British people were always the ones that were feeling less attached belonging to the EU than the other EU citizens. Therefore, the Lisbon Treaty became a real hope for the British Eurosceptics, as it gave the member states a right to withdraw from the EU.

In 2011, the UK began serious discussions of an in-out referendum. After an online petition was signed by 100.000 people, there was a parliamentary vote to decide whether there should be such a referendum. The majority of the British parliamentarians rejected the proposal (RT News, 2011). Instead, the UK enacted a law in 2011 which required a referendum for the adoption of a new EU treaty, which means a significant transfer of power from the national to the EU level. However, the idea of organizing an in-out referendum did not disappear. In fact, it continued to have supporters within the British society and politics.

Under the rising pressure for an in-out referendum, Prime Minister David Cameron delivered his famous European or Bloomberg Speech in 2013. In this speech, Cameron gave a promise to organise an in-out referendum to settle the matter and quieten down the anti-EU camp within the country (Macshane, 2016: xviii). Farage stated that this was the kind of speech Cameron would have normally avoided under all normal circumstances. However, Cameron was motivated to make such a promise because opinion polls were signalling the rise of the UKIP's voting share (Independent). Cameron also tried to prevent the turn of some Conservative voters to the UKIP, which had the potential of creating a Labour victory in the upcoming election (Sol, 2015a: 142-143). Despite his efforts, the UKIP did not have a lot of confidence in Cameron, and therefore found the speech unsatisfactory (Farage, 2013). Therefore, the UKIP put a heavy pressure on Cameron to force him to keep his pledge by frequently reminding him of his unfulfilled referendum promise about the Lisbon Treaty. The double success of the UKIP in the 2014 European Parliament election and the UK 2015 general election played a vital role in Cameron's final decision to make a referendum about the UK's EU membership. The UKIP considered Cameron's decision to organize an in-out referendum on 23 June 2016 as a victory.

3.2. UKIP in the Campaign Process before the In-Out Referendum

With the final decision of an in-out referendum, the campaign process started. Two leave campaigns were carried out simultaneously. At the beginning, these two leave campaigns competed with each other for gaining the status of the official leave campaign. The moderate one, Vote Leave, became the official campaign. Despite the fact that the campaign primarily consisted

of the Conservatives, it mobilized supporters from all segments of the political spectrum (Oliver, 2016: 217). The UKIP was working under the other leave campaign, Leave.EU, which had a harder stance. These two leave campaigns used similar arguments to persuade the voters to leave the EU. In general, the leave campaigns stressed that the risks of staying an EU member outweighed the risks associated with leaving. They both emphasized the costs of the EU membership, and argued that the funds spent on the EU could be better used on the domestic priorities. They firmly argued that the UK could be stronger in international politics by regaining its lost seat in some international organisations. They also claimed that UK could regulate its migration policy better without the involvement of the EU. The difference between the two leave campaigns stemmed mainly from their variation in the prioritization of these issues. While the Vote Leave campaign put more importance to the interests of businesses and economic issues, Leave.EU was primarily concerned with the issue of migration (Vasilopoulou, 2016: 222). In the campaign process, UKIP also made nostalgic references in its rhetoric. Despite the decline of the British Empire after the World War II, the period before the EU membership was depicted as a golden age in which the parliament was sovereign, the society was predominantly Anglo-Saxon white, industry was well-functioning and providing well-paid and secure jobs to the unionized workers, and the country was still accepted as an economic and military power (Inglehart and Norris, 2016: 16).

From the very beginning, the EU project was challenged by nationalists within the EU member states who had concerns about the diminishing national sovereignty due to the transferred competences to the EU level. The UKIP had similar concerns throughout its existence. As a potential super or federal state, the EU was seen as a threat to the sovereignty of the British Parliament and independence of the country in general (Macmillan, 2016: 160). Therefore, the referendum process was labelled as a war for independence by the UKIP. The day of referendum was coined as the day of independence of the UK, if the British people decide to leave (Farage, 2016a). Farage framed the in-out referendum as a choice about who governs the UK. The British people will either choose to be ruled according to their own will or to be ruled by the unelected and unaccountable technocrats based in Brussels (Farage, 2015c).

The leave camp also used Turkey's candidacy for EU membership by linking it with the issue of migration. Turkey's potential EU membership was intensively instrumentalized by the leave camp, because the probability of Turkish citizens' entrance into the Schengen area without a visa was discussed at the EU level (Langsley, 2016: 105). The possible free movement of Turkish citizens, after acceptance into the EU, became influential over the UK citizens who were extremely sensitive about the migration issue. This concern was validated by focusing on the increased migration from the Eastern European countries after the biggest enlargement of the EU in 2004 (Glencross, 2016: 45). In order to alleviate the concerns of the UK citizens, and its impact on their voting behaviour, Cameron joked that at their current rate of progress in fulfilling accession criteria, Turkey would be eligible to join the EU in the year of 3000. He also pointed out that every country could veto Turkey's entry into the EU (Hughes, 2016).

The remain campaign was built on the economic risks associated with leaving the EU. It was negatively tuned and used a threat approach, rather than giving a positive message about the EU and the UK's membership. The probable negative economic effects of the Brexit, such as deterring investments, the UK's depreciating image as an open and globalized market, difficulties in reaching the EU market or decreasing job opportunities, were frequently stressed (Glencross, 2016: 3). Internal divisions within the Labour and Conservative Parties, the leading supporters of the remain campaign, curbed their power to give clear signals to their voters about where they stood. In this setting, the voters made their final decisions by escaping themselves from the chains of partisanships (Vasilopoulou, 2016: 221). In comparison to the leave campaign, pro-EU voices found

a minor place in the agenda and had limited press coverage. The people[2], who saw the EU as a threat to their interests, invested a significant amount of money in the leave campaign in order to make anti-EU sentiments stronger. These resources were widely used to finance EU-hostile press (i.e. the Sun, the Daily Mail, the Daily Express). At the same time, a limited amount of money was spent to explain the EU correctly (Macshane, 2016: 138). Therefore, the issues of migration, sovereignty and democracy had dominated the Brexit debate; rather than the issues of economy, jobs and prosperity (Todd, 2016: 102).

Cameron, facing a hard leave campaign, asked for some concessions from the EU in order to have a success in the referendum. The most important demands were related to the free movement of people. The UK society was more afraid of Europeans coming to their country to work and live, rather than refugees (Freeden, 2017: 1). UKIP also stated continuously that "as long as we are in the EU, we can have no control over who comes to live, work and settle in the UK" (Farage, 2011b). Specifically, the UK government wanted to have more control in the entry of the EU citizens who want to either work or live in the country and a return to the pre-1997 was demanded in terms of social obligations (Macshane, 2016: xviii). The UK was given an opt-out from staying committed to the "ever closer union among the people of Europe" ideal in the EU treaties. It was also given the right to apply to the European Commission to suspend benefit payments to the EU migrants, if it was placing too much burden on social services, such as schools, hospitals and transport system. It was also agreed to not discriminate between the Euro using and non-Euro using EU member states and to limit further regulations of the single market (Hobolt, 2016: 1261; Glencros, 2016: 22, 33).

The leave campaign significantly used the failures of the Cameron government in renegotiating the membership conditions of the country and their ineffectiveness in promoting the gains of the renegotiation deal publicLy. As a result, the renegotiation process and final deal created an unexpected result. In great contrast with the purpose of the deal, the leave camp became stronger after the deal fell very short of the expectations (Hobolt, 2016: 1261). Cameron could not meet public expectations on the sensitive issue of migration by ensuring the membership of its country to a single market without free movement of labour. The leave camp stressed an unreformable EU that was heading towards a political union (Glencross, 2016: 22, 33; Farage, 2011b). The supremacy of the EU Law over the British Law, which can be accepted as one of the core supranational characteristics of the European integration, was not acceptable for the leave camp (Arnorsson and Zoega, 2018: 303). From the perspective of the UKIP, the only acceptable measure was to make a treaty change which would increase the control of member states over their laws, money and borders by returning the transferred power from the EU to the member states (Farage, 2016b).

The leave side used simple and easily grasped mottos during the campaign, such as the main motto "take back control". This motto was understood differently by the supporters of the leave. It was equated with a variety of meanings, namely the end of migration, the rise of living standards, the availability of secure jobs, the creation of a better future, etc. The remain camp could not find a motto having great public attraction like the "take back control" of the leave camp. In addition, the remain campaign was conducted using conflicting messages about issues such as migration or the economic effect of leaving. The contributions of the migrant EU citizens to the UK economy and growth were weakly addressed. As a result of which the remain camp could not come up with a persuasive response to the criticisms of the leave camp (Vasilopoulou, 2016: 226). This merely stemmed from the fact that Labours and Conservatives, two conventional rivals in the UK political system, organized separate remain campaigns rather than combining their efforts. The existence of anti-EU sentiments even among the people conducting remain campaign may be the underlying reason behind the strength of the leave campaign (Berry, 2019). Moreover, the leave camp also

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[2] The leading figure in this group was Rupert Murdoch.

made strong counter arguments against the remain camp. The leave side persuaded the British people that the cost of being a member of the EU exceeded the cost of exiting the EU. Additionally, they argued that it would be possible to trade with the EU without carrying the heavy burden of the membership. They used the fact that three largest trade partners of the EU, namely the USA, China and Russia, have no preferential trade deals with the EU (Helmer, 2015). Farage went beyond and even argued that "they need us more than we need them" (Farage, 2015b). The remain campaign responded poorly to the criticisms of the leave camp, especially the ones related to the free movement of labour. They could not show the contributions of the EU citizens to the UK economy and economic growth to the British people (Vasilopoulou, 2016: 226).

The great majority of the polls conducted before the in-out referendum, had difficulty in predicting the winning side. This was mainly due to the high number of the undecided voters. The result of the referendum was as evidence of the fact that a great majority of these undecided voters were persuaded by the leave camp. The two main parties of the UK could not give their voters a clear signal about their position. Thus, party politics played a minor role in the referendum process (Vasilopoulou, 2016: 220-221). The great majority of past referendums related to the EU were treated as second order elections. That meant citizens generally followed their party recommendations or used these referendums as a tool for expressing their content or discontent about the national government. The UK's in-out referendum was a far cry from a second order referendum, because the British people voted using a cost-benefit analysis about the EU membership of their country, especially by evaluating their attitude towards the free movement of labour (Vasilopoulou, 2016: 223, 226).

With its discourse within the leave camp, the UKIP gained the attention of the British people who felt left-behind by the system. The leave camp got votes from the electoral bases of both Conservative and Labour parties who had Eurosceptic inclinations. The UK society was divided across the lines of age, education, class and geography. These divisions within the society became very influential in the voting choice. The majority of the votes from Scotland, Northern Ireland and the city of London were overwhelmingly in favour of remaining an EU member. The decision to leave was based on the votes of the English people living outside of London; especially in the areas suffering from globalization with the shift of manufacturing overseas (Arnorsson and Zoega, 2018: 302). Accordingly, the ones who were happy with globalization mostly voted to remain, while the ones who had problems with it voted to leave as a way to protest the dominant system staying deaf to their opinions (Betts, 2016).

4. Conclusion

Historically, the UK has refrained from being an internal part of the European politics. So its decision to be a member of the EU, which led to the formation of a permanent institutional tie with the continental Europeans, was a rupture in the historical process. However, anti-EU feelings within UK's society did not disappear with the membership of the country. In the UK, there have always been individuals, advocacy groups and political parties following the political agenda of ensuring the withdrawal of the UK from the EU since 1973. Among them, the UKIP, which emerged as an anti-EU political party in 1990s, had a different and undeniable place by channelling the decades-old anti-EU feelings within the British society to cause of Brexit and to achieve the expected result in the referendum of 23 June 2016. From this perspective, the decision to leave symbolizes a return to the original path of the UK's way of handling European affairs. Thus, the Brexit decision should be seen as the final product of decades-long unrest in the UK's society about the EU, which is concomitantly operating with the current dynamics, including the role of the UKIP.

As a party, which was originally founded to achieve the UK's exit from the EU, UKIP became one of the pivotal players within the leave campaign organized before the in-out referendum. During the leave campaign, the party showed great success in exploiting the deeply-rooted anti-EU sentiments within the UK society. UKIP contributed significantly to the leave campaign by emphasizing the characteristics of the EU that had been problematized by the party since its emergence as a political force. In this scope, the EU was shown as the reason behind the problems of the UK and Brexit was presented as the only real solution of the UK's problems. By building its discourse on the issue of migration, the UKIP successfully found the most important factor in the final decision of the UK citizens. That means the UKIP, together with the other players within the leave camp became successful in politicizing anti-EU feelings within the UK society and persuading people that everything will be better without the EU.

The UK referendum of 23 June 2016 about the country's EU membership will not only have implications for the future of the country, but will also affect the future shape of the European integration. The British choice for Brexit can also be added to this list of developments that have adversely affected the evolution of the EU; because for the first time in the EU history, a member state decided to leave. The results of the Brexit referendum created shockwaves across Europe. The leaders of the populist Eurosceptic parties, from the other EU member states such as France, Denmark, Germany, have made calls for their own EU membership referendum. However, currently none of them have turned this into reality.

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