



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, HUMANITIES AND ARTS  
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**Britain in psychological distress:  
The EU referendum and the  
psychological operations of the two  
opposing sides**

By: **Eleni Mokka**

Professor: **Spyridon Litsas**

MIPA

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I hereby declare, that all the data used in this work, have been obtained and processed according to the rules of the academic ethics as well as the laws that govern research and intellectual property. I also declare that, according to the above mentioned rules, I quote and refer to the sources of all the data used and not constituting the product of my own original work.

Ελένη Μόκκα (Eleni Mokka)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Eleni Mokka', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

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## **Summary**

There are numerous analyses trying to explain the outcome of the 2016 referendum on Britain's membership of the EU. The aim of this dissertation is to examine the circumstances under which voters' attitudes were formed, and ultimately reflected in their choice on polling day. The study focuses particularly on the referendum campaign and the various psychological operations applied to British citizens, shaping their opinion and affecting their final decision.

First of all, this contribution attempts to develop the basic aspects of modern psychological operations (PSYOP), which have been known by many other names or terms, including *Propaganda*. The term is used to denote any action which is practiced mainly by psychological methods with the objective of evoking a planned psychological reaction in other people. Various techniques are used, aiming to influence a target audience's value system, belief system, emotions, motives, reasoning, or behaviour. In this context, the first chapter defines the word 'propaganda' and presents significant facts about its origins and examples of its usage in history. Subsequently, based on an extensive literature review, it provides a thorough analysis about a wide range of propaganda devices. This includes tactics involving language manipulation, as well as non-verbal techniques, such as opinion polls and statistics. In accordance with the above, the second chapter elaborates on Britain's EU referendum and attempts to explain the Brexit result. Unlike other academic research, this paper considers the outcome of the referendum within the broader context of a detailed analysis of public attitude towards the EU. This attempt requires examining the circumstances which gave rise to the plebiscite before turning to the issue of how the various strategies that were employed during the referendum campaign influenced the position of British electorate on polling day. The paper gives a concise but rich survey of the development of Euroscepticism in Britain, a phenomenon that provoked considerable debate on the UK's membership in the EU, and eventually led to the resolution of holding a national referendum on the matter. Following that, it devotes a fair number of pages describing the referendum campaign itself – its personalities, principal themes and arguments – and seeks to identify the particular tactics that were used by the two opposing sides to sway voters. It highlights David Cameron's failure to secure a substantive deal regarding Britain's terms of membership with the EU and outlines the key messages of the Remain and Leave campaigns, with the former

focusing on the economic and security risks of leaving, and the latter on immigration and sovereignty. Most importantly, the study emphasizes the prevalence of propaganda techniques throughout the referendum campaign, with reference to the insight of some of the key players on both sides. Last but not least, based on a review of the campaigns' strategies, there is an attempt to determine all those factors that may have attributed to the result of Brexit, and caused a historical moment in British history.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Britain has been debating the advantages and disadvantages of membership in a European Community of nations almost since the idea was broached. It decided to hold the first referendum on its continued membership of the European Economic Area in 1975, almost two years after it joined. A second one was held forty-one years later, after Prime Minister David Cameron promised a national referendum on EU membership, considering of settling the question to the public once and for all. The date for the further 'in-out' referendum was set for 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016, and the battle to keep Britain inside the EU began.

Admittedly, Britain's relationship with the EU differs from that of its European partners. It is true that the United Kingdom had never been sympathetic to the European ideal, with the media and political class reinforcing for decades an anti-European sentiment to British people. Hence, Britain experienced one the most heated, and divisive, political campaign, with the two opposing sides –Remain and Leave – employing a wide range of psychological warfare strategies to manipulate public's vote. According to a growing number of scholars, Brexit was the outcome of a combination of proven psychological operations – the same tactics the military deploys in order to effect mass sentiment change. The two official campaigns, '*Britain Stronger in Europe*' and '*Vote Leave*' found specific ways to research the voters' emotional states about particular issues regarding the EU and, subsequently, they created messages that elicited a particular voting response in British citizens. Psychological warfare, also known as 'Propaganda', constitutes an enterprise of winning the 'hearts and minds' of people. Unlike the past, when propaganda was mainly found in print newspapers, there are nowadays serious consequences of social

media being also used as a tool to distribute propaganda and manipulate public opinion. In this context, the campaigners of both sides deployed all the available means to target individuals – particularly those parts of the electorate identified as crucial to the result – in order to launch a great deal of information that resonate with the voters in an emotional way. Regardless of its validity, that piece of information was used for the sole purpose of influencing public’s decision on polling day. Ultimately, Britain’s EU referendum campaign, and its surprise outcome, offers valuable insights for political campaigns all over the world.

## **CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS**

### **A. Definition and analysis**

‘Psychological Operations’ (PSYOPS) is another term used for ‘Propaganda’, and refers to planned operations that convey selected information to target audiences such as organizations, groups and individuals in order to influence their value system, belief system, emotions and motives. In particular, there is an effort to affect the behavior and attitudes in favor of one particular interest or issue<sup>1</sup>. The term “Psychological Operations” was first used by U.S Army referring to the use of psychological techniques of persuasion for war propaganda purposes. During wartime, the major aim is to diminish enemy’s morale and at the same time to maintain the allies’ morale within rival countries. Propaganda constitutes the main device of Political Warfare. Covert ways of communication – such as the drop of leaflets by a bomber – enable the dissemination of reports inside the enemy’s stronghold with damaging consequences. The approach towards the enemy and to his subject people is hostile, while the attitude towards the friendly or still neutral countries and their people has a manipulative character. In one occasion, there is an effort to cause disruption to the enemies’ front and destroy their confidence, while the other approach serves to stay reconciled with the friendly countries and build bonds of trust. The first one requires the mindset and methodology of destabilizing and subverting, while the second one suggests directness

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<sup>1</sup> Psychological Operations/ Warfare, Major Ed Rouse <http://www.psywarrior.com/psyhist.html>

and intelligence information sharing.

However, an extended use of the term is made nowadays to refer to all these sophisticated techniques of manipulation used not only in politics, but in the commercial realm as well. The emergence of a globally interconnected, mass-mediated society increased their application and intensity in the last century (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2015, Marlin, 2002). More specifically, an extensive range of media and tools are utilized to articulate propagandistic messages, which improved as new innovated technologies appeared, like posters, animation figures, films, websites and radio or TV shows. Nowadays, propaganda is progressing and evolving into a digital era, which is characterized by the development of computational propaganda strategies that spread bogus or biased news online with the use of bots, algorithms and social media (Marin and Dean, 1929).

Any attempt to define 'Propaganda' requires, first and foremost, an examination of its origins. History plays a pivotal role in understanding the concept of this term. Due to the fact that the intensive propaganda methods are mainly an instrument of political warfare, many people believe that propaganda is something new and modern. The term "propaganda" started to be utilized by the public with the outbreak of the World War I in 1914. Nobody would presume that "propaganda" is something new, supposing that the efforts made in the past to manipulate and guide people's opinions had also the exact name. *"The battle for men's minds is as old as human history"* (Casey, 1944). According to Casey, in most of the ancient civilizations, people used to live under despotisms and were not able to express their feelings or formulate their opinions as a group due to the lack of methods and tools at that time. However, the Greeks – and more specifically the Athenians – were able to convey their feelings and their beliefs, as well as their interests. Remarkably, they were also aware of the affairs and the problems of the city-state they belonged. Consequently, the differences and arguments on political and religious issues gave birth to propaganda and counterpropaganda. Although there were not devices such as radio or newspapers, the intelligent Athenians created powerful and very effective methods and techniques of propaganda to control and form public's beliefs and attitudes. Some of these methods were the theater, the assembly, the religious festivals and the law courts. Furthermore, they made significant use of the oratory to express their points of view, as well as handwritten books in order to shape and control the men's minds (Casey, 1994).

Since then, propaganda was used anytime by societies with common knowledge and



interests. Already since the sixteenth century some nations applied propaganda methods similar to those of the modern propaganda. For instance, in the case of the Spanish Armada (1588), Philip II of Spain, as well as Queen Elizabeth of England practiced a rather modern form of propaganda. It is noteworthy that some years later Sir Walter Raleigh expressed his annoyance about the propaganda used by Spain (even though he did not use the exact term). His frustration was caused because of a Spanish report about a naval battle close to Azores between the Spanish king's vessels and the British ship Revenge. In particular, he claimed that it was *“no marvel that the Spaniard should seek by false and slanderous pamphlets, advisoes, and letters, to cover their own loss and to derogate from others their own honors, especially in this fight being performed far off”*. Subsequently, he recalled the case of the Spanish Armada and stated that when Spain intended to invade England, the Spaniards published *“in sundry languages, in print, great victories in words, which they pleaded to have obtained against this realm; and spread the same in a most false sort over all parts of France, Italy, and elsewhere.”* However, in reality the Spanish Armada suffered a devastating defeat. These Spanish declarations, though characterized by the language standards of Queen Elizabeth’s time, with some alterations may sound alike a statement made in 1944 by the Japanese propaganda office (Casey, 1944).

Furthermore, the missionary activities of the Catholic Church were the cause which led European people to begin the usage of the term ‘propaganda’. The roots of the term ‘propaganda’ come from the Latin word ‘propagare’, which means spread or grow<sup>2</sup>. In 1622 Pope Gregory XV established the ‘Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith’, which was located in Rome. The Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith was a commission of cardinals who assigned to expand the regulating church affairs and to spread the faith in heathen lands. Thus, Pope Urban VII created the first College of Propaganda to instruct and prepare the priests for that mission. This suggests that propaganda is from its roots an ancient and honorable word, since any religious activity that was related with that word was treated with great respect from humanity (Casey, 1944). Conversely, nowadays the word is completely associated with selfishness, dishonesty and deception.

People were familiarized with the involvement of propaganda on significant issues and concerns due to its long lasting existence from the Middle Ages and in the later historic

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<sup>2</sup> Oxford dictionary

periods down to modern times. Some notable cases, where extensive propaganda was applied, were the historic conflict among kings and Parliament in England, the movement of American independence and the France Revolution. In France, Voltaire and Rousseau aroused opposition to Bourbon rule through their writings and during the revolution Danton and his fellows shaped attitudes against the French king, just as the writers Adams and Paine had incited people's opinion in the American Revolution. Last but not least, propaganda's power and triumphs were dramatized throughout World War I. In the post-war period, fascists and communists made an excessive use of intense revolutionary propaganda aiming to extend their control and influence beyond their national borders (Casey, 1944).

With the passage of time, by using its inventive intelligence, the mankind perfected a communicational system which accelerated and extended the influence of information and ideas. However, this machinery of communication also provided the propagandists a rapid and effective system for the spread of their appeals. Although, this evolutionary and innovate technical equipment can be utilized for international good-willing and peaceful purposes, Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo preferred to exploit this efficient and magnificent mechanism for inhumane reasons and for their own profitable desires and preferences. Thus, the definition of propaganda has utterly changed.

Another stimulus to propaganda was the modern development of politics, as the promotion of it is an essential part of political campaigns in democracies. When political leaders used to control nominations, a relatively small promotion was required before a candidate was named to operate an office, but under the direct fundamental system the candidate who seeks nomination ought to address to a voting constituency. Moreover, in the final election he/she must appeal to the electorate for its verdict on his capability of running successfully an office and on the credibility of his/her platform. In other words, a candidate "*must engage in promotion as a legitimate and necessary part of a political contest*" (Casey, 1944). Subsequently, it is essential for political leaders in power to clarify and explain their courses of action to voters. More specifically, those in power, such as presidents, prime ministers, heads of departments and cabinet members, aim to reconcile the demands of various groups in the society by using means of persuasion. They use propaganda techniques in an effort to justify a particular policy and make a proposed measure clearly understood and widely accepted by the public.

Last but not least, the volume of propaganda has been expanded due to recent

economic changes. For the purpose of selling commodities and services the methods of public relations and propaganda have been greatly developed, under the circumstances of mass production and mass consumption. There have been many attempts of clearly define and analyze the meaning of propaganda and also loads of considerations and debates about the proper and the most effective use of it in a way that it could be beneficial for humanity.

As Randal Marlin notes, we should think propaganda as a “*systematic, motivated attempt to influence the thinking and behavior of others through means that impede or circumvent a propagandee’s ability to appreciate the nature of this influence*” (Marlin, 2002). From the World War I and II, when propaganda was used to move entire nations, up to the present many people have tried to recognize the tactics used by propagandists. Scholars have identified various standard techniques and each of them chooses a different way to analyze them. Randal Marlin states that they can be separated in many categories; verbal and non-verbal forms of propaganda, techniques that appeal to ethos (convince an audience of your credibility or character), to pathos (persuade an audience by appealing to their emotions) and others devoted to persuasion by logos, or argument. There are also large-scale strategies, which include and combine a whole range of techniques.

## **B. Propaganda: Techniques involving Language Manipulation**

### **1. Basic Propaganda Devices**

The most well-known and compact list of propaganda tactics was created by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA). This New York-based Institute was established in 1937 due to general concern that the widespread propaganda was decreasing the public’s ability to think critically, and suspended its operations in late October 1941 when the United States prepared to enter the war. The purpose of the Institution was to educate American public about the nature of political propaganda and understand the techniques by which propaganda is spread. IPA was composed of social scientists and journalists and it published a series of books, including; *The Fine Art of Propaganda*, *Propaganda Analysis*, *Group Leader’s Guide to Propaganda Analysis*, *Propaganda: How To Recognize and Deal With It* (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2015, Delviche, 2018). This Institute identified the following seven basic devices

which are so frequently reproduced and widely quoted in lectures, articles, and textbooks that “*they have become virtually synonymous with the practice and analysis of propaganda in all of its aspects*”(Combs & Nimmo, 1993).

Name-Calling: The name-calling technique links a person, or idea, to a negative word or symbol and is a powerful force for influencing opinion because names are easily remembered. It is used to arouse prejudice and make us reject and condemn a person or idea without examining the evidence. Words like “terrorist”, “racist”, “sexist” carry powerful emotional overtones and politicians sometimes resort to this kind of labels during political campaigns or public events with the intentions of gaining advantage over, or defending themselves from, an opponent or critic.

Glittering Generality: This is defined as associating something with highly valued concepts and beliefs. It could be considered as the opposite of “name-calling” as it links a person, or idea, to a positive symbol. Propagandists employ vague, sweeping statements (often slogans or simple catchphrases) including intentionally virtue words such as “honor”, “democracy”, “peace”, “family”. The use of these words, without context or specific definitions provided, serves the sole purpose of evoking certain feelings to the audience. These feelings later translate into unquestioning approval of whatever the propagandist states. Magedah Shabo gives certain examples in her book and notes that glittering generalities can make or break a candidate’s campaign.

*Example: “I stand for **freedom**: for a **strong** nation, unrivaled in the world. My opponent believes we must compromise in these ideals, but I believe they are our **birthright**.”*

Other words with strong positive connotations that constitute popular glittering generalities are “freedom/liberty”, “strength”, “security”, “prosperity”, “choice”, “equality”, “change”.

Transfer: The Institute of Propaganda Analysis defines this term as a device by which the propagandist carries over the authority, sanction, and prestige of something respected and revered to something else in order to make the latter acceptable.

Symbols are constantly employed to stir public’s emotions and win peoples’ approval. More specifically, propagandists attempt to transfer the status of a beloved symbol to the cause they represent. For example, the *cross* represents the Christian Church and the *flag* represents the nation. A politician could close their speech with a public prayer, attempting to transfer religious prestige to the ideas they are advocating or could be photographed in front of the country's flag to project patriotism.

Transfer is a very common device in political spectrum. Randal Marlin explains that there are legitimate and illegitimate uses of this method. It is legitimate when it is used to represent fairly what a party stands for. If a candidate plans to increase public subsidies for mass transit once he/she is elected, then it helps to be seen riding a bus. However, it is illegitimate when it is used unfairly to pretend the candidate is in favor of something that he/she is truly not. There are publicity-seeking candidates who try to take credit through photo-opportunities for projects they have never got involved with or take pictures with senior political icons to share the latter's prestige even if they never shared the same views. The reverse of this is publicizing footage of opponents in the presence of people who have earned the contempt of the community in order to suggest the connection between the candidates and the others. The "Transfer" technique is considered more subliminal (operating on a subconscious rather than conscious level) than other techniques. (Hoyt, 2018)

Testimonial: In the Institute's definition, the Testimonial Device "*consists in having some respected or hated person say that a given idea or program or product or person is good or bad*". A testimonial is an endorsement. This technique has usually a well-known figure endorse, recommend or disapprove of a product, cause or program. The more famous or respected an individual is, the more powerful their testimonial will be in the eyes of the public. This appeal to authority may include the use of celebrities and public personalities who have well established and trusted public brands, the use of experts, clerics, police, scientists and others whose title is respected, as soon as, people who are like the people whose support the propagandist needs. By simply citing a qualified source, getting them support your case with vigor on TV shows or/and stand up on stage with you in political debates, the testimonial technique can be used to construct a balanced argument. As Randal Marlin notices, this method encourages the propagandist's audience to accept ideas without subjecting them to critical examination. However, this source should be credible in the context of the speaker's claim. The most common misuse of the testimonial involves citing individuals who are not qualified to make judgements about a particular issue. For example, in 2016, Lady Gaga supported Hillary Clinton, and Clint Eastwood threw his weight behind Donald Trump. Although they are both popular performers, there is no reason to think they necessarily know what is best for the United States (Delviche, 2018). Last but not least, making vague references to experts without naming specific names or details is also a variation of the testimonial device.

*Examples: “Many doctors claim that ...”, “All of the greatest legal minds agree ...”*

Plain Folks: The plain folks technique is an attempt by the propagandists to convince their audience that they, and their ideas, are “of the people”/“the plain folks” by presenting themselves to the public as the everyday man, “*just like you*”. It is designed to make ordinary citizens be related with a political candidate or other figure that they otherwise may have nothing in common with. People like to vote for someone who “speaks their language” and can understand and empathize with their concerns. This is why “plain folks” is used most in politics. Politicians usually come from prestigious backgrounds and have hefty bank accounts. However, they try to give the illusion that they are normal people, from humble origins and ordinary lives by doing activities in public, such as attending church services, showing devotion to little children and pets or going fishing. The images of George Bush wearing denims and a plaid shirt while relaxing at Camp David or Bill Clinton eating at McDonalds are all examples of using this technique.

By using plain language and mannerisms, the propagandist gives the people a sense of trust making them believe that they share common goals and eventually agree with him/her.

Card Stacking: This method requires skill and ingenuity. Propagandist uses this technique to give an unfair advantage to one point of view and make the best case possible for his/her side, while weakening the opposing viewpoint. More specifically, the Institution defines “card-stacking” as “*the selection and use of facts and falsehoods, illustrations or distractions, and logical or illogical statements in order to give the best or the worst possible case for an idea, program, person or product.*” The arguments used in this device may be honest, in terms of the information shared, and convincing because they rely on sound reasoning and facts. However, they are misleading because they present information out of context, ignore contrary opinions on issues, omit serious details or conceal important facts (Shabo, 2008). The true facts are twisted by the propagandist who uses only the information and evidence that support his/her ideas and suit his/her interest. This one-sided effect is commonly used in political campaigns, in both written and visual propaganda. It can be accomplished by stating your favored view first and choosing an appropriate mix of speakers in debates to confirm your ideas and make them dominant. Making your opinion visually noticeable, while letting the undesirable information be printed in a smaller typeface or some way visually obscured, could also be possible ways of using this technique.

Randal Marlin stresses that “card-stacking” covers a large area, considering the frequent and extended misuses of statistics and polls. The aim of "stacking cards against the truth" is for the audience to be impressed. Propagandists try to control the beliefs of their followers by making assume that these facts are conclusive. This unfairly representation of the situation is dangerously deceptive and hard to detect as it does not provide all of the information necessary for the audience to make an informed decision (Shabo, 2008, Marlin, 2002, Crouch, 2018, McDonald & Palmer, 2015).

Bandwagon: Propagandists use this device to persuade the viewer or listener to follow the crowd and “jump on the bandwagon”. This technique creates the impression of widespread support and it capitalizes on the human desire to be a member of the winning team. It is based on the premise that “since so many other people are doing it, it must be good, or at least acceptable”. According to this concept, the group addressed should accept the propagandist’s program, join the crowd and align with the most popular, successful side of the issue. Simultaneously, there is the implication that everyone who refuses to follow the mass movement will be isolated. The feeling of loneliness and the fear of exclusion also play a role in the bandwagon effect (Crouch, 2018, Hoyt, 2018).

The bandwagon device explains why there are fashion trends and is also very effective when used in religious and political propaganda. For example, it is highly observed during elections that the increasing popularity of a candidate or party encourages people’s support. Citizens tend to vote those candidates or parties who are likely to win (or are proclaimed as such by the media), hoping to be part of the “winning team” in the end. Especially in situations involving majority opinion, such as political outcomes, people may ignore or override their own beliefs and alter their opinion to accord to the majority view (McAllister & Studlar, 1991). During the 1992 U.S. presidential election, a study was conducted at a large northeastern university and the results were published in “The Journal of Consumer Research (1996)”. Some volunteer business students were given the results of student and national polls indicating that Bill Clinton was in the lead. Many of them who had intended to vote for Bush changed their minds after seeing the poll results (Morwitz & Pluzinski, 1996).

There is a variety of other techniques in which language is used to manipulate an audience. In this research, there will be presented some further interesting examples of propaganda methods, drawing on the work of many scholars, for a more accurate, clear

and complete view. It is worth noting that many of the definitions are associated with or complement the ones listed above, subsisting on the same basic principles.

J.A.C. Brown, in his 1963 book *“Techniques of persuasion: From propaganda to brainwashing”*, compiled a list of such deceptive practices involving language.

The Use of Stereotypes: This is similar to Name-calling device. Brown outlines that there is a natural tendency to ‘type’ people in terms of their racial, ethnic, or cultural characteristics. Stereotypes ignore individual identity and categorize people into specific groups. There is an exaggerated belief that, within these groups, members act alike and share the same beliefs and attitudes. Hence the stereotypes of the *black people*, the *Jew*, the *capitalist* constitute a type of discrimination as these people’s reactions are explained in terms of the group they belong. Stereotyping creates also prejudice as assumptions about particular categories of people are transformed into "realities".

*Examples: “Blonde women are unintelligent”, “Blacks are great athletes”, “Asians are very smart and technology savvy”, “Women are bad drivers”, “All teenagers are rebels”*

Downright Lying: One obvious way to manipulate is simply to lie. However, the liar loses credibility once the falsehood gets detected. Therefore, propagandists lie to achieve a specific goal in short-terms (Marlin, 2002). Brown reports among others the example of Hitler’s recommendation of the Big Lie. The expression was conceived by Hitler, when he dictated his *Mein Kampf* book, about the use of a lie so "colossal" that no one would believe that someone "could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously".

Repetition: As Brown states, a propagandist is confident that, *“if he repeats a statement often enough, it will in time come to be accepted by his audience”*. Phrases regularly mentioned, such as slogans and key words play a large part in advertising and politics. Repetition is used so frequently because it is easy and effective. By simply repeating a “catchy” word or sentence, emphasis is provided to the statements and people listening will remember it any time they think about that certain subject (Whitney, 2013).

A notable example is Martin Luther King’s famous speech by American civil rights, which included the phrase *“I have a dream”* a number of times. This made his speech very powerful and memorable.



*Further Examples: “Keep the World Safe for Democracy”, “Fair Shares for All”*

Assertion: Many authors mention this technique. Eleanor Maclean in her 1981 book *“Between the lines”* and Magedah Shabo in her 2008 book *“Techniques and Persuasion”* make an extensive reference to “assertion” considering it as the first and the simplest form of propaganda. Brown outlines that bold assertions in favor of the propagandist’s thesis aim for the deliberate limitation of free thought and questioning. This method consists of simply stating debatable ideas as facts, with little or no explanation or justification (Shabo, 2008). Sometimes dubious claims are followed by expressions like “*unquestionable*”, “*undeniably*” or “*as everyone knows*” (Maclean, 1981).

*Examples: “The Middle East will never be at peace”, “Richard Williams obviously doesn’t have the experience it takes to be President of the United States”*

Pinpointing the Enemy: Brown claims that it is helpful if a speaker or writer “*can put forth a message which is not only for something, but also against some real or imagined enemy*”. By presenting a specific cause, person or group as enemy, propagandists simplify a complex situation. This technique is extremely used during wartime but it is also observed in political debates and campaigns<sup>3</sup>. An example provided by Brown is the Nazi campaigns against the Jews and the ‘plutodemocracies’. The author underlines that this was an attempt to blame selected targets in order to direct aggression away from the propagandist and his party, as well as to strengthen in-group feelings and improve party morale.

*Further Examples<sup>4</sup>: “The reason there are so many people unemployed in America is because of Barack Obama”, “McDonald’s is the reason for obesity in America”.*

The Appeal to Authority: This is related to “Testimonial Device”. The propagandist relies his/her arguments on an authority that appears to be an expert on the specific subject. Based on the credibility of this “expert”, the propagandist tries to persuade the audience that he/she is right and gain support. The authorities appealed to are usually religious figures, people working on science, or professors.

*Examples: “Scientists have found that eating cooked meat causes cancer”, “Drinking is morally wrong because this is what the pastor of the local church said in his sermon”*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://unitas.wordpress.com/2007/07/11/propaganda-techniques/>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.learnquebec.ca/documents/20181/267969/006-Propaganda\\_101-Student\\_Resources.pdf/d5e11bf9-d917-4ad5-95c9-acec19ea17d1?version=1.0](http://www.learnquebec.ca/documents/20181/267969/006-Propaganda_101-Student_Resources.pdf/d5e11bf9-d917-4ad5-95c9-acec19ea17d1?version=1.0)

Eleanor Maclean's list on propaganda practices will also be examined. Although her book *"Between the lines"* supplements the theory above, she chooses to give more emphasis on techniques that could be subcategories of the "Card-stacking" method.

Selective Omission: There are also legal terms in Latin referred to this device; namely *suppressio veri* with *suggestio falsi*, meaning "a suppression of truth is equivalent to an expression of falsehood"<sup>5</sup>. The propagandist selects to omit certain facts or circumstances connected with an event, in order to form a false impression and deceive the audience. He/she does not lie, but neither tells the whole truth. Randal Marlin tries to illustrate Maclean's definitions by giving real-life examples in his own book. He presents the case of a politician who has to vote on a bill which combines both acceptable and unbearable measures for the public. He notes that it is selective omission to report that the politician voted against the positive measures without mentioning that the bill also included the other, unacceptable features (Marlin, 2002).

Quoting Out of Context: This is relevant to selective omission. The propagandist reproduces deliberately a part of what someone said (selective quotation) in order to prove that this person holds views that, in fact, they do not hold. The ultimate purpose of this "trick" is to distort, alter, or even reverse the originally intended meaning of the quote according to the propagandist's interest (Cline, 2018). Statements meant ironically may not be conveyed as such, thereby, the concept presented eventually is exactly the opposite of what was intended. ( Maclean, 1981, Cline, 2018). Quoting out of context is a tactic mainly used in politics where opposition party quotes the statements of the others, in such a way, to serve its interest and ruin the opponent's reputation.

*Examples: (Original statements):*

1. *"This has been the best play I've seen all year! Of course, it is the only play I've seen all year"*. 2. *"This was a fantastic movie, as long as you aren't looking for plot or character development"*

*(Selective Quotation):*

1. *"This has been the best play which he has seen this year"*. 2. *"This is a fantastic movie"*

Meshing fact with opinion: Sometimes opinions and facts are mixed. Propagandists

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<sup>5</sup> <https://dictionary.thelaw.com/suppressio-veri-expressio-falsi/>

may present their personal belief or judgement and support it with facts in order to manipulate their audience. Maclean notes that we need to pay attention to the language used when a statement is made because *“opinion can be concealed behind claims that appear to be purely factual”*. In her given example, *“Southern Africa is being overrun by Communists”*, she urged us to examine and evaluate what the words connote. She notices that the definition of the term “Communist” may not be limited here to card-carrying Communist Party Members and the verb “overrun” expresses the speaker’s belief that there are too many of the designated group in the area. The facts propagandists choose to present and the way they choose to present them reflect the argument they are trying to make (Gonçalves, 2016).

Last but not least, various academic sources focus on emotional appeals, as a successful way used extensively by propagandists to influence public opinion. Widely reported as most important is the appeal to fear;

Scare Tactics or Appeal to Fear: Propagandists employ this method by warning people of the serious repercussions that will result if they do not act in a particular way. As Aaron Delviche states, *“By playing on the audience’s deep-seated fears, practitioners of this technique hope to redirect attention away from the merits of a particular proposal and toward steps that can be taken to reduce the fear.”* Plenty of empirical studies have been conducted in respect of fear appeals and their effectiveness.

According to a brief review of this research, a successful fear appeal includes four elements: 1) a threat, 2) a particular recommendation about how the public should behave, 3) public’s perception that the recommendation will help to cope effectively with the threat, and 4) public’s perception that they are capable of implementing the recommended attitude (Delviche, 2018).

The fear appeal is a prevalent technique in contemporary politics. Politicians attempt to intensify people’s uncertainty, doubt and fear about immigration, guns or some external threat, while promising that they will reduce the threat if they are voted.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that there are many additional “tricks” extensively used by propagandists in order to manipulate and shape public’s opinion. Skilled rhetoricians can attribute a different meaning to a sentence by using the passive voice or selected verbs and adverbs with the desired ambiguity. This indefiniteness is an attempt to conceal or reveal as much as they wish (Marlin, 2002). Randal Marlin

emphasizes that there can be verbal expressions, for example, that “*impute intention to a doer more definitely, or to a higher degree, in relation to some consequence*”. The statement “A caused B’s death” gives a lower degree of culpability rather than “A killed B”. Accordingly, the imprecision and the deliberate omission of certain words may completely change the meaning of a sentence and create false impression. Provided that the killing was an accident, the assertion that “A killed B”, without further details, leaves open the possibility that the killing was an intentional act. The failure to mention the word “accidentally” may lead to a wrong conclusion (Marlin, 2002).

## **2. Logical Fallacies**

Of equal importance to the propaganda devices mentioned above are “Logical Fallacies”, which constitute a separate sector in propaganda analysis. Since the time of Plato and Aristotle, common fallacies in reasoning were at the center of philosophers’ interest, mainly for avoiding making such mistakes. However, these misconceptions can be used immorally to deceive an audience (Marlin, 2002). More specifically, fallacies and propaganda techniques are associated by nature, as they overlap, are often used in combination, and do not always fit simply into one category or another (McKeever, 2005). Propagandists’ desire to persuade makes the conscious and habitual use of fallacies as rhetorical devices prevail. The following list of language-linked fallacies dates back to Aristotle and earlier and is based principally on Randal Marlin’s book.

The Ad Hominem Argument: This Latin phrase literally means “to the person”. In logic and rhetoric, ad hominem refer to personal attacks (Ferrer, 2018). “*An ad hominem fallacy redirects the discussion of an issue to a discussion of one of the subjects—to his or her personal failings, inconsistency, or bias*” (McKeever, 2005). It is fallacious to reject someone’s view on the basis of their bad character. In particular, ad hominem arguments are a fallacy of relevance where someone criticizes another person’s claim due to his/her personal characteristics, background, physical appearance, or other features irrelevant to the argument at issue (Ferrer, 2018). For example, a good policy does not change merely because a bad person advocates it. The assumption that it does is sometimes called the “*genetic fallacy*”. We need to examine

the policy on its own merits and not on the character of the person supporting it, in order to avoid unsound reasoning (Marlin, 2002). Undoubtedly, ad hominem arguments are very common in politics, where the undermining of the opponent's credibility is a vital component of effective rhetoric. Especially in political campaigns, instead of addressing the candidate's attitude on the issues, or addressing his/her effectiveness as a politician, a propagandist may focus on personality issues, speech patterns, outfit, style, and other things that affect popularity but have no relation with candidate's competence. In this way, propagandists try to influence the voters unethically by appealing to unrelated foibles instead of addressing core issues.

False Cause: It is a logical error to think that simply because one incident follows another, the first causes the second. This fallacy is sometimes called "*post hoc, ergo propter hoc*" ("after this, therefore because of this") (Marlin, 2002). Randal Marlin underlines that "*the attribution of causality cannot be established merely by the temporal sequence*". According to Rosemary Mckeever, who agrees with Randal Marlin, causal fallacy is the result of incorrectly identifying the causes of occurrences either by oversimplifying or by misinterpreting a statistical correlation for a cause. She notes that oversimplifying happens when people attribute to a single cause a complex causal network.

*Example: "Poor performance in schools is caused by poverty"*<sup>6</sup>. Poverty is certainly a factor contributing to poor academic performance but it is not the only one.

On the other hand, mistaking correlation for cause occurs when we assume a causal connection between two unrelated events which happen at the same time, either coincidentally or because they are both results of the same cause (Mckeever, 2005).

*Example: "Eating more ice cream in the summer causes an increase in crime rates"*. By giving this example, Mckeever stresses how a statistical correlation can lead to a logical fallacy. Although the rates for ice-cream consuming and violent crimes both increase each summer, under no circumstances the first causes the second. Yet, the simultaneous rise of these phenomena may be a result of a common cause, like hot weather (Mckeever, 2005). Likewise, we cannot make assumptions about causation without clear evidence. For instance, if we observe that, among octogenarians, fewer smokers have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's than nonsmokers, it is fallacious to conclude that smoking helps prevent this disease (Marlin, 2002).

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<sup>6</sup> <https://unitas.wordpress.com/2007/07/11/propaganda-techniques>

Hasty Generalization: Hasty generalizations are general statements hastily made and supported by little or no evidence. More specifically, these statements are drawn as unwarranted conclusions about how a whole class of people behave, taking as reference only a small sample. For example, someone may have a bad experience with a lawyer and, therefore, make the blanket accusation that all lawyers are unscrupulous (Marlin, 2002). Moreover, when the sample is too biased to support a conclusion, it also constitutes hasty generalization. For instance, a survey is conducted of ten million households, selected from all fifty states, and yet all of them being Democrat. National election's result could not be predicted sufficiently, based merely on this evidence (McKeever, 2005).

Last but not least, Ferrer highlights in his article that these general claims may lead to some sort of illicit assumption, overstatement, exaggeration, or even stereotypes (Ferrer, 2018).

Ignoring the Question: Randal Marlin characterizes it as a “time-honored” device, as it is widely used by officials who face some damaging accusation by the media. In practice, the person asked diverts the questioning by answering to some different issue, ignoring the actual question completely. The author presents the case in British Columbia in 1997, when the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) clashed with demonstrators and used pepper-spray to control the crowd. When the Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien asked about this action, he joked and responded that he put pepper on his plate (Marlin, 2002).

Ignoring the Logical Force and Direction of an Argument: This is one of the main types of logical fallacies to which scholars attribute many different names, like “Smokescreen” or “Red-herring” fallacy<sup>7</sup>. It is also known as “*Ignoratio elenchi*” (literally in Latin; “ignorance of the refutation”) because it produces eventually a totally irrelevant conclusion. According to this tactic, a speaker attempts to redirect the argument to another topic to which he/she can better respond. While it is similar to “Ignoring the Question”, the difference lies upon the deliberate diversion of attention in order to distract and confuse the audience. In this case, there is an effort to replace the lack of real arguments, abandon the original subject of the discussion and introduce a separate issue. Typically, the argument given in response seems to be relevant but is

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<sup>7</sup> The phrase “red herring” refers to a kippered herring (salted herring-fish) which is quite pungent and has a very strong odor. According to legend, this aroma was so strong and delectable to animals that it served for training the hunting dogs and for testing how well they could track a scent without getting distracted. Dogs are not generally used for hunting fish so a red herring is a distraction from what he is supposed to be hunting. <https://thebestschools.org/magazine/15-logical-fallacies-know>

not really on-topic (Ferrer, 2018, McKeever, 2005). This fallacy of relevance is very common when the person asked does not like the current topic and deviates from it in order to speak about a more preferred matter- usually something easier or safer to address (Ferrer, 2018). Randal Marlin argues that this challenge may require clever reasoning abilities through the development of the argument, combined with some sentiment. He stresses that when passions are aroused, people are manipulated more easily. Besides, *“building up emotional indignation can result in easier bridging of this logical gap”* (Marlin, 2002).

For example, an argument stating that a given crime is odious and needs to be punished does not really answer the question whether the person accused committed such a crime (Marlin, 2002).

Finally, politics is another arena where the use of this fallacy is widespread. Political figures are familiar with this technique and use it mainly to mislead the general public. For instance, Donald Trump was asked during the second presidential debate about some recordings from 2005 –in which he is heard making degrading comments about women to Billy Bush. He responded by changing the topic to ISIS, in an effort to make his taped comments appear unimportant in comparison.

*“This was locker room talk. I’m not proud of it. I apologized to my family. I apologized to the American people. (...) You know what, we have a world where you have ISIS chopping off heads, where you have men frankly drowning people in steel cages, where you have wars (...). Yes, I’m very embarrassed by it. I hate it. But it’s a locker room talk and it’s one of those things. I will knock the hell out of ISIS, we’re going to defeat ISIS. ISIS happened a number of years ago in a vacuum that was left because of bad judgment. And I will tell you I will take care of ISIS.”*<sup>8</sup> (Trump, 2016)

**Begging the Question:** This form of fallacy is also called “circular reasoning” or “*petitio principii*” (meaning “assuming the initial [thing]”). It occurs when a person makes a claim and tries to justify it by advancing grounds that actually repeat what is assumed beforehand. More specifically, when the justification of a statement leads to a conclusion which is equivalent to the original statement, this constitutes “circular reasoning” (Ferrer, 2018, McKeever, 2005, Marlin, 2002). Rosemary McKeever’s definition explains it more extensively; *“circular reasoning presents as a true premise an assertion that actually requires its own proof. This leads to a “conclusion” that has*

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<sup>8</sup> via <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/10/us/politics/transcript-second-debate.html>

*already been pre-supposed or implied*". According to Randal Marlin, fanatics are particularly prone to this fallacy. Due to the fact that they are overwhelming enthusiasts and obsessed with their own beliefs and ideas, they cannot understand or accept the opposing view. Therefore, they argue heatedly against an opponent projecting that it is an issue between them. A frequently-used example of circular arguments is found in a debate between theist and atheist. The assertion that God exists because the Bible is divinely inspired and assures His existence is a circular argument. It is also circular for the atheist to reject the possibility that the Bible is divinely inspired because there is no God, when this is the very point at issue (Marlin, 2002).

False Analogy: Drawing analogies between various events, circumstances, or things always plays an important part in learning. Correspondingly, people try to explain and convince the others about particular situations- or actions- by comparing them with former situations (Marlin, 2002). Randal Marlin explicates that false analogy is a fallacy of placing excessive weight on similarities rather than dissimilarities. The differences, notwithstanding their importance, may be not acknowledged, not clearly explained, or simply, ignored. In that case, the analogy is poorly suited and logical conclusions cannot be drawn; dissimilarities can often overpower the similarities and, therefore, invalidate the specific argument.

*Examples*<sup>9</sup>: *"People who buy stocks are no different from people who bet on horse racing. They both risk their money with little chance of making a big profit."*

*"Smoking cigarettes is just like ingesting arsenic into your system. Both have been shown to be causally related to death."*

Amphiboly: *"The word amphiboly comes from the Greek "ampho", which means 'double' or 'on both sides'"*(Cline, 2018). Language may include sentence constructions that can be parsed in multiple ways to get different meanings. The word "amphiboly" refers to the syntactic ambiguity of a whole phrase or sentence which results to divergent interpretations. Headlines, for example, often provide such ambiguous phrases: "Squad Helps Dog Bite Victim", "Miners Refuse to Work after Death", "Deer Kill 17,000".

This fallacy is considered Propaganda when amphiboly is exploited on purpose to induce people to perceive the meaning in one (false) way, while responding to the accusation of lying by pointing to another (true) meaning (Marlin, 2002).

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.txstate.edu/philosophy/resources/fallacy-definitions/Faulty-Analogy.html>



Accident: The fallacy of accident was introduced by Aristotle. It occurs when a statement is applied as a general rule to all situations while ignoring legitimate exceptions. This sort of simplistic rules defies rationality and therefore, constitutes a logical fallacy. The ulterior motive behind this generalization is to “*bypass reason to preserve the illusion of a perfect law*” (Bennett, 2012). Subsequently, this invalid syllogism can lead to absurd conclusions. For instance:  
*Cutting people with knives is a crime. → Surgeons cut people with knives. → Surgeons are criminals.*

### **C. Propaganda: Non-Verbal Techniques**

In modern times, good policy-making is often followed by numbers. The problem lies in recognizing whether these numbers cited by experts are accurate and applied to determine policy or are untrustworthy and used to manipulate people’s will. Among the various forms of propaganda in existence, the public also needs to be alarmed by the common pitfalls in the use of polls and statistics (Marlin, 2002).

#### **1. Opinion Polls**

*“Public opinion polls, frequently conducted and with results that are widely disseminated, are one distinguishing feature of a healthy democracy”* (Traugott, 2003). Western world is based on the premise that democracy is a superior system and, therefore, arguments for a given measure or policy gain ground if there is evidence that the proposals have the public’s support (Marlin, 2002). Consequently, everyone who needs to take into account people’s perspective turns to opinion polls, which are surveys designed to represent the viewpoints of a population. This kind of survey is usually employed by politicians, business leaders, as well as journalists, in order to measure opinion. Especially in politics, polling is used as a means of communication between the citizens and their elected representatives (Traugott, 2003). Under these conditions, opinion polls seem to be really important in today’s world, since they constitute a tool through which people’s wishes can be discerned (Dionne & Mann, 2003). What is more, technological innovations have influenced survey methods, such

as the availability of the statistical software and Internet based polling, making it possible to produce data faster and cheaper.

However, the ubiquity and wide use of pollsters arises many concerns about their reliability. People should be reluctant to trust the polling data, without a fair amount of detailed information about how the poll has been conducted (Traugott, 2003). Marlin notices that it is easy to be deceived by opinion polls and underlines that even those commissioning the polls can be misled. In his 2003 article "*Can We Trust the Polls?: It all depends*", Traugott strengthens Marlin's view. He urges poll consumers to be aware and notifies that "*today, with polls proliferating in the media and with methodological concerns increasing within the polling industry, caution is even more warranted*". Indeed, opinion polls can be misleading in many ways. Some deceptions are connected with the polling methodology that may affect the quality and accuracy of the collected data. Others have an impact on people polled, by embedding certain ideas in their minds under the pretext of seeking their opinions. In particular, bogus polls of this sort are called "ruse polls" or "push polls" because they intend to push voters for or against a candidate (Marlin, 2002). According to reports, such a "push poll" was conducted, for instance, in 1996 by the Ontario government and was censured by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation. The objective of the poll was to ascertain public opinion about the decision to make spending cuts in education up to \$1 billion. One of the polling questions was, "Since teachers have had it so good for so long, should they not be asked to suffer a little?" Teachers who had been polled complained to the federation and asked for the reconstruction of the question. The president of the OSSTF was quoted as referring to the government, "They are now engaging in a propaganda strategy to sway public opinion regarding the actions they intend to take in the education sector"<sup>10</sup> (Marlin, 2002).

Additionally, Randal Marlin outlines the "pseudo-polling", regarding the polls seeking specific opinions on matters in order to reach a foregone conclusion. Especially some activist organizations are inclined to this method; instead of being interested in the responses, they try to encourage awareness and indignation concerning the problems noted by the question.

In relation to the above, scholars made a thorough research and compiled a list of ways

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<sup>10</sup> Ottawa Citizen, 10 February 1996: A14

in which polls can be deceptive and fallacious:

Randomness: Polling is based on the theory that one gets a small sample from a population, and examines it, in order to form an idea about the whole composition of the specific population. Supposing the sample is absolutely random and respectively large (at least some hundreds for a population in the millions), there is a fair chance that the composition of the sample will give a quite clear view about the population as a whole. Randomness is obviously required in the polling procedure. It is a prerequisite that the selection of people to be sampled should not exclude particular groups, locations, or ages in order to be truly random and representative (Madden & Keri, 2009). For instance, it would be misleading to ascertain the proportion of French speakers in the population of Canada by taking only a sample from Montreal, where there is a large percentage of French speakers (Marlin, 2002).

Interviewer effects: There is evidence that biases can be produced resulting from who does the polling. Studies have indicated, for example, that African-Americans, when asked about racism, express themselves more freely to African-American interviewers than to white pollsters<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, the way pollsters manage the results plays a significant role. Randal Marlin notes specifically that *“how pollsters divide up the undecideds can make an important difference to the assessment of public opinion.”* The author presents the case of the 1980 Quebec independence referendum. Back then, the director of research for the Canadian Broadcasting Federation (CBC), Barry Kiefl, commented on the opinion polls taken prior to referendum. His claim was that *“some pollsters assume the undecided will split the same way as decided voters, others weight some of the undecided by the direction in which they are ‘leaning’ or according to the party they voted for in an election. Some polls exclude those who indicate they are unlikely to vote, others include all eligible voters.”*<sup>12</sup> Kiefl underlined that the procedures followed by the pollsters could completely alter the results, particularly in a campaign during which there had been dramatic shifts in public opinion (Marlin, 2002).

Mathematical limitations: This factor refers to mathematically determinable ranges of error that arise during an opinion poll and are usually ignored in results-reports. It should be taken into consideration that every poll has a margin of error, which means

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<sup>11</sup> See Herbert H. Hyman, et al. *“Interviewing in Social Research”, A Research Project of the National Opinion Research Center* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1954) 159ff

<sup>12</sup> Barry Kiefl, letter, *Globe and Mail*, 11 September 1984

that the real number is not necessarily the reported result, but is within a given range. Opinion polls include inevitably a margin of error due to the fact that researchers are polling a tiny sample of the voting public which cannot perfectly mirror the whole population (Alexander, 2017). Nevertheless, the larger the sample size, the smaller the margin of error. Pollsters should fulfill all the required conditions so that the result is as representative as possible, while, simultaneously, they should report the likely size of an error.

The intricacies of polling are undoubtedly much more complicated. However, this approach helps us to comprehend the potential of deception (Marlin, 2002). For example, provided that a poll shows us that 36 per cent of Greeks prefer Alexis Tsipras as prime minister, and later, another poll shows us that 38 per cent favour him as prime minister, while the polls' stated range of error is plus or minus four percentage, we cannot presume that his popularity has increased<sup>13</sup>. In the first case, the estimate ranges from 32 to 40 per cent, and in the second one from 34 to 42 per cent. This fact creates the possibility that the real statistics of the opinion polls are respectively 40 per cent for the first one and 34 per cent for the second. Subsequently, a decline in the Prime Minister's popularity might have appeared as an increase (Marlin, 2002).

Furthermore, in cases that subpopulations are considered, opinion polls seem to become even more untrustworthy. By giving another example regarding Quebec referendum, Randal Marlin tries to explain this observation. In 1990, a poll was conducted to 2,259 citizens coming from all areas of Canada (apart from the Northwest Territories and the Yukon) and he reported range of error was 2.2 percentage points. Supposing we make a reference to Quebec alone that is a province of Canada, its sample is smaller than the total one including it, so the relevant range of error becomes inevitably bigger. Indeed, it turned out by the pollsters that the respective ranges for each region were 4.3 percentage points for Quebec, 4.4 for Ontario, 4.8 for the Prairies, 4.9 for British Columbia and 4.8 percentage points for Atlantic Canada<sup>14</sup> (Marlin, 2002).

Under these circumstances, pollsters and, by extension, media and newspapers should take into account these variables and inform the public appropriately. Otherwise, the people can be misled "*as to the true state of opinion*" (Marlin, 2002). Usually, news reports of polling results include this necessary data; an estimated percentage with a

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<sup>13</sup> the example was based on the author's example and adapted to Greek political realm

<sup>14</sup> *Globe and Mail*, 29 October 1990: A7

stated range of error and the number of people sampled. However, the confidence level<sup>15</sup> is often overlooked in news reports, and even if it appears, it is mentioned only superficially or in the fine print (Madden & Keri, 2009).

Wording and Context of the Question: This probably constitutes the most remarkable way by which polls can influence public opinion. Randal Marlin explicates how the wording of the question can be biased in order to direct people's responses; the question "*Are you in favor of nuclear power and the reduction of coal-fired, polluting, ecologically harmful power stations?*" may evoke more positive answers regarding the nuclear industry, rather than the question "*Do you favor nuclear power despite its high cost, the problems of nuclear waste disposal, and the remote possibility of meltdown?*" (Marlin, 2002). The author underlines that reporters may irresponsibly ignore the full question while presenting the polling results and give emphasis only on the percentage of people being 'for' or 'against' nuclear power. He points out that readers should have the chance to consider how they would have responded in that case and for what reason. "*Journalistic integrity requires that the wording and the methodology be presented for the reader's inspection, even if only at the end of the story*" (Marlin, 2002).

The way an opinion poll is constructed plays a significant role in the survey's outcome. More specifically, the structure of the questionnaire and how the questions are worded may – deliberately or not – lead the responders to answer in a particular way. For instance, asking "*How inefficient is Prime Minister when it comes to foreign policy?*" gives a negative connotation to the question, instead of asking "*How would you describe Prime Minister's position on foreign policy?*"<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, a form of survey that could be proved misleading is when the pollster sets a pair of contrasting statements and asks people to indicate which one represents best their opinion. The following example explains how the context of the questions can elicit very different and incompatible answers: The Legal Research Institute at the University of Manitoba conducted a survey asking people to choose between "*I must always obey the Law*" / "*It is alright to break the law as long as you don't get caught*". The respondents answered affirmatively by roughly 93 per cent to the first one and only 7 per cent chose the second. A few questions later though, the same people gave an affirmative response of about 47 per cent to the question "*There are situations when it is right not*

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<sup>15</sup> In Mathematics: the probability that the value of a parameter falls within a specified range of values.

<sup>16</sup> This is based on the example given in <https://surveytown.com/10-examples-of-biased-survey-questions>

to obey the law”, when it was contrasted with “*Disobedience of the law can never be tolerated*” (chosen approximately by 52 per cent). This inconsistency in responses demonstrates that the import of an answer to a poll question cannot be properly evaluated without knowing the question in context (Marlin, 2002).

Dishonest Respondents: Undoubtedly, polls cannot be reliable if people give untruthful answers (Marlin, 2002). Lying is not easily detectable through the use of polling and, therefore, constitutes a serious problem for pollsters. Respondents' honesty constitutes an important factor in polls and surveys, especially in the case of an election, in which the quality of the sampling is checked directly by the actual result (Reuben, 2014).

Dishonesty in Gathering the Information: Some questionnaires are being answered only by marking with pencil a few coded blank spaces. Because of the fact that poll-takers are sometimes paid with respect to the number of questionnaires completed, they can easily cheat and fill the sheets without taking interviews. Notwithstanding it is a risky method, checkups are not always strong enough to guarantee integrity (Marlin, 2002). Michael Wheeler gives an example in his book by presenting the case in 1968, when ‘New York Times’ commissioned ‘Gallup’ to conduct a survey regarding the attitudes of Harlem residents. Since the tabulated data were submitted to ‘New York Times’ for publication, a pleased editor decided to get a story about some of the residents interviewed. However, the reporters sent could not find dwellings at seven of the twenty three addresses that had been given by Gallup. Apart from this, five more alleged respondents could not be traced, although their addresses existed. Following that, the ‘Times’ newsman learned that even the rest of the interviews were not all legitimate, as in one occasion the poll-taker had discussed with four people playing cards and incorporated all their responses into one interview.<sup>17</sup>

Biased or Incompetent Interpretation of Answers: This factor refers to inaccurate conclusions based on polls. A failure to consider the polling theory and its methodological weaknesses is usually related to a deliberate attempt to mislead. Nevertheless, Randal Marlin emphasizes that “*there may also be errors stemming, not from malevolence, but from wishful thinking or sheer ignorance*”. The author brings the example of a youth group in Canada, Katimavik<sup>18</sup>, which received public funding by the Liberal government. Its funds were cut off in 1984, when the Conservatives came to power; one of the reasons was that the

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<sup>17</sup> Wheeler, *Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics*, pg. 111

<sup>18</sup> It is a registered charity which educates Canadian youth through volunteer work

group was vilified in the press for taking drugs. However, one of them sent a letter to the 'Ottawa Citizen' explaining that the interpretation of a poll regarding the use of drugs was biased. The writer outlined that one of the questions was "*Are you aware of anyone having taken drugs during the period as participants of the program?*" . Based on the answers, the report concluded that 55 per cent admitted to taking drugs. Subsequently, the sender of the letter pointed out that supposing the result was reliable, the conclusion should have been: "*55 per cent of the participants are aware of the fact that a least one person has taken drugs*".<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, there are occasions when media favoring a certain person or policy promote polls supporting that position. They intentionally ignore methodological limitations of the specific poll or other polls presenting a contrary view (Marlin, 2002).

Fluctuation of Opinion: Even if polls are properly executed, they present only the current public opinion at a given time. It is commonly observed that public attitude is affected by the news and the series of events. Especially in politics, exit polls cannot predict or measure voters' change of view. Randal Marlin argues that politicians may count on favorable polls and, therefore, call for an election. However, this may create disappointment and a shift to voters' opinion particularly if the election is called earlier than supposed, so that the candidate takes advantage of the favorable opinion. "*This resentment can be aroused, fed, and exploited by opposition parties, as former Ontario Premier David Peterson found when he lost the election he called in 1990*" (Marlin, 2002).

Deliberate Attempts to Manipulate Polls: Since prominent events seem to affect public opinion, people holding or seeking for power may manufacture such events (Marlin, 2002). Such a case occurred when Charles Colson tried to improve President Richard Nixon's ranking in polls. According to author Wheeler, he made a profitable contract with a prominent pollster so that the last one exposes merely positive polls. Wheeler also reports that Nixon had a source inside the Gallup organization by the time of 1968 campaign. This allowed him to be informed when surveys were going to be conducted and, consequently, arrange his activities in order to have the maximum impact on polls (Wheeler, 1976).

Bogus (Unscientific) Polls: A legitimate poll is based on scientific sampling to

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<sup>19</sup> The letter- writer argues that the group responded affirmatively because there had been a participant using drugs that was later asked to leave. Source: Jimmy Edwards, letter, *Ottawa Citizen*, 31 March 1986

measure opinions and behaviors of a population. On the other hand, bogus polls include unscientific (and therefore, unreliable) methodology to determine public opinion, as well as other practices, similar to polls, designed for other purposes rather than legitimate research (Lavrakas, 2008). Various techniques are used to make unscientific assessments of opinion and produce "pseudo-polls". Paul Lavrakas argues that this sort of polls is problematic regarding its data quality. Bogus polls are usually conducted and publicized by media and other organizations “*with a serious intent to influence public opinion*” (Marlin, 2002).

## **2. Statistics**

According to Huff (1954), there are four identifiable figures of deception in the usage of statistics; the *Well-Chosen Average*, the *Semi-Attached Figure*, the ‘*Gee Whiz*’ *Graph* and. the *One-Dimensional Figure*

The Well-Chosen Average: The word “average” is primarily preferred by many experts or pollsters in order to misguide and influence the general public opinion since this term is deceptive by its own and has a very unclear and loose meaning. Not many individuals know that there are actually three averages; the mean, the median and the mode. The mean is the sum of the quantities, divided by the numbers of quantities that have been chosen; the median is the middle point of a data sample that separates the higher half of numbers from the lower half, when those numbers ranked in order and the mode is the most frequently appearing number in a data sample. Due to their similarity, inexperienced people are incapable of recognizing the differences and are led on false and unreliable conclusions. Thus, the “average” that is selected can alter the meaning of the data, as the “average” that is presented may differ significantly depending on whether the mean, the median or the mode is displayed (Huff, 1954). Therefore, pollsters, by using a different kind of average each time, can trick, deceive and manipulate people beliefs and perspectives by simply twisting the real facts according to their own benefits and purposes. In other words, an undefined “average” is meaningless, and for that reason it is essential to examine which kind of average someone is referring to.

The Semi-Attached Figure: ‘*If you can’t prove what you want to prove, demonstrate something else and pretend that they are the same thing*’ (Huff, 1954). The semi-attached figure is a useful tool that can be utilized in circumstances when the writer



aims to confuse people by presenting distorted data, in such a way that the real evidence is concealed and the public is deluded, taking advantage of that situation for their own benefits. In particular, attaching two statistical data that seem to be identical, but they are actually irrelevant, and creating a comparison among them may lead to a valid statistical implication which is literally false, and produce, by extension, incorrect assumptions, misguidance and mistaken beliefs. It should be noted that this statistical collision confuses the human mind and it is impossible an inexperienced individual to notice the differences. Because of being undetectable, the semi-attached figure is clearly used as a strategy by experts who have the intention to deceive and misinform people, in order to accomplish a desirable objective (Huff, 1954, Marlin, 2013).

The Gee Whiz Graph: The “Gee-Whiz” graph is a method frequently used. The majority of people does not prefer numbers and tries to avoid them with any cost, and when the words are inadequate to present a point of view, the writers apply another method for that purpose by creating pictures which are more accessible to the public. Moreover, the use of graphics and pictures with adjustable scales gives a highly chance to deform and alter the message. The representation of the graphic-picture, in such a way that there seem to be small or no changes in relation to the original form, allows the readers to make their own assumptions, without any valid or reliable evidence, even though the final result may be totally ambiguous and unclear. According to Huff, there are numerous methods and techniques to manipulate and modify a graphic-picture. This device is commonly used by companies when the present digital data referring to their performance. More specifically, the basic trick of this misrepresentation is to deceive public’s perception by selecting the most preferable poor data from the past and compare them with the most favorable data from the present, in order to enhance an organization’s profile, eliminate antagonism and defame the competitors. Accordingly, that process can be reversed, depending on the current state of preference. In that case, the chosen data from the past will be good in comparison with the present data that will be poor, so that the propagandist may achieve the desirable outcome by minimizing the organization’s errors and maximizing its accomplishments. However, if people become aware of that situation and begin to improve their knowledge about that matter, there is a great risk that this effort of deception fails entirely (Huff, 1954, Marlin, 2013).

The one- dimensional figure: The one-dimensional figure is another strategy which may also be misleading by the increase or the decrease of a pictorial representation.

The one-dimensional figure usage is occurred when someone is using a figure-symbol instead of numbers, and this figure is not illustrated to the same and realistic scale with the initial numbers that have been provided. This popular method misguides and misleads the public by changing the width, as well as the length of a preferred selected figure in comparison to another figure that is represented. The trick of the one-dimensional figure may be deceptive as it gives an incorrect visual impression to the reader. As a result, this approach leads the individual to a false and an inaccurate conclusion about the statistical data of a given survey (Marlin, 2013).

## **CHAPTER TWO: BRITAIN'S EU REFERENDUM**

### **A. Euroscepticism in Britain since 70's**

The 2016 debate that led British people to the referendum and the decision on whether their country should leave or stay in the EU pivoted around issues which had been the main subject of previous intense debates, almost fifty years ago. In this extent, 2016 referendum was not the first of its kind since almost the same questions had been asked forty years earlier (Davis, 2017). According to Davis, the origins of Britain's detached attitude to the rest of Europe are traced back to the Roman Empire and Hundred Years' War, as well as to the Reformation and Henry VIII's break with Rome and the 'Glorious Revolution'.

Great Britain's vision to adopt a constitutional monarchy set it against the absolutist regimes in the rest of the continent. It could be claimed that the notion of Euroscepticism derives from the very creation of Britain's state. The sense of difference and division from the 'Other', such as the other neighbor and or the other rival patriotism, prevailed in English and hence British nationalism. Historically, for British people this 'Other' has mainly been European (Davis, 2017).

Wellings agrees that the fundamental development and verbalization of the anti-European ideology, which sees 'Europe' as the vital institution responsible for the English decline, originates from the past. Consequently, the principles of the modern English nationalism cannot be understood explicitly in political terms, but they can be explained through the understanding of the past. To this context, an analysis of the arguments used regarding the past in withstanding the European integration could shed

light to contemporary association between the English nationalism and Euroscepticism (Wellings, 2012).

The foundations of the English nationalism's resurgence were set in two main ways by the debates on the accession in the European Economic Community (EEC) in the late 60's and 70's. Firstly, it was repeatedly argued that Britain should defend its Parliamentary sovereignty, whose continuity and significance could not really be understood by Continentals. And secondly, this kind of arguments led to the fusion of two notions, the Parliamentary sovereignty with the popular one, through the device of a referendum (Wellings, 2012). Yet, Wellings points out that other considerations also enhanced the skeptical position towards EU integration, many of which might simply rely on prejudice and unverified reports. As an example, the author cites a draft pamphlet by the businessman A.G.Elliot, who argues against entering the EEC on the following grounds: *"I visited France on a 2,000 mile business trip and everywhere (except among the peasants) I found half the companies and people I dealt with tried to cheat me. As a recent television program proved this sort of thing does not happen to foreign visitors to England... and while I have spoken about the French, people tell me Italians are worse"*<sup>20</sup>. Correspondingly, Great Britain's long-term bonds with the Empire and Commonwealth were a vital reason that generated the disinclination towards a closer economic and political integration with European countries. This became particularly obvious after the victory of Labour in 1974 general election, when Prime Minister Harold Wilson as the head of the government was inevitably committed to declare a referendum *"on the re-negotiated terms of Britain's involvement in the EEC"* (Wellings, 2012). Wilson's conviction was that Europe was directly related with threat and risk, while the Commonwealth offered support by holding family and friendly ties with Britain. Consequently, the possibility of Britain's accession in the EEC originated concerns and fears about potential costs for both sides, especially for New Zealand which would be the biggest loser of the Commonwealth members if that deal was agreed. Nevertheless, these great ties of partnership with Commonwealth were not such crucial for the development of English nationalism, as the importance of the protection of Parliamentary sovereignty. More specifically, during the upcoming referendum in 1975, the most enduring concern of the public and political class about the UK's entry in the EEC was linked to the authority and

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<sup>20</sup> Letter/pamphlet from A G Elliot to Shore, SHORE/9/44 [Miscellaneous, 1971]

governance. The potential association with the powerful nations of Europe and the prospect of control being exercised over Britain brought great apprehension and the crowd's upheaval. As Wellings highlights, the last time British people faced these concerns was during World War II, when some of these nations fought against Britain. As a result, United Kingdom's fears of losing its autonomy and supremacy as a nation were dominant.

Notably, since this point, Labour Party was the only side largely opposed to European integration, as the Conservatives and the Liberals used to support a deal with the European Economic Community. According to Wellings, the left-wing regarded the EEC as a "*pro-big business*", however their objections were also based on the matters of sovereignty and history. To this extend, Ron Leighton<sup>21</sup> argued that "*Sovereignty is not a reactionary concept. It is our most precious possession, as those countries in the world without it today would testify*" (Leighton, 1971). He continued by stating, "*Our present liberties and freedoms in Britain were fought for and achieved by our forefathers in a long struggle (...). Our present MPs have inherited these rights and liberties, and now they are custodians responsible for handing them on to future generations. They certainly have no mandate to surrender or abandon our right to self-government and self-determination to the apparatus in Brussels and would never be forgiven for doing so*" (Leighton, 1971). Apart from this, it should be noted that many of their arguments derived also from a skeptical attitude towards the EEC's framework, since it was merely seen as a capitalist and Christian Democratic structure. Viewing the events in chronological order, after the Treaty of Rome was signed by PM Ted Heath in 1972 and Britain entered into the EEC, a specific political group gave prominence to the issue of the referendum. That group was called the 'Anti-Marketeers' and was mainly – but not entirely – comprised by members of the Labour Party. Labour came to power, after winning both elections in 1974, by advocating the importance of Britain's autonomy and the requirement of a referendum regarding *the "continued UK involvement under renegotiated terms of accession"* (Wellings, 2012). Due to this public declaration, it was decided that a referendum would be held on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1975.

Despite the fact that the 'Anti-Marketeers' were the first ones to fuse the Parliamentary and popular sovereignty, Enoch Powell – the ex-Conservative MP – was the one that

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<sup>21</sup> Director of the Labour Party's Committee for Safeguards on the Common Market

clearly associated national identity with sovereignty. During the referendum campaign, Powell outlined that “*parliamentary sovereignty is the form in which we are accustomed to asserting our national independence*”, adding that Parliamentary sovereignty was also “*the fact for which men have fought and died, that the laws in their country are made only by the institutions of their country and in Britain that they are made only by the parliamentary institutions of our country*” (Powell, 1975). In the run-up to the referendum, these debates demonstrated that the British identity was founded upon and expressed with respect to the uniqueness of Parliament. According to their perspective, the UK’s legislature was particularly important, and distinct from other institutions, due to its historical foundation and its endurance and continuity throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was highly thought that the Continental Europeans were not able to understand this notion because, as the anti-Market National Referendum Campaign argued, they were “*more used to giving up their institutions*” than British people (National Referendum Campaign, 1975, Wellings, 2012).

Consequently, the core and comprehension of England’s past became a populist issue and the main topic of the referendum in 1975. Apparently, through this innovative device people could vote and decide upon this significant matter.

Nevertheless, the whole referendum procedure “*was also designed to preserve the Labour Party from splitting over the issue of Europe*” (Hennessy, 2001). Labour Party took advantage of that situation and tried to resolve the protracted disputes over Europe’s integration by inducing the electorate to make the final decision. Ultimately, the ‘Anti-Marketeters’ argued to the public that the referendum was related to “*whether or not we remain free to rule ourselves in our own way*” (National Referendum Campaign, 1975), while the government’s campaign backing a ‘Yes’ vote stressed out material interests by downplaying the threat to sovereignty: “*Today we are even more dependent on what happens outside. Our trade, our jobs, our food, our defence cannot wholly be within our own control. That is why so much of the argument about sovereignty is a false one (...) If we came out, the Community would go on taking decisions which affect us vitally – but we should have no say in them*” (Britain in Europe, 1975). Remarkably, British people were more persuaded by the arguments referring to vital material benefits, as the memories of the wartime still remained vivid: “*Britain, as a country which cannot feed itself, will be safer in the Community which is almost self-sufficient in food*” (Britain in Europe, 1975). Nonetheless, these debating points contributed significantly to the emergence of a national identity connected with

Parliamentary sovereignty by giving a political character to these feelings.

As far as the Conservative Party is concerned, it was observed that their commitment to European integration had been diminishing through the time. According to Andrew Geddes, Conservative's pro-European views were based on a "*rather narrow trade-based idea of European integration*" which could not be adapted to the new challenging plans for political and economic integration introduced in the 1980's (Geddes, 2004). Indeed, Margaret Thatcher, who campaigned for a positive vote in 1975, sought to adjust the European Community's regulation to the Britain's standards when she became a Prime Minister. Her initial negotiations with the European counterparts were solely related to the budget rebate, but later her uncompromising policies and aggressive rhetoric concerning the European integrative measures revealed her intentions (Wellings, 2012, Bismarck, 2016). Undoubtedly, after the Single European Act (SEA) in 1987, the Conservative Party seemed to make tremendous attempts to reform and improve the European Community according to Great Britain's recent liberal profile. However, the roots of the "Euro-scepticism" phenomenon can be basically traced in Thatcher's efforts to modify the Conservative Party and Britain itself since 1975. More specifically, Thatcher's viewpoints regarding British sovereignty created divisions within the Conservative Party, as well as, within the United Kingdom itself (Wellings, 2012). In particular, the idea that "*government should step in and replace organic and spontaneous relationships by regimentation from above*" claimed Thatcher, "*is alien to the Anglo-Saxon tradition*" (Thatcher, 1977).

Similarly to what occurred during Labour's referendum in 1975, internal concerns emerged once again about Britain's autonomy and the processing European integration, by creating eventually significant unfavorable attitudes towards the EEC. This negative stance also initiated a 'battle of ideas' and intense arguments on the relationship between the individual and the state in Britain (Wellings, 2012). Since 1979, the Conservative Party worked to transform Thatcherite principles into political and social reality.

Margaret Thatcher's philosophy concerning the 'individualistic anti-bureaucratism' was officially made public in her Bruges Speech in 1988. Thatcher referred extensively to the future of the European Community and, with this speech, she aimed to stop this 'foreign power' of deteriorating the national and individual liberty. Her most trenchant argument was that "*We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in*

*Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level*” (Thatcher, 1988, Bismarck, 2016). Subsequently, her viewpoints regarding the political, economic and social growth of European Community disclosed Britain's sense of superiority, especially with respect to government's system – *“if I were an Italian, I might prefer rule from Brussels too”* (Thatcher, 1995). In addition, her statements revealed the close relation of British way of life with the institutional character of the state and the wide concern that this relation may be affected by the European integration: *“British democracy, parliamentary sovereignty, the common law, our traditional sense of fairness, our ability to run our own affairs in our own way”* might be *“subordinated to a remote European bureaucracy, resting on very different traditions”* (Thatcher, 1995, Wellings, 2012).

A combination of Euroscepticism and xenophobia also emerged due to additional developments and changes within the EEC in late 80s, especially the German reunification. Margaret Thatcher's initiatives for meetings and discussions about German national identity – namely at Chequers in March 1990 - as well as the fact that Nicholas Ridley characterized the EC as ‘German racket’ demonstrated suspicions originated from the recent war-experience with Germany a few decades before (Ramsden, 2006). According to Thatcher views, Germany since 1871 had been changing directions *“unpredictably between aggression and self-doubt”*, therefore including post-War Germany within the European Unity would succeed only worsening and not solving ‘the German problem’ (Thatcher, 1995). To this extent, for Thatcher, a re-unified Germany inside a powerful EC constituted the worst scenario (Volkery, 2009). Remarkably, although Thatcher was initially isolated in her concerns, Conservative Party's inclination to think the EC as a threatening alliance of former enemies started to strengthen. In line with the above, the press reported in great extent the Single Market's regulation and its impact on the United Kingdom, implying the existence of European threat with respect to Parliament's sovereignty, and consequently the core of popular life.

In 1990, during the battle for Conservative's leadership, the issue of Europe amplified the divisions within the party. Despite the various efforts of the pro-European wing in the Conservative Party to amend the anti-European feelings, a sense of Euroscepticism had overrun the party. This suggested that John Major, the new Prime Minister, had to deal with those Eurosceptic sentiments, when at the same time there were negotiations in Maastricht about the political project of European Union (Wellings, 2012). Once

again, debates on EU structure and integration were based on the wartime and the threat that Britain faced by Nazi Germany and its allies. For example, in line with this, *The Spectator* published a Paul Johnson's paper declaring that "*what the row over the Maastricht Treaty has brought to the surface is the salient fact that Britain's real enemy is not Germany but France (...) where hatred of Britain and the individual freedom it stands for is a religion*" (Johnson, 1992).

Correspondingly, Conservative Eurosceptics expressed their concerns about the corrosion of democracy resulting from being an underrepresented and not really understood part of a centralized political union (Wellings, 2012). This indicated the fact that European integration was gradually raising a sense of discrimination regarding the issue of sovereignty. Even worse, it was believed that the European Union intended to impose on the United Kingdom specific political rights and freedoms, opposed to Britain's conception. Based on this, Bill Cash and Iain Duncan Smith - leading Eurosceptics - blamed the Chancellor of Germany, Helmut Kohl, for promoting "*a system of authoritarian and bureaucratic European government which would extinguish the opportunity to disagree*" (Cash and Duncan Smith, 1996). Furthermore, they both argued by stressing the 'German Problem' that the intense interference of Germany in the balanced function of EU might "*destabilize Europe and the world well into the next millennium*" (Cash and Duncan Smith, 1996).

The mentality of viewing Anglo-European relations in respect of the past had become by 1996 so deep-rooted that momentous Anglo-European interplays were described as conflicts. The late 80s and 90s debates regarding the European integration deepened the connection made "between the nation, the past and the defence of sovereignty" (Wellings, 2012). What is more, the added element of English individualism to the above allowed the increased criticisms of the EU for constraining, and not insuring, liberty.

In 1997, New Labour Party came to power and one of their first and most notable actions was to delegate power to Scotland, Wales, London and Northern Ireland. Remarkably, during the 1990s, a kind of English nationalism started to be produced because of this uneven devolved structure of Britain. This type of nationalism, according to Philip Resnick, is characterized by 'hubris' – excessive pride and arrogance – and is usually traced in national majorities of former imperial states. In contrast, he claims that the feeling which characterizes the national minorities is 'melancholy' (Resnick, 2008). In England, this supposed English nationalism was



based on Eurosceptic ideas, or at least the philosophy of Euroscepticism could embrace opinions about 'national decline' – resulting particularly from open borders, the bureaucratic EU regulation and foreign corrosion of the United Kingdom's sovereignty. A combination of Resnick's two descriptions – 'hubristically melancholic' – could properly define that English nationalism in the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, when "*a nostalgia for the past (was) combined with an increasingly organized and popular anti-European politics*" (Wellings, 2012).

It is also worth noting that, initially the general elections in 1997 caused a further separation between the two major parties on the issue of Europe. At the beginning, the difference between the Conservatives and New Labour was profound. After the long period of Conservative Euroscepticism, New Labour seemed to bring some 'fresh air' in the political area. During its 1980's and 1990's 'modernization', Labour Party abandoned its 1983 manifesto commitment to withdraw from the EEC. Notably, Antony Blair was the most pro-European Prime Minister since Heath (Gamble, 2003).

With respect to the relations with European partners, at first they appeared to be utterly friendly. However, this goodwill aimed to Britain's commitment for cooperation "within the framework of European multilateralism", as proved by the constructive attitude of the new British government when the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) was signed and the St Mâlo Agreement (1998) between Britain and France was concluded. Nevertheless, Blair was also aware of the 'special relationship' between Great Britain and United States of America and after September of 2001, he demonstrated an inclination towards a closer Atlanticist cooperation that seemed to justify all of General De Gaulle's worries and doubts about Britain's engagement in Europe. In addition, alongside with the pro-American attitude, Britain's refusal to entrust and accept the euro currency, created a strong belief that UK was reluctant –or incapable- to decide between America and Europe (Wellings, 2012).

Moreover, it was the contradictory reactions of the foreign ministries of Europe to the invasion of Iraq led by the US, which costed Blair by damaging his European reputation. More specifically, his decision to back the US brought United Kingdom back into the 'awkward' camp regarding the European matters. The primary invasion against Iraq, in 2003, turned American, British and Australian armed forces against some European countries, such as Germany, Belgium and France, who supported Iraq. However, the Anglophone countries had assistance from Spain, Italy and Denmark.

That diplomatic argument led US Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld to separate Europe into ‘old’ and ‘new’, with Britain belonging to the second one. According to Wellings, this division could also be regarded as ‘core’ and ‘no-core’ Europe, with Britain being part of the ‘noncore’ group (Wellings, 2012).

As it has been indicated by opinion polls back in 1975, the majority of people did not vote UK to stay in the EEC because they strongly supported Britain’s continuing engagement in the European Community. On the contrary, their decision was based on the fact that they had no other available option (Boase Massimi Pollitt Partnership, 1975). Tom Naim argues that the loss of “*greatness*” – a term used to describe Britain’s desire to project its power to the rest of the world – created much Euroscepticism (Naim, 2002, Wellings, 2012). As mentioned above, public’s concerns about the way Britain’s power and freedom of action were restricted within an enlarged EU were gradually increasing. Apparently, the European Union symbolized the Britain’s decline and, to this extend, it could be accused for everything that might go wrong within the state; from unregulated immigration to bureaucratic waste.

It was these exact convictions on which the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) was based in order to be formed. UKIP members articulated the party’s “Five Freedoms”, including the first principle which was freedom from the EU (UKIP, 2004). The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which was established in 1993, had as primary goal to ensure that Britain will withdraw from the European Union in order to protect and maintain its sovereignty. Notably, there are two significant arguments of UKIP political party regarding their manifest, which are worth mentioning. Firstly, they strongly believed that if Britain left the EU, it would become once again “*a normal self-governing democracy*” (UKIP, 1997), and secondly that the European Union would increasingly force Britain “*to abandon the centuries old democratic and legal systems that have been embraced by countries throughout the world*”(UKIP, 2004). Notwithstanding that party’s name and policies indicated that this was a British party, in fact UKIP’s campaign strategies and electoral successes – especially in the 2004 European elections – lead to a different assessment. UKIP focused its efforts to be elected particularly in England, where it achieved eventually to win all of its twelve seats. Likewise, in the same elections, Conservative’s twenty-four seats – out of their twenty-seven won – were gathered in England. Although, it would be inaccurate to claim that Eurosceptic attitudes are only observed in England, it can be argued that Euroscepticism is “*a bigger vote winner*” in England in comparison to the

other parts of the United Kingdom (Wellings, 2012). Furthermore, it is interesting that a possible comparison between the *de facto* English nationalist party and the Scottish National Party would reveal significant differences. The latter did not consider European integration to be a threat, like the English nationalists. Instead, European integration was viewed as an opportunity that offered guarantee and augmentation to Scottish sovereignty (Ichijo, 2004). This suggests that the meaning of defending sovereignty could be perceived in different ways. Indeed, in the following 2009 European elections, the British National Party (BNP) also secured two seats in England, by advocating the issues of anti-Europeanism and anti-immigration in terms of maintaining sovereignty.

In conclusion, the association between Euroscepticism and English nationalism is highly important for many reasons. First of all, the debates regarding the Britain's accession to the EEC and its continuous level of engagement in the European integration process concentrate on the role of sovereignty – especially the Parliamentary one – as a pivotal aspect in English nationalism. Secondly, the internal policies, notions and norms about Parliamentary sovereignty have acquired a popular dimension through the referenda promoted by Eurosceptics. This inevitably led to the fusion between Parliamentary and popular sovereignty. It should be also noted that even though Euroscepticism may find supporters all over the United Kingdom, the different policies and strategies of nationalist parties towards the EU signify that Euroscepticism is more popular in England. Last but not least, the views and understandings of the past and the protection of Parliament's sovereignty bolster and reinforce each other. The conclusion is that Euroscepticism may basically be a sort of English nationalism, yet this English nationalism expresses typically the Britishness (Wellings, 2012).

## **B. Brexit vs. Bremain: Methods, Techniques and Rhetoric**

The United Kingdom faced a referendum wherein Britons had to decide whether Britain would remain in or leave the European Union (EU). Referendum or plebiscite is called the procedure in which every person of voting age can participate, providing a yes or no answer to a legislative or policy query, directing democracy in action with their vote preference. The side which gets the majority of more than half of all votes wins. The Brexit referendum was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016. Noteworthy, PM David

Cameron had promised to the public that if he won the 2015 general election, a plebiscite would be held, arguing that it was time to settle the European question in British politics. Moreover, Cameron was responding to the requests of his own Conservative Members of Parliament (MPs) and the UK Independence Party (UKIP), who demonstrated that British people had not given the opportunity to express their views about Britain's European membership since 1975. They also claimed that the EU was progressively exercising more control over the daily lives of British citizens. David Cameron had also decided to negotiate an agreement with other EU leaders to alter the terms of Britain's EU membership before the official announcement of the referendum (Bartlett, 2016).

The official campaign group for staying in the EU was known as *'Britain Stronger In Europe'* – or informally *'Remain'*. It was chaired by Stuart Rose and endorsed by the Chancellor George Osborne and the Prime Minister David Cameron. There were also additional campaigns supporting remaining in the EU, including *'Conservatives In'*, *'Labour In for Britain'*, *'Greens for a Better Europe'*, *'#INtogether (Liberal Democrats)'*, *'Scientists for EU'*, *'Universities for Europe'*, *'Environmentalists for Europe'* and *'Another Europe is Possible'*. On the other hand, the official campaign supporting Brexit was *'Vote Leave'*, after a contest for the designation with *'Leave.EU'*. It was fronted by the Secretary of Justice Michael Gove, the Conservative MP Boris Johnson and Labour MP Gisela Stuart. Each side found support from across the political spectrum, as well as from businesses, newspapers, trade unions and prominent individuals. Both of the official campaigns deployed a variety of methods and techniques in order to manipulate and shape public's opinion. This section examines the strategy of the two opposing sides that led to the outcome of the Britain's EU referendum in 2016.

## **1. Membership, Designation and Campaigns' Strategy**

### **1.a. 'Leave' Campaign**

One of the most significant personalities that played a vital role in the Out campaign's preparation was Dominic Cummings. Due to his previous success as a campaign director at Business for Sterling, which assisted to retain Britain out of the euro, he was

considered as one of the most intelligent and capable professional of his generation on public policy. The political strategist and lobbyist of Out campaign, Matthew Elliott, selected Cummings because of his strongly Eurosceptic views, his organizational skills and his determination to run a successful campaign. Already since 2014 Elliott had hired Cummings in order to conduct polls and create focus groups regarding how an Out campaign might be formed. This study was highly essential because it proved that the public views differentiated from London elite's concerns, leading him to realize that this was the key factor of winning the referendum. More specifically, Cummings concluded that Europe was totally unpopular and identified that people did not like the foreigners, abominated the bankers and thought more money should be spent to NHS (Shipman, 2017). Furthermore, he had correctly foreseen that immigration and control issues would affect people's position in the possibility of a referendum. He outlined his views in an article, stating that "*the combination of immigration, benefits, and human rights dominates all discussion of politics and Europe. People think that immigration is 'out of control' [and] puts public services under intolerable strain*"<sup>22</sup>. In the case of a referendum, the main dilemma in public's choice would be related to the risk of an economic disaster, or, the amount of money that could be saved by controlling immigration. However, he realized that it was preferable to neutralize the issue of immigration instead of focus on it – and give more attention on other arguments to convince the electorate during the official OUT campaign. Cumming's decision was also based on the fact that Farage and Ukip party would inevitably refer to the immigration, so he preferred to give emphasis on other crucial aspects to get a hearing from the media.

Furthermore, during the formation of the campaign's strategy, Cummings cooperated with Paul Stephenson, who was British Bankers Association's communication director and former special adviser at Transport Department and the Department Health. Remarkably, he was also one of the most skillful and efficient media operators of Conservative Party and highly appreciated by journalists. As a passionate Eurosceptic he had involved on a variety anti-Brussels campaigns. Stephenson agreed with Cummings to highlight the immigration issue close to the polling day and only after they had won the designation. By following that policy, they achieved not to be associated with Farage's party and be characterized as racists by the electorate.

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<sup>22</sup> Dominic Cummings, *The Times*, 26 June 2014

In accordance with the above, Cummings posted extended reports in his blog, referring to Europe being detrimental for democracy based on scientific endeavors and descriptions on how the civil service was operating (Shipman, 2017). It could be indicated that this was his first effort to apply Propaganda, since his claims included specific persuasive techniques. More specifically, experts' affirmation could be considered as 'appeal to authority', while he 'pinpointed as enemy' the European Union and referred to democracy by making use of the 'glittering generality' device. It is also worth mentioning that one of Cummings priorities, when he started to form the campaign team, was to approach and integrate Business for Britain as a Brexit outfit.

On the other hand, Farage was convinced that Mathew Elliott and Business for Britain would not eventually commit for Brexit and took the initiative to launch an alternative Brexit campaign with his own team. He strongly believed that forming an organization as soon as possible would provide Brexit camp valuable time to prepare efficiently against Remainers. Farage and Chris Bruni-Lowe, the campaign expert of Ukip party, proposed Arron Banks to set up this operation.

Arron Banks, a successful businessman and former donator of Tory Party, became known in political background in 2014, when he changed sides and started supporting the Ukip. After the general elections, he offered £1 million to the party, but Farage and Bruni-Lowe suggested him instead, to found and invest in a referendum campaign. As a result, on 21<sup>st</sup> of June, Banks declared officially on *Sunday Telegraph* paper that he intended to fund £20 million for creating a leave campaign called '*No thanks we are going global*'. Banks' first notable action was to hire Gerry Gunster, a political consultant in the US, known for his great achievement of winning more than thirty referendums across the world.

By the time the second 'No' campaign had been organized, the first one had not even been set up. However, Cummings' team got motivated in June, after Cameron outlined briefly his requirements at the European Council in Brussels. It was observed that many parts of the Bloomberg's speech were missing, as well as some of the commitments that Cameron had publicly made. Taking advance of that incident, Cummings seized the opportunity to present Cameron as unreliable and by using this 'ad hominem argument' to urge the donors to shift direction and support the 'Out' campaign. Moreover, just before Cameron's summit press conference, the *Guardian* published an article exposing Cameron's intention to rely his referendum campaign

mainly on the risks of Brexit – following the same tactic he had deployed in the Scottish referendum, known as ‘Project Fear’.<sup>23</sup> The story was based on a leaked report, whose source was suspected to be the Italian embassy, which described a private conversation among the prime minister and a fellow EU leader. Elliott’s spin doctor, Rob Oxley revealed the story to the MPs, especially to those being Eurosceptic. Additionally, Elliot convinced ‘Business for Britain’ to join the ‘Out’ camp by the end of July, who were determined since then to anticipate until Cameron’s renegotiation, in order to promote their expectations on the final deal.

Additionally, one more noteworthy initiative that Cummings took to convince the undecided public was to introduce the possibility of a second referendum after voting for out, in which they could decide upon a new and more profitable deal with EU. More specifically he claimed at his blog that, *“If you want to say ‘Stop’, vote no and you will get another chance to vote on the new deal”*, drawing instantly the media’s attention. Notably, London mayor Boris Johnson was excited about the double-referendum idea and he publicly approved it at the end of June, explaining that it would prove to Brussels that Britain was determined for an EU reform.<sup>24</sup>

Incidents of high importance occurred in September, starting with the creation of ‘ExCom’ – an exploratory committee set up by Bernard Jenkin in order to convene more MPs – that would constitute the Leave campaign’s voice within the Parliament. Following that, the two official sides, which were committed to Brexit, decided to rename their campaigns in accordance with Electoral Commission’s final decision to change the wording of the referendum question so that people could choose between Remain/Leave instead of Yes/No. The name of Banks’ campaign was modified from “the KNOW” to “Leave EU” while Elliott changed his campaign’s logo from a simple ‘NO’ to ‘Vote Leave’ because it implicated an action. Eventually, Elliott along with Cummings concluded that the complete name of the slogan would be “Vote Leave. Take Control”, based on Cummings’ ascertainment that “Let’s Take Back Control” is a strong argument within focus groups (Shipman, 2017).

Cummings decided to announce the beginning of his campaign operation by uploading a video on social media instead of holding a press conference. His decision was based on the fact that he did not have yet enough economic and political support. The posted

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<sup>23</sup> David Cameron plans EU campaign focusing on ‘risky’ impact of UK exit, *Guardian*, 26 June 2015

<sup>24</sup> Tim Shipman, *Sunday Times*, 28 June 2015

video described that, *“Every week, the United Kingdom sends £350 million of taxpayers’ money to the EU. That’s the cost of a fully staffed, brand-new hospital, or looked at another way, that’s £20 billion per year”* and continued by quoting *‘Vote Leave, let’s take back control’* (Shipman, 2017). Apparently, this was an attempt to influence public’s opinion by employing ‘appeal to emotion’ and evoke compassion regarding the possible establishment of a hospital and enhance the outrage for the money spent on the EU.

Furthermore, besides their internal war, ‘Vote Leave’ and ‘Leave.EU’ had significant differences regarding their strategy and the way they approached the voters. The Electoral Commission had to designate only one outfit to represent and run officially the Leave campaign. Vote Leave’s insight was to be a cross-party campaign, yet without any links to the Ukip, more based on the economics than immigration and target swing voters, particularly the centre ones. On the other hand, Leave.EU team managed to take advantage of Bank’s financial and business background and mobilize his Bristol call centers to persuade people to vote for Brexit. They also created an impressive and challenging social media operation and targeted mainly Labour voters, people on the right of the Conservative Party and those who had never voted before (Shipman, 2017). In contrast with Vote Leave, the assumption of Leave.EU was that the centre voters would back Remain. Moreover, Bank’s vision was to run a Trump-style campaign by employing Trump’s strategy of deliberately making an outrageous claim to *“create as much noise as possible”* (Shipman, 2017). The campaign’s strategist, Wigmore, would highlight later such comments made by Banks or Farage on social media. He admitted in an interview that *“If people are outraged, you can do one of two things. You can ignore it and then it dies, or you can react and take it down, not apologize, but then see what the reaction is. When you take it down it’s like an admission of guilt, so you get the double hit with the press. Then you put it back up and get the treble hit(...). In some cases, within an hour, we would change a headline on Facebook or Twitter maybe five or six times, just to gauge the reaction. We were monitoring how many people looked and shared it, where it went, and reacted accordingly”* (Shipman, 2017).

With respect to ‘Vote Leave’s strategy, there were specific instructions inside the campaign on how to disrupt and disorientate the opponents. Cummings provided guidance to his colleagues and advised them to get in the enemy’s ‘OODA loop’. The term ‘OODA loop’ comes from the American military strategy and stands for ‘observe, orient, decide, and act’ (Boyd, 1995, Shipman, 2017). Based on this strategy, he urged



his team to take actions more quickly than the adversaries in order to operate in an unpredictable way and generate disorder and confusion to the opponents. Cummings had studied Thucydides, Clausewitz, Mao and other authors, philosophers and military leaders and was determined to run the Leave campaign following basic principles of psychological warfare. Due to his acquaintance with many people from the Downing Street and Remain campaign, he was also able to exploit the weak points of his enemies (Shipman, 2017). Subsequently, the head of strategy implemented two further plans in order to get publicity. First of all, despite the warnings of Health secretary team, he displayed the NHS logo on 'Vote Leave's leaflets and on the side of the campaign's bus. The second plan was related to Cummings' endeavour to neutralize the most influential business voice in United Kingdom, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). In November, the campaign team organized a protest at the CBI's annual conference and gained access to the event by creating a fake company. When Cameron prepared to make his speech, they raised placards writing 'CBI=Voice of Brussels'. Additionally, a month later 'Vote Leave' made its first overt 'ad hominem attack' to Cameron, when the newspapers published that the PM might lead the Brexit campaign in case his renegotiation with Brussels was unsuccessful. More specifically, the chiefs of 'Vote Leave' replied to newspaper journalists and referred to Cameron as 'toxic' on the issue of Leave campaign (Shipman, 2017).

In the designation battle between 'Leave.EU' and 'Vote Leave', a third outfit was added in December 2015, called the 'Grassroots Out' (GO) and was set up by Conservatives MPs, Peter Bone and Tom Purgslove. The aim of this organization was to argue for Brexit through small-scale campaign events in village halls, town squares and street stalls. Subsequently, GO and Leave.EU resolved to cooperate and they organized a series of big rallies which proved really successful and popular (Shipman, 2017). The new campaign group was called 'GO Movement Ltd'.

Eventually in April, the Electoral Commission declared that Vote Leave would be the official 'Out' campaign and immediately after their victory, Cummings and his team unveiled a new poster in order to launch the formal campaign. It could be asserted that this poster was part of their propaganda strategy as it promised for the first time to spend on the National Health System (NHS) the entire £350 million amount of Britain's weekly contribution to the EU.

## 1.b. 'Remain' Campaign

One of the most distinguished figures that is worth to be mentioned regarding the operation of 'In' campaign is Andrew Cooper. His professional background as a pollster and his significant role in 'Better Together', the cross-party campaign that won the Scottish Independence referendum, led to his recruitment.

Prior to Cameron's official announcement to hold an EU referendum, Cooper's company 'Populus' was hired in order to conduct opinion polls and make a 'segmentation analysis' dividing up the public into different groups of voters with respect to their attitudes towards Europe. As a result, he identified seven discrete groups, to which gave names and constructed their profile by depicting a typical member. The first two groups were called 'Ardent Internationalists' and 'Comfortable Europhiles' and were expected to vote to remain. Cooper also estimated that they accounted for 29 per cent of the population. 'Engaged Metropolitans' constituted a third smaller group, very active on social media, which was also likely to vote to stay. On the contrary, he found two groups, called 'Strong Sceptics' and 'EU hostiles', that were determined to support 'Brexit'. 'Strong Sceptics' were mainly white people, probably over fifty-five years old and with only a secondary education. They were generally Labour supporters with some obvious Ukip tendencies, accounting for 21 per cent of the population. 'EU Hostiles' were mainly retired people and Ukip voters, making up an 11 per cent and being informed of the news by the *Daily Mail*. However, Cooper's target would be the two following categories. The 'Disengaged Middle', who were at the age of thirties, well-educated, from middle-class and got informed from Facebook. According to Cooper, they were not interested in politics and knew little about European Union since they thought it had a rather small impact on their lives. The final and most important group "*encapsulated the rhetorical challenge the campaign faced*" (Shipman, 2017). They were called 'Hearts v Heads' and were two-thirds women, probably middle-aged, married or divorced with children and worked mainly part-time or in a low-paid job. They usually read newspapers and were concerned about the issue of Europe, which, however, regarded as a complex one and felt muddled and confused. The majority of them agreed with the statement "*My heart says we should leave the EU, but my head says it's not a good idea*". Subsequently, Cooper urged the importance of focusing mostly on those last groups upon his campaign team (Shipman, 2017).

Apart from Andrew Cooper, other driving forces constituted Will Straw, who was hired to run the operation and David Chaplin as media operator of the Remain campaign. Regarding the name of the campaign, they devised the emblematic red, white and blue ‘*Britain Stronger In Europe*’ logo. The full name was the result of market research. The word ‘Britain’ was substantial as it appealed to the patriotic vote, along with the three-coloured scheme. The expression ‘Stronger’ had a clear impact on Cooper’s focus groups and ‘Europe’ was essential for people to perceive what the campaign really defended. It is worth to be mentioned that the opponents abbreviated the name to ‘BSE’ – the acronym connected with ‘mad cow disease’, one of the worst periods of UK-EU relations in the 1990s – in order to offend and undermine the profile of ‘In’ campaign.

The campaign’s formal establishment required efficient cooperation with businesses and celebrities. Thus, the team recruited Gabe Winn to run the outreach work with business world, a well-known executive from the energy company Centrica, whose brother was a political producer in *Sky News*. Furthermore, ‘In’ campaign succeeded an extensive financial support by approaching investment banks and by getting Conservative donations (Shipman, 2017).

By the end of November, the ‘Stronger In’ had outlined and followed a specific strategy, all included in their plan-book called ‘war book’ or ‘messaging bible’. According to Cooper, they had written down the segmentation and underlined their strongest messages either in a sentence, paragraph or page. The aim was to concentrate on the two persuadable groups, the ‘Disengaged Middle’ and the ‘Heats v Heads’, which Cooper estimated through statistical analysis that were susceptible to economic risk arguments. The Remainers also identified that the opponents would counter them with arguments on immigration, sovereignty and cost that were regarded as ‘Stronger In’s weaknesses. For this reason, they conducted focus-groups sessions to test and evaluate their precise messages and the rebuttals in order to enrich the campaign planning (Shipman, 2017).

In pursuance of the appropriate board and chairman, ‘Stronger In’ ended up to Stuart Rose, the former Marks & Spencer’s chairman. Lucy Thomas admitted that “*Stuart was exactly what we needed as a chair to make the pragmatic, reasonable and patriotic case. He had run one of the best-loved British brands and had a reputation of being a highly successful businessman as well as nice, decent bloke. He was also Eurosceptic who was rightly critical of the way the EU worked and in favor of*

*significant reform*” (Shipman, 2017). Admittedly, the full membership of the campaign’s board was formed to demonstrate breadth and experience, joining in business, political, culture, education and military establishments. Subsequently, it was declared that the three former Prime Ministers – Sir John Major, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown – along with Sir Richard Branson, the most well-known businessman, were also backing the campaign.

Last but not least, ‘Stronger In’ decided to appoint James McGrory as a media operator to compete against ‘Vote Leave’s Paul Stephenson. The referendum battleground would be characterized by the clash of two of the most qualified spin doctors of their generation.

### **1.c. Labour In for Britain**

In the run-up to the referendum, along with the official ‘In’ and ‘Out’ campaigns, the Labour Party pronounced the formation of its own pro-EU campaign, separated from the ‘Stronger In’. The main reason of this attempt derived from the opinion of many Labour politicians that during the referendum of the Scottish Independence, campaigning alongside the Conservatives proved to be a mistake. According to their point of view, Labour’s involvement had a negative effect to their supporters and the party lost all but one of its Scottish seats in 2015’s elections. Nevertheless, Will Straw claimed that the establishment of a shared platform between Labours and Conservatives would benefit both of them to gain votes by showing economic credibility. Additionally, he underlined that an underfunded and isolated Labour campaign might not succeed to encourage Labour supporters to vote, especially in low-turnout areas. This would consequently undermine any efforts to keep the United Kingdom in the EU.

Notwithstanding Straw’s warnings, ‘*Labour In for Britain*’ was eventually launched by Alan Johnson. The new campaign used a memorable slogan called ‘JIGSI’, which stood for *jobs, investment, growth, security and influence* in the world (Shipman, 2017).

### **1.d. Conservatives for Britain**

The declaration of the EU referendum led to a civil war within the Conservative Party.

Prior to the designation of the official Brexit campaign, many eurosceptic MPs decided to be united in running their own campaigning organization. As a result, in June 2015, Steve Baker, a Tory MP, launched ‘Conservatives for Britain’ (CfB). Remarkably, the ‘guerrilla warfare’ strategy that Steve Baker devised played a decisive role in the referendum’s result. As soon as he became the chairman of CfB, he read and applied specific strategic plans described explicitly in the ‘*The Art of War*’ and ‘*The Thirty-Three Strategies of War*’ books. Baker gained the insight that all battles are won in the preparation and he deliberately used guerilla tactics against his own party leadership to succeed his aims (Shipman, 2017).

One of the first accomplishments of Baker’s ‘military’ campaign was to persuade the Electoral Commission to modify the wording of the referendum’s question. Taking as reference the cases of 1975 referendum and the Scottish plebiscite, the Eurosceptics believed that the Yes/No option on the ballot paper would benefit the ‘In’ campaign, since voting positively for the status quo seemed more attractive to people rather than voting ‘No’ (Shipman, 2017). Moreover, the importance of the question was demonstrated by the polling from ICM. More specifically, the results highlighted that when voters were asked “*Should the UK remain a member of the EU?*” 59 per cent answered ‘Yes’, while in the question “*Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?*” only 55 per cent chose to remain. Based on that evidence, Baker urged the Commission to conduct its own research and amend the original unbalanced question, where only the ‘Remain’ option was clarified.

The second victory of ‘Conservatives for Britain’ was associated with the timing of the referendum. Cameron and ministers identified the benefits of holding the referendum on 5 May, the day when the local elections in England, Scotland and Wales were also scheduled. The Eurosceptics considered that Conservatives might run a double-sided campaign, prompting the public to vote the Tories in council elections and ‘Remain’ in the referendum. Along with the Labour Party, who worried that this might cost them seats in the local elections, Baker’s team convinced the government to change the referendum date.

The most crucial battle was the third one that concerned the issue of ‘Purdah’. “*Purdah is the UK’s civil service term for the time between the formal start of an election campaign and the announcement of the results*” (Shipman, 2017, White, 2015). During that period, government executives and agents are not allowed to take actions or make

statements regarding the following election in order not to influence the voters. In the majority of British elections there is usually a *puddah* period of twenty-eight days. Cameron's government intended to omit *puddah* rules in the EU referendum campaign, claiming that it would affect government's dealings with Brussels and many ministers might face legal action in the case of a statement on the EU (Shipman, 2017).

'Conservatives for Britain' perceived that plan as an attempt by Cameron to deploy propaganda until polling day and accused the government of bending the rules for its own benefit<sup>25</sup>. Eventually, eurosceptic Conservatives cooperated with 'Vote Leave' and its research team to urge an amendment of the Referendum Bill. Due to the fact that Labour Party lined up with the SNP and the 'rebels', the amendment was ratified, constraining ministers and officials from making statements on the EU directly linked to the referendum.

Furthermore, 'Conservatives for Britain' played a vital role in Cameron's decision about neutralizing the Conservative Party on the issue of the referendum-campaign. More specifically, the Conservative board unanimously agreed in September that the party and its personnel would keep neutral stance and would not be involved in the campaigns. That decision was based on the fact that divisions might be created within the Party, since two thirds of the activists supported Brexit and were reluctant to side with Remain. The resolution had two practical consequences. Notably, the Remain campaign would not be able to exploit the £7 million amount permitted by the Electoral Commission. "*The equivalent of the entire budget of 'Vote Leave' was taken out of the Remain campaign by keeping the Conservative Party neutral*", admitted Baker (Shipman, 2017). Moreover, the Tory MPs would not be allowed to utilize their own canvassing data in order to target voters.

Two months later, an amendment to the Bill was passed by Labour and the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords to authorize the vote to sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds. Cameron, along with Baker's supporters, disapproved the plan. Despite the fact that it would benefit Labour in general elections, the Eurosceptics tried to avoid an influx of young people likely to vote 'Remain' (Shipman, 2017).

Last but not least, the main accomplishment of 'Conservatives for Britain' was to assure that the ministers would not be bound by collective responsibility. Cameron agreed to suspend cabinet collective responsibility during the referendum campaign

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<sup>25</sup> Why we MUSTN'T let No10 fix this vital vote, *Mail on Sunday*, 7 June 2015

and announced in January 2016 that “*There will be a clear government position, but it will be open to individual ministers to take a different personal position while remaining part of the government*” (Shipman, 2017). Remarkably, in a six-month period, ‘Conservatives for Britain’ executed efficiently Steve Baker’s *war* strategy (Shipman, 2017).

## 2. The Deal

It could be considered that Cameron's renegotiation was mainly characterized by deliberate manoeuvres and was not based on a long-planned strategy (Shipman, 2017). He had pledged to British people *fundamental* reform in 2014, and outlined that the main changes in UK and EU relationship would involve; tougher immigration controls – particularly for citizens of new EU member states, additional powers to national parliaments including the ability to veto proposed EU laws, a reduction in bureaucracy for businesses along with new free-trade agreements and a lessening of the influence of European Institutions on police and courts<sup>26</sup>. Consequently, the expectations of Eurosceptics had been raised.

Despite his initial determination, Prime Minister progressively moderated his demands from Brussels. This was particularly observed by Craig Oliver, Cameron’s director of Communications, who toughened government’s rhetoric in order to conceal this fact. Specifically in November 2015, when Cameron prepared to send a letter regarding additional details of his aims to the European Council’s president, Donald Tusk, Oliver briefed the newspapers that PM might side with Brexiters supposing that his demands were not met: “*If we can’t reach such an agreement... we will have to think again about whether this European Union is right for us*”<sup>27</sup>. However, after the letter was debated in the Commons, Eurosceptic MPS and journalists noticed that the requests had softened and sought to expose Cameron. This was notably illustrated in *Sun*’s article-headline ‘ARE EU KIDDING?’, while the *Mail* published a paper with the title ‘IS THAT IT, MR CAMERON?’ , explaining that the prime minister was “*in retreat over plans to strip benefits from EU migrant workers*”<sup>28</sup>.

In fact, the major media confrontation between Downing Street and Leave campaign

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<sup>26</sup> Ross, Tim “*David Cameron: my seven targets for a new EU*”, *The Daily Telegraph*. 15 March 2014

<sup>27</sup> PM could reject EU if it lends ‘deaf ear’, *Sunday Times*, 8 November 2015

<sup>28</sup> Is that It Mr Cameron?, *Daily Mail*, 11 November 2015

occurred in February, when the final deal was made, and shaped considerably the public views (Shipman, 2017). The last summit between Cameron and his EU partners was held on 18 February and the PM claimed to the reporters he was there to “*battle for Britain*”. After the 31-hour marathon of negotiation, Cameron emerged to declare his accomplishment: “*I believe we are stronger, safer, and better off inside a reformed EU, and that is why I will be campaigning with all my heart and soul to persuade the British people to remain*” (Shipman, 2017). The slogan ‘Stronger, Safer, Better off’ was a creation of Remain’s team, who included powerful emotional words in their script to persuade the electorate. However, the Eurosceptics agreed that Cameron did not reach their expectations and released an effective media barrage. Richard Tice, the ‘Leave.EU’ co-chairman, stated publicly that “*The prime minister promised half a loaf, begged for a crust and came home with crumbs*” (Shipman, 2017).

Cameron’s team realized that it would have big media coverage and asked ‘Stronger In’ digital group to organize a ‘Twitter war room’ with business leaders, MPs and other influential supporters advocating that PM had brought a good deal. Nevertheless, ‘Leave’ campaign’s reaction and preparedness weakened Remainers’ efforts. Their purposeful strategic approach succeeded in turning the print media into their natural allies focusing on what was missing from the final EU agreement. An opinion poll by ComRes shortly afterwards indicated that only 21 per cent of voters considered the deal to be good. Indeed, the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail* campaigned intensely for leaving the EU, while the *Daily Telegraph*, although it gave a fair hearing to Cameron, had links to Ukip which also backed Brexit. *The Times* and the *Sunday Times* were initially neutral but they eventually split; *The Times* for Remain and the second one for Leave. On the other hand, the *Guardian* and the *Independent* might support ‘Stronger In’ but their dwindling circulation, along with the kind of readers they addressed to, did not help Remainers to convince specific target-voters. Only *the Mail of Sunday* and the *Mirror* papers used to speak adequately on behalf of Remain. Furthermore, Oliver’s previous work experience in BBC allowed him to intervene in the main BBC television bulletins at 6 and 10 p.m. By calling the right correspondent or editor, he was able to alter the running order of the news or the tone of the coverage (Shipman, 2017).

The poor public and media reception for the deal led ultimately ‘Britain Stronger In Europe’ to remove it from their strategic playbook and promote instead their core messages. Due to the lack of efficient and persuasive solutions on immigration, the ‘Remain’ campaign decided to concentrate on economy and risk.



Finally, it should be mentioned that Brexit side gained significant advantage at that point, since six influential cabinet ministers resolved to back ‘Vote Leave’ for the final designation. Notably, the Secretary of State for Justice, Michael Gove, arrived together with the other five ministers at Westminster Tower after the cabinet meeting, signing a giant placard quoting ‘Let’s take back control’. They followed the instructions of ‘Vote Leave’ strategists, who concluded that having all of them with that big pledge wall would be a powerful image and an effective demonstration of strength (Shipman, 2017). In the same manner, another key figure from Conservative Party, Boris Johnson, decided to campaign to leave changing significantly the course of events across the political spectrum.

### 3. Project Fear

Having lost the support of the most influential MPs, David Cameron along with ‘Stronger In’ leaders sought to use alternative means to enhance the campaigning advantages of government.

The Prime Minister arranged personal meetings with MPs to secure they would side with Remain and ‘In’ campaign team tried to convince voters based on two main themes; the economy and security of Britain. Accordingly, they devised one positive message, the ‘*Stronger, Safer, Better Off*’ argument regarding the benefits of EU membership, and a negative one linked to a potential economic disaster: ‘*Don’t risk it. Leaving the EU would be a leap in the dark.*’ Remarkably, they also utilized the ‘testimonial’ technique to affect public’s opinion by publishing a letter from two hundred business leaders pointing out that “*leaving the EU would deter investment and threaten jobs. It would put the economy at risk*”<sup>29</sup>. The letter included the signatures of well-known companies such as British Telecom, Vodafone, Marks & Spencer and Kingfisher. Correspondingly, an additional formal letter was circulated, incorporating the views of thirteen retired military commanders warning that Britain should remain in the EU to protect itself from ‘*grave security threats*’, posed mainly by Russia and Islamic State (Shipman, 2017). ‘Stronger In’s endeavor to persuade the electorate was completed with a letter from NGO luminaries – including Action Aid, Oxfam, Christian Aid, Save the Children and the World Wildlife Fund – claiming that the EU

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<sup>29</sup> Brexit puts jobs at risk, say 200 business chiefs, *The Times*, 23 February 2016

membership assisted in fund efforts to deal with poverty in Africa and the humanitarian emergency in Syria (Shipman, 2017).

An issue arose when two of the army signatories accused obliquely the Remain campaign for applying propaganda. General Rose announced he had only asked to read the pro-European letter and had never endorsed it, while Lord Bramall admitted he was intimidated to sign it.<sup>30</sup> However, the PR offensive had an immediate effect on public's opinion, since the surveys conducted in early March put 'Remain' ahead of 'Leave' for the first time after two months (Shipman, 2017). Due to the effectiveness of that policy, 'Stronger In' followed the same approach and published further letters and articles from entrepreneurs, former NHS chiefs, former UN Secretaries General and former intelligence executive directors backing Remain. Notably, towards the end of May, they also issued an anti-Brexit letter signed by celebrities, which urged voters to support Britain's EU membership.

Leave campaign's respond to these establishment endorsements was to adopt a rebellious attitude towards the business world. Based on the fact that none of the enterprises backed Brexit, they tried to undermine the opponent's efforts by arguing that "*It's the establishment versus the real people*". This was an attempt to differentiate the concerns of ordinary people from those of business administrators. Moreover, the Eurosceptics sought to apply counterpropaganda, labeling any action and every intervention by Remainers as a part of 'Project Fear'. Accordingly, they accused the government for abusing its position, particularly in April, when it was announced that £9.3 million of taxpayers' money would be used for the production and distribution of pro-EU leaflets to every country's house. The Brexiters denounced it as 'Project Fear Propaganda' (Shipman, 2017).

It could be concluded that 'Vote Leave' had mainly their own words as an offensive weapon against the weight of the establishment. In line with this, Gove deployed an aggressive rhetoric, blaming the EU for inciting the rise of '*Hitler worshippers*' in Europe. Johnson also utilized the Nazi dictator as a rhetorical device but none of these attempts seemed to be really successful (Shipman, 2017). In this regard, they appeared to exploit the major authority figure - and the most respectful symbol across United Kingdom- Her Majesty the Queen. On 8 March, the *Sun* published a paper detailing an alleged quarrel between the monarch and –then deputy PM- Nick Clegg over Europe,

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<sup>30</sup> War hero felt pressured by No.10 into signing pro Europe letter, *The Telegraph*, 24 February 2016

claiming to him that “*the EU was heading in the wrong direction*” (Shipman, 2017). The article also revealed another case when the queen supposedly confessed to a group of parliamentarians, “I don’t understand Europe”<sup>31</sup>. Buckingham Palace denounced all the allegations, while Gove disclaimed responsibility for those reports. Nevertheless, the story helped Vote Leave eliminate Stronger In’s media domination for a week and thwarted any government’s plans to deploy the Queen for its own benefit (Shipman, 2017).

#### **4. Trade and Security; Barack Obama’s visit**

The competition between the two opposing sides began to intensify as the day of the plebiscite approached. ‘Stronger In’ confuted constantly all Brexiters’ arguments about which country Britain would most closely resemble after Brexit, regarding its trade relationship with European Union. Norway was one of their first suggestions due to the fact that it was a member of a single market without being an EU member. However, the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement involved complying with EU rules without having the ability to set them, accepting the free movement of people and contributing to the EU budget. Another possible option was Switzerland, which was a member of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) and had signed many different bilateral treaties with the European Union. That case suggested though that Britain should negotiate numerous separate agreements with the EU for various goods and services. Boris Johnson also proposed that Britain could make a deal like the Canadians based on trade with no tariffs (Shipman, 2017). David Cameron responded immediately, tweeting that such a plan would mean seven or more years of uncertainty. Although the Remain campaign advocated that ‘Vote Leave’ could not find an alternative solution in the case of Brexit, Michael Gove insisted that there was a free trade zone extending from Ireland to Turkey that all European countries have access to, regardless of whether they are members of the EU or the Eurozone. He pointed out that since countries such as Bosnia, Serbia, Ukraine and Albania were part of that free trade area, under no circumstances would Britain be excluded. Stronger In’s team seized on Gove’s assertion that Britain should emulate Albania – a rather small and impoverished country – and texted the journalists to present it as a blunder (Shipman,

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<sup>31</sup> Revealed: Queen Backs Brexit, *Sun*, 8 March 2016

2017). It could be claimed that there was an attempt by Remain side to use propaganda, in order to undermine the arguments of Eurosceptics, by reproducing only a part of what Gove had stated.

It was essential for Brexit supporters to reconstruct their arguments concerning the single market, especially ahead of a rather hard week for the campaign because of Barack Obama's arrival. A visit from the President of the U.S. had been included in government's agenda already since Cameron called the referendum, and the Queen's ninetieth birthday celebrations in April would constitute the ideal cover for a visit to United Kingdom by America's first family (Shipman, 2017). Remarkably, Downing Street prepared the ground for Obama's narrative just the day before with a letter to *The Times* from eight former US Treasury Secretaries. They warned that a possible withdrawal from the EU would constitute a 'risky bet', explaining that "*If Britain exits, it should not take for granted its global primacy when it is no longer the gateway to Europe*" (Shipman, 2017). On the other side, Brexiters had sent a letter to the US ambassador a month earlier, urging Obama not to be engaged in the EU debate because his intervention might undermine the 'validity' of the referendum's result.

Additionally, Boris Johnson published an article in the *Sun* based on 2009 reports, presenting evidence that President's foreign policy pivoted away from Europe. More specifically, he highlighted that one of the first Obama's actions as president was to return to the British embassy a bust of Winston Churchill which stood in the Oval Office (Shipman, 2017). Eurosceptics were apparently aware of the fact that any Obama's statement might influence the voters and thus tried to undermine his credibility.

Cameron and Obama arrived for the press conference after 5 p.m., deliberately timed before *The Six O'Clock News*. The President started his speech declaring that, "*This is a decision for the people of the United Kingdom to make*" and underlined that he was not there to "*fix any votes*". Nonetheless, when he continued on the trade deal, Obama hardened his rhetoric warning the British people that "*they would get no special favors from the United States*" and argued using the sentence: "*The UK is going to be in the back of the queue*". Notably, it was widely observed that the U.S. President used an American phrase – 'In' the back, instead of 'at' the back – followed by the English word 'queue', where he would instinctively have used 'line' instead (Shipman, 2017). Obama's speech could be considered as the best moment for Remain camp as it invalidated all Brexiters' claims that if Britain left the EU, it would be helped by its

closest ally and would be put at the top of the list for a bilateral free-trade deal. It should be noted that ‘Stronger In’ realized that the media would comment upon the queue/line aspect and tried to downplay any suggestion of collusion. In particular, Craig Oliver stressed to journalists that *“This is the leader of the free world. He is not some puppet we can get parroting what we want”* (Shipman, 2017). However, the enraged Eurosceptics sought to refute the president’s statements, pointing out that Obama would not be president at the time a trade deal was negotiated. In the absence of any effective rebuttal, some of them also used a populist rhetoric. For example, Justice Minister Dominic Raab demonstrated that British people would not be blackmailed by anyone, while Ukip MEP Patrick O’Flynn tweeted: *“What has Dave got lined up next? Invite Angela Merkel over to say she will invade us if we vote “Leave”?”* (Shipman, 2017).

Brexit campaigners were confident that Obama’s intervention would have no impact on the public. Their judgment was confirmed later by polls showing no boost for ‘Stronger In’. On the contrary, three of the five polls conducted after Obama’s visit put Leave ahead. Stronger In’s attempts to promote Britain’s place in the world, relying merely on third-party endorsements and well-known foreign figures, proved unsuccessful and was viewed by voters as ‘patronizing’ (Shipman, 2017). Moreover, Cameron’s repeated efforts to demonstrate that the UK was safer in an interconnected system also failed, based on the following events.

The *Sunday Times* published on 8 May a warning from the former heads of MI5 and MI6, Jonathan Evans and Sir John Sawers, that leaving the EU could damage intelligence sharing and might undermine UK’s ability to protect itself from terrorists. On the same day, Downing Street sent out to newspapers a briefing with parts of the speech Cameron was expected to make the following day, regarding how the EU had helped maintain the peace in Europe since 1945 (Shipman, 2017). It was accompanied by a video of four veterans of the Second World War speaking emotionally about why they did not want to see the unity they had fought for disintegrated. Both endeavors were an appeal to fear and emotion, however, they brought undesirable results and caused a media frenzy. Cameron’s speech was seen as another example of Fear because it implied that a vote for Brexit might lead to war. The *Sun*’s headline the next morning read: *“BREXIT could see Europe descend into World War Three, David Cameron will say today”*, while in the *Times*’ front page was written, *“Brexit will raise risk of world war, PM claims”* (Shipman, 2017). Consequently, the ‘World War Three’

speech – as it became known – damaged Cameron’s credibility and also overshadowed the rest of the argument points on security theme.

## **5. Budget and Economic Arguments**

In the run-up to the budget, the government decided to apply some new economic measures, particularly designed to appease the middle-England voters that Cameron and Osborne wished to ‘gain’ ahead of the referendum. More specifically, it was announced that the tax-free allowance for income tax would be raised to £11,500 and the tax threshold from £40,000 to £45,000 (Shipman, 2017). However, the new fiscal measures were based on cuts to disability benefit, which was given to 600,000 people with long-term health problems. Ian Duncan Smith, the secretary of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), was irritated that benefit cuts were used as an offset against tax cuts for the middle class. Many Tory MPs complained as well, and urged Osborne to reconsider, but Downing Street demanded that the DWP defend the cuts. As a result, Duncan Smith decided to resign by sending a letter and a resignation statement to the media (Shipman, 2017). He claimed in the letter that the government reneged on Osborne’s promise that ‘We are all in this together’ implying that the Chancellor was more interested in numbers than people. The following day, he appeared to *The Andrew Marr Show* – where initially Sir John Major would appear to make the case for the Remain campaign – and gave an impassionate speech. He explained his decision and articulated his feelings and concerns for the disabled, while he confirmed that his stance was irrelevant with the issue of Europe. Nonetheless, Duncan Smith supported Brexit and the Downing Street considered his resignation as an intended attempt to calumniate them (Shipman, 2017).

Regardless of his initial motivation, Duncan Smith’s attack had a serious impact on Osborne. The success of the Remain campaign relied on convincing people to trust their economic arguments, yet the reputation of the main advocate of that policy was damaged.

Nevertheless, during May, the two opposing sides entered into a new debate on trade and economy, in which ‘Stronger In’ declared victory. Gove stated explicitly in an interview to BBC that United Kingdom should be out of the single market. The fact that Vote Leave’s chairman declared that Britain should not be a part of a free trade area of five hundred million people, where the country did more than 40% of its

business, helped Remain campaign to achieve the first goal of its strategy and raise the sense of economic risk around Brexit. Osborne argued to the media that “*leaving the largest free trade area in the world (...) would be catastrophic for the people’s jobs, their incomes and their livelihoods*” (Shipman, 2017).

‘Stronger In’ was determined to follow the same strategic playbook that led to victory in the Scottish referendum. The first part of their operation plan was to publish reports by the Treasury on the dangers of Brexit, while the second one involved deploying third-party endorsements to support Osborne’s case about the risks of leaving the EU. The chancellor was well connected with key players because he had been for six years on the top table of many international finance events. One of the key figures that were deployed was Christine Lagarde, the head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF regarded Brexit as a high risk in the latest World Economic Outlook that downgraded the forecasts for economic growth in Britain, while Maurice Obstfeld, the organization’s chief economist, declared that “*a Brexit would do severe regional and global damage*”. In line with these statements, David Cameron tweeted “*The IMF is right – leaving the EU would pose major risks*” (Shipman, 2017). On the other hand, ‘Vote Leave’ seized on these warnings and ominous forecasts and used them as evidence that the chancellor and the Prime Minister intended to ‘*talk down Britain*’, a theme that would sway the voters.

Moreover, Osborne circulated a two hundred page document detailing the long term economic risks in case of Brexit. Admittedly, the word ‘risk’ had penetrated into the British people’s subconscious, since the Remainers used it repeatedly. Osborne’s paper included particular statistics showing that Britain would be poorer by 2030, costing each UK household £4,300, if the public decided to leave the EU. However, the statistical data were ambiguous and misleading. The figure of £4,300 per household had resulted from dividing the total loss of a GDP by the number of households without a reference to actual family incomes. Additionally, the amount was based on the number of households in 2015 and not on how many they were expected to be in 2030. Brexiters released a rebuttal of that Treasury’s analysis document explaining that the £4,300 figure meant a growth to the sum of households, from twenty-seven million in 2015 to more than thirty-one million in 2030, much of it originated from immigration (Shipman, 2017). According to Eurosceptics, these projections failed to

consider new trade deals with countries outside the EU and also indicated that the government would break its promise to reduce net migration<sup>32</sup> (Riley-Smith, 2016). Despite the fact that the Treasury's report received a lot of criticism, it got a big broadcast coverage and helped 'Stronger In' dominate the media for a week. Will Straw admitted that "*numbers are the most compelling way*" to get coverage and public's interest (Shipman, 2017). Remarkably, Brexiters believed they were losing on the economy and decided to neutralize it as an issue. At the same time, they had great difficulty raising funds for the campaign, since most of the potential donors came under huge pressure from Cameron's allies not to give any money (Shipman, 2017). The Remain side was committed to its strategic plan and deployed one of the most trusted voices on the economy to address the public regarding the risks of Brexit. That key figure was the governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, who gave a speech in front of a House of Lords Select Committee warning that Brexit could cause higher inflation and lower growth, which would inevitably lead the City of London to lose its place as one of the greatest financial centers in the world (Shipman, 2017). Nigel Farage realized that Cameron and Osborne were running a referendum campaign based on negativity – exactly the same approach followed in the Scottish referendum and the general election. He argued that there was not given a single good reason why people should vote to stay in the EU. Conversely, Leave campaign advocated that "Britain is going to be stronger, safer, better, more global" outside the EU, which was an uplifting message (Shipman, 2017).

By the beginning of May, 'Stronger In' was convinced that it was the outright winner of the economy debate. They had demonstrated that the Brexiters wanted to withdraw from the single market and had won the support of almost every major international economic institution. They had also released a memorable figure referring to the scale of economic risk and managed to draw media's attention. However, towards the end of the month, Cooper's tracking polls put Remain behind proving that the voters were very skeptical about the campaign's messages. There was evidence that people could not evaluate if their arguments were true because they did not understand economy and made no connection between lower growth and less money for the public services (Shipman, 2017). Cooper concluded that the public could not perceive the damage

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<sup>32</sup> Ben Riley-Smith, "EU referendum: George Osborne says tax hike needed to cover £36bn Brexit black hole", *The Telegraph*, 18 April 2016



Britain's economy would suffer and proposed they explained in simple terms their claims. He also observed that their interventions were heavily focused on risk – Treasury, IMF, Carney, prices – and advised his team to reinforce more the “Stronger, safer and better off” message. As a result, David Cameron appeared in his second television debate on *Question Time* and followed Cooper's first advice explaining comprehensively to the audience that “*a hit to the economy would mean less money for the NHS and other public services*” (Shipman, 2017).

Nevertheless, a second problem emerged for ‘Stronger In’, when the polling and the focus groups showed that the electorate was reluctant to believe any report by the Treasury, including the £4,300 per household figure, which was too specific to be believable. Coetzee pointed out that those bold assertions about the future undermined and invalidated the campaign's claims that a Brexit vote would lead to uncertainty. Moreover, the economy-risk arguments were delivered by Cameron and Osborne, who both faced credibility problems – the Prime Minister because of the deal and the World War III speech and the chancellor due to the budget debacle (Shipman, 2017). There was also an attempt by ‘Stronger In’ to change the course and advocate a more positive message but the media started to lose interest in the economic arguments. Eventually, the campaign decided to concentrate heavily on immigration (Shipman, 2017).

Concerning the Brexit side, Vote Leave insisted on their statement that the £350 million that Britain sent per week to Brussels would be better spent within the country. The team's particular logo had been emblazoned on the campaign bus and it was attached to almost every email sent by the campaign. Leave side wanted to make an important point about the money and undermine Osborne's economic-risk offensive strategy. However, the rebate money never left Britain, so it was inaccurate to claim that the country ‘*sent*’ £350 million every week to EU. ‘Stronger In’ accused ‘Vote Leave’ of promoting that message “*even though it was a straightforward lie and it was exposed*”. On the other hand, Cummings supported that “*every time there was a row about the size of the cost to taxpayers of EU membership, it simply reinforced in voters' minds that there was a high cost*” (Shipman, 2017). Focus groups interaction proved that the people were influenced by numbers.

In conclusion, Remain campaigners praised themselves for winning the economy debate in an environment of ‘post-truth politics’, while Brexit side continued on telling voters that their money was wasted in the EU. In any case, Stephenson admitted that if a citizen was asked about the EU, they would argue that it costed hundred million

pounds per week and – although some of it returned to UK – most of it ended up in Greece (Shipman, 2017).

## **6. Ad Hominem Attacks and Immigration Issue**

In April, the so-called Panama Papers were released, which are million leaked documents with detailed financial information for offshore entities. The government seemed to be in a fortunate position, since none of the cabinet's serving members were included. However, the BBC's *Panorama* revealed that Blairmore Holdings, a company owned by Cameron's late father, used Mossack Fonseca, the Central American corporation responsible for these documents. After incessant public pressure to disclose details about his finances, the Prime Minister published extensive information about his tax return. Nonetheless, his document also unveiled the amount of £300,000 inheritance Cameron received from his father and £200,000 cash he accepted from his mother as a supplement to that inheritance. The press pointed out that the sum might not be liable to inheritance tax and assumed that the money could have come from Blairmore. The way media handled that issue aroused voters' suspicion about the Prime Minister's financial activities. 'Vote Leave' seized on that incident and posted a video on Facebook, saying in effect, "*David Cameron has been fiddling his taxes for years, how can you trust him in Europe?*" (Shipman, 2017).

Cameron complained to 'Leave' campaigners about the viral video and the implications he was lying about his tax arrangements, and asked them to avoid ad hominem attacks. Although Boris Johnson agreed, he gave an interview for the *Sunday Times* and the *Sun on Sunday* the following day, personally attacking David Cameron, George Osborne and Theresa May for failing to keep their pledge and secure a deal with Brussels that only EU migrants with a job could enter Britain. Downing Street was hugely irritated by Johnson's line and urged the Prime Minister to wage a counterattack, especially on Leave's official spokesmen, Gove and Johnson, who were gaining credibility and authority. However, Cameron was reluctant from the beginning to be involved in a quarrel with another Conservative (Shipman 2017).

In mid-May, the 'Vote Leave' campaign decided to pursue a more aggressive policy. Cummings stated repeatedly to his team that "*If you want to win this campaign, you have to hit David Cameron on the combined subjects of money, the NHS and immigration. What we are going to talk about in the campaign is 350 million quid,*

*immigration, Turkey*” (Shipman, 2017). It should be noted that those key messages were already included in parts of the campaign that Cummings was responsible for, such as the viral videos, the leaflets and social media advertising. Additionally, the *Sunday Telegraph* published on 15 May an interview, in which Boris Johnson compared the European Commission’s endeavor to form a superstate with Hitler’s Third Reich. He pointed out that the European Union constitutes an attempt to unite Europe under a single government by simply using different methods from Hitler and other people who also had the same aim. His statements caused uproar and the pro-European politician, Michael Heseltine, appeared on television to denounce Boris for making those “preposterous, obscene” claims. George Osborne was convinced that Boris Johnson was the most effective and persuasive voice within Vote Leave, hence they should undermine his credibility. On the other hand, Cummings vowed to provide stories to emphasize the Tory civil war. Moreover, he persuaded Gove and Johnson to continue the ad hominem attacks, especially after a story published by the *Sun*, revealing that the ‘Remain’ campaign was spreading false rumors about a sex scandal, in which supposedly Boris Johnson’s wife was also involved. That was used as evidence to the Conservative politician that the opponents would do anything to destroy him personally (Shipman, 2017).

A significant moment for ‘Vote Leave’ was the day when the latest immigration figures were disclosed. More specifically, towards the end of May, it was published that net migration had reached 330,000 during 2015, nearly half of it coming from other EU countries. Remarkably, that number exceeded the upper limit of the government’s ‘*tens of thousands*’ plan. In addition, the government had concealed some HRMC immigration statistics, which, however, appeared in the front page of many national newspapers. Subsequently, Johnson did plenty of television and radio interviews, stating that he supported immigration but he argued about control and democracy. Along with Gove, he also wrote a letter which was published by the *Sunday Times* under the headline ‘*Boris and Gove lash Cameron on immigration*’. The main section of the letter read: “*Voters were promised repeatedly at elections that net immigration could be cut to the tens of thousands. This promise is plainly not achievable as long as the UK is a member of the EU and the failure to keep it is corrosive of public trust in politics*” (Shipman, 2017). Although they did not want to insult the Prime Minister, the press regarded their intervention as a ‘direct challenge to David Cameron’s authority’ (Shipman, 2017). Furthermore, the Conservative MP Priti

Patel wrote to the *Sunday Telegraph*, accusing Cameron and Osborne of being too wealthy to understand people's concern about immigration. Eventually, those blue-on-blue attacks allowed the media to relinquish Stronger In's economic warnings and develop a completely new narrative.

In June, Brexiters decided to issue their first policy regarding the control of immigration. Gove and Johnson demonstrated that a post-Brexit government would adopt a points-based system for immigration, following the example of Australia. They announced that migrants would be prohibited from entering Britain unless they had the right qualifications and a good command of English language. They also pointed out that the scale of immigration had put 'strain' on public services, and if Britain remained in the EU, the waiting lists would lengthen and the class sizes would rise (Shipman, 2017). 'Stronger In' tried to issue a response based on facts and argued that the Australian points-based system actually allowed the entry of a higher number of people compared to its population than the current British system for non-EU migrants. Implanting the idea of an 'alternative' government in journalists' minds was Paul Stephenson's sole aim when he suggested the policy proposals. In mid-June, Vote Leave released a 'roadmap' of six new laws that they would introduce in the case of Brexit. The scheme included legislation regarding the withdrawal from the 1972 European Communities Act, a special Finance Bill to deduct VAT from household fuel, a Free Trade Bill, an NHS Funding Bill to channel the extra money to the NHS, an Asylum and Immigration Control Bill and, last but not least, an Emergency Provisions Bill to cease the supremacy of the European Court of Justice and remove from the UK all those EU citizens '*whose presence is not conducive to the public good*'. The glut of the announcements immediately attracted media's attention (Shipman, 2017).

At the time Gove and Johnson began to act like a government in waiting, the formal *puddah* period had started. Thus, the real government could not provide further support to the Remain campaign. From that point onwards, the civil service was forbidden from doing anything that could affect the result of the referendum and both campaigns could only spend £7 million each to run their operation (Shipman, 2017). That also meant that Stronger In could no longer have access to government reports or get advice from officials. Conversely, the start of *puddah* constituted a perfect moment and a key turning point for Leave campaigners. Matthew Elliott admitted that they gained a competitive advantage during the *puddah* period, since they were able to determine the

*broadcast* agenda and the BBC offered more balanced coverage to both sides.

It was acknowledged that ‘Vote Leave’ chose the most appropriate time to give weight to the immigration issue. The point that *purdah* came into effect, immigration was in the center of the public debate and plenty of postal votes were sent to British households. In particular, ‘Leave’ campaign delivered a hundred million leaflets and sent half a billion advertisements digitally (Shipman, 2017). Admittedly, Downing Street and ‘Stronger In’ considered the economy, public services, the cost of the EU and immigration as separate issues, while ‘Vote Leave’ managed to fuse them into one campaigning issue.

Before the publication of the ‘corrosive of public trust’ letter, Brexiters had printed a new poster which illustrated footsteps walking through an open door shaped like passport, with the slogan *‘Turkey (Population Seventy-Six Million) is joining the EU’* (Shipman, 2017). Additionally, Penny Mordaunt underlined that the entry of Turkey into Europe might pose threats to Britain’s security due to the fact that Turkey is a country with a high crime rate and *“the government will not be able to exclude Turkish criminals from entering the UK”* because of the free movement laws of European Union. She also claimed – inaccurately – that Britain could not veto Turkish accession. Cameron called Mordaunt’s assertions *“absolutely wrong”* and his team accused ‘Vote Leave’ of lying particularly on the grounds that Turkey would join the EU.

Subsequently, the Prime Minister proceeded in a provocative statement, risking a diplomatic incident. He affirmed that Turkey is not expected to join the EU any time soon, since they applied in 1987 and *“at the current rate of progress they will probably get round to joining in about the year 3000”* (Shipman, 2017).

Despite the criticism, ‘Leave’ campaign continued to promote the Turkish issue because it had a clear influence on voters. Ryan Coetzee reprovved Brexiters for using mendacious propaganda in an environment where feelings of distrust and xenophobia were fueling populist movements across the West. Correspondingly, ‘Stronger In’ members believed they should also provide a solid answer to voters regarding immigration. Coetzee suggested that there should be a package of measures proposals to alleviate the impact of immigration especially on the impoverished areas and their overstretched public services. However, ‘Stronger In’ did not want to place too much emphasis on the matter since, according to Andrew Cooper’s polling, the economic risk would overshadow the immigration issue. The pollster had conducted ‘regression analysis’, examining the explanatory power of various words, phrases and policies. He

concluded that arguments on immigration had little influence on voters and people who were determined to vote 'Leave' because of immigration, they would not reverse their decision.

## **7. Breaking Points; Jo Cox's Murder**

On 16 June, a week before the referendum day, the Labour MP, Jo Cox, was attacked and murdered in the middle of the street. Based on the testimony of witnesses, the media reported that the perpetrator had yelled "Britain First" when he attacked her. Two days later, the 52-year-old Thomas Mair, who had links to an American-Neonazi group, the National Alliance, was arrested and charged with the murder. When he appeared at the Court and asked to confirm his name, he replied "*my name is death to traitors, freedom for Britain*" (Shipman, 2017).

The House of Commons was recalled for a day to pay tributes to Jo Cox, while Cameron cancelled the biggest Remain rally in Gibraltar, where he was due to appear in front of 15,000 people. Brexiters also cancelled a rally in Birmingham and suspended the operation of 'Vote Leave'. Admittedly, there was wide concern among those people involved in the campaigns about whether the Labour MP was murdered due to her views for Brexit and whether her death would affect the referendum's outcome.

Subsequently, 'Stronger In' sent an email to invite volunteers to take part in a conference call. The email also appeared in one of Vote Leave's fake accounts and two senior staff managed to join in the conference, where Will Straw argued that "*people have been pulled up short by Jo Cox's death. It is now time to make a very positive case for why we want to be in the European Union*", and "*call out the other side for what they have done to stir division and resentment in the UK*" (Shipman, 2017). A transcript of his speech was leaked to *Day Telegraph* and it was claimed that 'Stronger In' was exploiting the MP's death. Moreover, Steve Baker advised his colleagues in Leave campaign not to respond to Remainers' attacks or make public statements regarding the murder of Jo Cox (Shipman, 2017).

On the other hand, Nigel Farage was subjected to severe criticism because of a provocative poster about immigration, which he had unveiled a few hours before Cox was killed. It depicted a long stream of migrants standing at the Croatian-Slovenian borders under the slogan 'Breaking Point'. When the poster was first released on the

advertising vans, it had attracted minor interest. After the incident though, it became the centre of public debate about whether the Ukip leader was inciting racial hatred, and whether that feeling had fuelled both Cox's murder and Leave's lead in the opinion polls. Farage's initial plan was to launch six separate posters during the last week, and that was the first one. Both Michael Gove and Boris Johnson condemned the action and tried to deter him from publishing the rest of those posters. Farage handled the issue based on the instructions of Bank's campaign strategist, Andy Wigmore, who noted that the Ukip leader *"did not apologize for the poster, he apologized for the timing of the poster – and that set the whole news cycle going again"* (Shipman, 2017). Admittedly, that was another tactic to keep the immigration issue in the headlines. The immediate perception in both the media and the campaigns was that Jo Cox's killing would benefit the Remain side. Leave campaigners believed that the 'Breaking Point' poster *'had offended polite opinion'* and they would be affected by association (Shipman, 2017). However, Henry De Zoete had conducted focus groups discussion and reported back to 'Vote Leave' that people did not accuse Brexit campaign for her death. In the final days, polls indicated a small lead for Remain which might have given a false comfort to 'Stronger In', since many voters were reluctant to admit to pollsters they were backing Brexit after Cox's murder (Shipman, 2017).

## **8. Debating Points**

It was commonly admitted that both campaigns had deployed the most structured minds and the best political communicators in Britain to help them build an effective strategy during the debate-battles for Brexit.

Leave campaigners' success was based to a great extent on Brett O'Donnell's assistance and guidance. O'Donnell – also known as the 'candidate whisperer' – had cooperated with George W. Bush in 2004 elections and prepared Mitt Romney for his 2012 debate with Obama. He explained to Vote Leave's team that debates are 'messaging opportunities' because people are given the chance to influence the public by using the campaign's most effective lines. In the first meeting of the group, O'Donnell created a messaging document and provided instruction to his colleagues on how to respond to Remain's attacks, while in the second preparation session, he arranged a practice debate with some of staff playing the Remain side (Shipman, 2017). Their own attacks and offensive arguments were scripted.

On the other hand, Craig Oliver advised Cameron not to engage in a face-to-face debate, especially with Johnson and Gove. Instead, he arranged for the Prime Minister three solo appearances, one of which included to share the same platform with Nigel Farage and face the audience's questions. Notably, in summer 2015, the Ukip leader had negotiated with ITV executives to appear in one of the program's debates. Although 'Vote Leave' won the designation, ITV did not change its decision. Nevertheless, the fact that Cameron would have to confront with Nigel Farage did not concern Craig Oliver, who regarded the Ukip leader to be an easy opponent and a referendum vote-loser (Shipman, 2017).

Cameron's first media appearance was on 3 June, when he was interviewed by the political editor of *Sky News*, Faisal Islam. The interview would be followed by an audience question-and-answer session. To Cameron's evident surprise, Islam appeared to be sarcastic, asking the Prime Minister "*What comes first? World War III, or the global Brexit recession?*". Cameron, who was reduced to calling his interviewer "*glib*", found himself in an even more uncomfortable position in Q&A, when a literature student accused him of using 'scaremongering' as a way to win votes. According to journalists and campaign's spin doctors, it was a bruising encounter, which also proved the depth of anti-EU feeling in Britain.

The following evening, Michael Gove was due to appear in the same program and Brett O'Donnell helped him to prepare. He put Gove under pressure by testing him repeatedly with any possible question and interrupting him during the practice interview. Brett O'Donnell explained to the politician that every question was a chance to convey his messages. He also interviewed him about his personal life and urged him to seize on the fact that Euroscepticism grounded in his own past. In his *Sky* appearance, Gove proved to be sharp-witted by making astute turns of phrase and relentlessly advocating 'take back control'. He also followed O'Donnell's advice and made a reference to personal experiences stating to the audience that his father "*had a fishing business in Aberdeen destroyed by the European Union and the Common Fisheries Policy*". When Faisal Islam questioned the existence of the free-trade area, which Gove hoped Britain would join after Brexit, stressing the fact that there was no relevant website, Gove won applause by replying, "*Most of the people in this audience don't have their own personal website. I don't doubt that they exist*" (Shipman, 2017).

Subsequently, Gove was asked why more businesses and financial institutions were not backing Leave. He avoided to provide a direct response and tried to change the subject



of the question by answering, *“I think the people of this country have had enough of experts...I’m afraid it’s time to say, ‘You’re fired!’”*, which proved to be his most memorable line. Although he deliberately committed a logical fallacy, his answer had a positive impact on the voters. Gove’s performance – unlike Cameron’s – exceeded expectations and constituted a key moment in the campaign.

On 7 June, the performances of Cameron and Farage would be judged against each other but the two party leaders would not appear on stage together. The Ukip leader had recruited a team of advisers to help him craft his arguments. However, Farage faced a difficult situation in front of the ITV audience, especially when a young black woman blamed him on his anti-immigration rhetoric, which might increase the fear and discrimination of Black British people. She asked him whether he was encouraging racism and Farage appeared to be nervous defending himself as a supporter of the Commonwealth. It was a heated encounter but the Ukip leader admitted later that they would not gain more votes if he suddenly deployed a different rhetoric and gave the wrong impression of being a social democrat (Shipman, 2017). Cameron benefited from the fact that he appeared second in the ITV program and handled the public’s questions more comfortably than the last time, even though he faced severe criticism particularly on his ‘tens and thousands’ immigration pledge (Shipman, 2017).

Two days later, the two opposing campaigns were prepared for the first three-way debate. After a long period of avoiding blue-on-blue attacks, ‘Stronger In’ decided to follow a different approach and place an all-female line-up to challenge Boris Johnson and deploy ad hominem attacks against him. ITV had separately approached the Scottish minister, Nicola Sturgeon, whose debate performances during the previous general elections had attracted media’s attention. Labour Party appointed the shadow leader of the Commons, Angela Eagle. The team was completed with the appointment of a Conservative MP, the energy secretary Amber Rudd. According to Oliver, Johnson would face difficulty in tackling the assaults from three female politicians during a ninety-minute debate. However, Johnson would be also surrounded by two women, the Labour MP Gisela Stuart and Andrea Leadsom, who was Rudd’s deputy at the Department of Energy and Climate Change (Shipman, 2017).

In preparation sessions, ‘Stronger In’ practiced a role-playing debate and tested attack lines in order to interact and properly coordinate their moves. An additional advantage for ‘Remain’ campaigners was the assistance that Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair’s old spin doctor, rendered to the team. He advised them on how to deal with the hostile

press and how to communicate their strategy through the debate. Moreover, he pointed out that they should always think about the rebuttal on every opponent's response. On the other hand, O'Donnell urged Jonson, Leadsom and Stuart to give weight on the important arguments and address the audience while answering each question. He advised them not to react to any provocation and repeat constantly the campaign's line 'Take back control'. Remarkably, he also encouraged all three candidates to humanize each issue and present themselves to the public as people and not merely as politicians. Leadsom was advised to refer to her experience as a businesswoman and a mother, while the German-born Stuart decided to incorporate in her answers the fact that she was a mother, a grandmother, as well as an immigrant. They did practice debates for hours, with the two female politicians intervening to halt any attacks on Johnson (Shipman, 2017).

The ITV show was the biggest live debate on the EU referendum. It was characterized by Vote Leave's teamwork and message discipline but Remainers' performance got the headlines. Boris Johnson came under sustained attack by the three Remain women during the televised debate. Amber Rudd accused the lead figure in Brexit campaign of being motivated by personal leadership ambitions, saying that "*I fear that the only number Boris is interested in is Number 10*". In her closing remarks, she made a point of disparaging her Tory colleague. "*As for Boris, he is the life and soul of the party but he's not the man you want driving you home at the end of the evening*", Rudd claimed. On the other hand, Johnson accused Stronger In of scaremongering and negativity. He also defended and justified the £350 million figure, which Sturgeon called a 'whopper', while Eagle urged him to remove it from Vote Leave's bus. Throughout the debate, Johnson tried to keep his composure and confirmed to the voters that Britain would "*prosper as never before*" out of the European Union. Furthermore, Stuart used her "*I am an immigrant*" line during the conversation on immigration, which worked perfectly according to Stephenson (Shipman, 2017).

The Remain side was satisfied with the outcome of the ITV debate. Will Straw recalled, "*If we weren't careful, this would be Boris Johnson moment. We preferred to be huge ranking over an attack on his character, rather than whatever he was trying to get across*" (Shipman, 2017). Leave side felt relieved that Johnson did not respond to their ad hominem attacks, believing that Boris was the most popular politician in Britain and the Remain team's offensive attitude would have the exact opposite effect. Indeed, Ryan Coetzee did focus-group sessions and concluded that the verbal assaults

were counterproductive. More specifically, the undecided/persuadable voters, who constituted the Remain campaign's target, did not like the personal attacks. As a result, Stronger In decided to adopt a different policy in the BBC debate at Wembley (Shipman, 2017).

Cameron's last broadcast appearance was on the BBC's *Question Time EU Special*. The most significant moment was when a member from the audience referred to Prime Minister's renegotiation and claimed that the deal was not legally binding. The questioner compared Cameron to a "21st-century Neville Chamberlain" and asked the Prime Minister how he could make pledges based on that deal, when in fact "a dictatorship in Europe can overrule it" (Shipman, 2017). Cameron responded with passion, citing Winston Churchill: "At my office I sit two yards away from the cabinet room where Winston Churchill decided in May 1940 to fight on against Hitler. The best and greatest decision perhaps anyone has made in our country. He didn't want to be alone. He wanted to be fighting with the French, the Poles and the others. But (...) he didn't quit on democracy, he didn't quit on freedom". Cameron moved around the stage, gesticulating wildly during his speech and pointing with his fingers. He continued stating, "We want to fight for those things today. You can't win if you're not in the room. You can't win a football match if you're not on the pitch" (Shipman, 2017). It could be noted that Prime Minister deliberately used first-person plural – "We want" – to establish a personal connection with the listeners and some virtue words – such as democracy and freedom – in order to influence the public. It could be also indicated that he committed the 'red-herring' fallacy by diverting the question and redirecting the argument to another topic in order to distract the audience. Nevertheless, he succeeded in following the instructions of the debate coach, Bill Knapp, who had advised him to show emotion during his performance. Subsequently, Cameron gave an interview to the *Sunday Times*, arguing that a Brexit vote would be a "one-way ticket" with "no going back". That argument had been regarded as a powerful one with women, according to Ryan Coetzee's focus groups. However, there was a common perception within 'Stronger In' that Cameron had lost the force of his impact due to the fact that he was viewed as a Tory politician rather than a prime minister. As a result, a public speech was organized two days before the polling day, where Cameron would present himself as the nation's leader addressing to the country. According to Tim Shipman's view, the 'Remain' side "was stretching the purdah rules to breaking point" (Shipman, 2017). The Prime Minister managed to

make his economic message appeal to families: *“As you take this decision whether to remain or leave, do think about the hopes and dreams of your children and grandchildren – they know their chances to work, to travel, to build the sort of open society they want to live in, rest on this outcome”* (Shipman, 2017).

The following event was going to be the biggest debate in British history. The representatives of the campaigns were due to appear at Wembley Arena and speak in front of 6,500 people. The BBC producers had initially envisaged two politicians and another public figure on each team. ‘Stronger In’ chose the leader of the Scottish Party, Ruth Davidson, who was a committed pro-European. It was believed that she was the only Tory politician with an influence to Labour supporters, mainly because of her accent, which was familiar to Labour voters living in the north of England. ‘Labour In’ campaign preferred to keep Eagle but Lucy Thomas proposed Sadiq Khan (Shipman, 2017). The third team member would be Frances O’Grady, Britain’s top trade unionist and the general secretary of the TUC. Stronger In’s team resolved to be better-organized in that debate and, during their preparation, they recorded an opening and closing statement, which Coetzee played to a focus group in order to get their approval.

‘Vote Leave’ would deploy once again the main advocate of the campaign, Boris Johnson, and Gisela Stuart, the German immigrant. Regarding the third member, Brexiters had originally chosen the businessman and former minister Digby Jones but they eventually deployed Andrea Leadsom due to her previous good performance. According to Henry de Zoete, the electorate did not trust businessmen. On the other hand, the women liked the fact that Leadsom referred to her experience as a mother. Brett O’ Donnell advised his team to frame the debate as they were promoting hope, in contrast to the opponents, who were promoting fear and loathing (Shipman, 2017).

The three main sections of the debate were the economy, immigration issue and security. The Remainers’ basic plan was to give weight and win on the economic arguments, and to focus on security to overcome their disadvantage on immigration. Conversely, they did not in fact manage to get public’s attention during the economic section, whereas they performed better than expected on immigration. Surprisingly, neither side succeeded in winning on the security issue.

In the opening section of the BBC debate, Ruth Davidson accused Boris Johnson and ‘Vote Leave’ of “lying” about the cost of EU and Turkey. They also clashed on jobs, where the Scottish MP quoted a Johnson’s previous claim that some jobs might be lost

from Brexit. Johnson cleverly retorted that the Remain side was deploying once again Project Fear in an effort to conceal the fact that they could not make a positive case about staying in Europe. However, as the debate reached the immigration topic, Mr Khan accused the Leave side - which had campaigned hard on the issue – of utilizing “Project Hate” instead of “Project Fear”. Moreover, Frances O’Grady demonstrated that ‘Vote Leave’ had never pledged to limit net migration if people voted for Brexit. Subsequently, Davidson made her final statement for ‘Stronger In’: “*You have to be 100 per cent sure, because there’s no going back on Friday morning, and your decision could cost someone else their job*” (Shipman, 2017). Nonetheless, it was Boris Johnson’s line which received loud acclamation. He argued: “*I believe this Thursday can be our country’s Independence Day*”. His idea was based on the fact that there were posters everywhere advertising the movie *Independence Day*, which had its premiere on 23 June.

It could be indicated that although ‘Stronger In’ managed to approach the debate in a more positive and affective way, Johnson was the person that deeply affected public’s emotions. However, the outcome of the referendum the following day would determine which campaigns’ strategy had been more successful.

## **9. ‘All Out War’**

Tim Shipman considers the operation of a campaign a “*sophisticated business*”. According to his book ‘*All Out War*’, there are four identified ways to run an election campaign successfully and gain advantage over competitors. First of all, the author refers to the ‘*air war*’, which constitutes the campaigners’ attempt to convey their main messages through the mass media. This policy is heavily based on making emotional or intellectual appeals to persuade the undecided voters and sway supporters of the opposing side. The second way is called the ‘*ground war*’ and concerns the role of activists in delivering the campaign literature. They also contribute to the campaign’s efforts to increase the voter turnout in elections. Moreover, Tim Shipman analyses two additional hi-tech battlefields, which have emerged the last twenty years. The first one constitutes a different version of the air and ground war and is known as ‘*cyber war*’ because it is conducted on social media. Facebook and Twitter are the most influential platforms, where campaigns can advertise their messages in a more direct and effective way and promote their views to people who do not get informed from the traditional

media. However, behind all these practices lies the *'data war'*, which includes the usage of sophisticated data-mining methods to analyze the electoral register and create databases with information from voters' social media accounts. These data help the campaign to identify which demographic or interest group of the country is susceptible to its messages in order to send emails and activists towards specific households. A campaign could achieve its objectives supposing that all the above operations are properly combined and reinforce each other.

Most of the above chapters have described the *'air war'* of the two opposing sides in Britain's EU referendum. However, both Brexit and Remain campaigns built strategies based on all those techniques to target voters. The most significant example of Vote Leave's digital operation constituted the creation of a £50 million football prediction competition. The campaign was supposedly offering the staggering price, which claimed that amounted to the sum UK sent to Europe every day, to anyone who managed to predict correctly the winner of all games at Euro 2016.

The real reason behind the competition was Brexiters' attempt to gather personal information about the participants, who were asked to fill in their name, email and address. These data proved extremely useful for the campaign, since half a million people were sent text messages reminding them to vote on polling day (Shipman, 2017). The attraction of football was also used by 'Stronger In', as an effort to entice young men who would not otherwise have been interested in the referendum.

Remainers devised a product that allowed football fans to estimate which English team might lose more foreign players if immigration controls were imposed (Shipman, 2017).

Admittedly, the web strategy helped both sides to make judgments about where to deploy their ground forces. Based on their databases and their social media operations, the campaigns selected key areas to send leaflet commuters. Special pamphlets were delivered by 'Stronger In' to pensioners and young voters, while 'Vote Leave' recruited volunteers to put adverts outside schools and supermarkets in specific neighborhoods.

On reflection, both campaigns used a range of communication methods and employed a number of rhetoric strategies to reach the desired outcome. Tim Shipman argues that politics is first and foremost *"a results business"*. *"There are no hung Parliaments in referendums, only victory or total, irreversible defeat"* (Shipman, 2017). The result of

the EU referendum would ultimately determine which campaign's policy was more effective.

### **C. The Result: BREXIT; Why?**

Britain's EU referendum, also known as Brexit referendum, resulted in 51.9 per cent of voters being in favor of leaving the EU. The outcome provoked considerable debate regarding the factors that contributed to the 'Leave' campaign's victory, leading to various explanations and theories. The issues stressed by the Remain and Leave campaigns received significant attention in studies, since they played a vital role in forming the public attitudes towards the EU. The cost-benefit *calculations* and the related risk assessments, the *cues* from political and business elites and the feelings of attachment to a wider *community* are considered to be the main parts of Britain's campaign that eventually shaped people's opinion and the result of the 2016 referendum (Clarke et al., 2017).

Most of the analyses that have been conducted focus on identifying the economic, social and demographic factors behind the Brexit vote. More specifically, it has been indicated that people's decision to vote 'Leave' or 'Remain' can be attributed to various individual characteristics, such as, education, age, income and employment status (Clarke et al., 2017, Curtice, 2017, Soudis et al., 2018). In broad terms, people with higher levels of education, higher incomes, working in higher skilled and professional jobs, and belonging in younger age groups opted for 'Remain', and vice versa for 'Leave' (Soudis et al., 2018). Undeniably, it is not as simple as that, since many intellectuals and young voters across England and Wales also supported Brexit. The outcome of the UK's referendum should be approached at more than one level in order to be adequately explained. Based on an extensive literature review, this paper will mainly attempt to interpret how people voted to 'Leave', examining the circumstances under which voters' attitudes were formed and the various tactics and strategic plans of the campaigns that might have affected people's final choice.

First of all, it could be argued that the referendum's result was the culmination of three decades of scepticism towards the EU (Shipman, 2017). All those years of sustained Euroscepticism among politicians, citizens and in large parts of Britain's media could not be reversed in just eight months of campaigning. The Conservative MP and then

Minister of State at the Department of Health, Alistair Burt, admitted that the EU battle “*was lost a long time ago with the relentless drip, drip of anti-European propaganda*” (Shipman 2017). It should be also taken into account that British people have always had a weaker sense of European identity compared with their counterparts in other EU member states (Dennison et al., 2018). This suggests that the vote to ‘Leave’ could be regarded as a statement about Britain’s national identity, and everything that involves – in that case about the economic and political future of the country. Moreover, the role of the media during the campaign should be also taken into consideration. For almost thirty years, the British national press has been inciting Eurosceptic sentiment. Stronger In’s media operation “*was unable to compete with the populist message orchestrated by tabloid newspapers such as the Sun*” (Wring, 2016).

Regarding the circumstances in which the referendum was held, there is a second explanation of the outcome, provided mainly by Remainers. It has been claimed that the EU referendum occurred in a period when “*powerful forces that assisted the Leavers were sweeping the Western World*” (Shipman, 2017). Brexit was considered to be another sign of the phenomenon that fuelled support for Marine Le Pen in France and Donald Trump in the US. This included a revolt against the effects of globalization and a rejection of political elites, expressed chiefly by people from working-class communities, who protested about the low wages and the pressure on local services emerging from rising immigration. It also included the growth of what analysts call a ‘post-truth’ culture, “*in which voters are persuaded by the volume rather than the accuracy of an announcement*” (Shipman, 2017).

Based on the above, many scholars tried to assess the relative importance of the issues stressed by the two opposing sides, as well as the various tactics used by both campaigns to convey their key messages. British people were bombarded with warnings from the ‘Remain’ side about the economic consequences the country would face if they voted to leave the EU. They deployed all kind of experts – the IMF, the OECD, the CBI, the IFS – to persuade the public that the economic growth would be affected, unemployment would rise and the pound would rapidly fall after Brexit. However, the ‘Leave’ campaign was quick to denounce those warnings as “Project Fear” and propaganda based on negativity, dismissing all those experts as wealthy, unaccountable elites having their own vested interests. The result indicates that voters were reluctant to believe and accept the arguments of recognizably establishment figures, while Leave side was accused of fomenting that feeling of distrust. On the



contrary, 'Vote Leave' preferred to concentrate on the question of fiscal transfers instead of the economics of leaving the EU (Curtice, 2017). Their main argument was that the EU membership costed the UK £350 million a week, an amount of money that could be rather spent on the country's health service, "*a form of public spending that is always relatively popular*" (Curtice, 2017). The assertion was heavily disputed not only by Remain campaigners but also by the Treasury Select Committee and the UK Statistics Authority, which described it as potentially misleading. However, it was a powerful political slogan, which attracted voters' attention by being placed across the side of the campaign's bus. Admittedly, the publicity that was generated by the criticism gave also publicity to the fact that the UK was still a net contributor to the budget of EU (Curtice, 2017). In that sense, it provided an effective illustration of how Britain could be better off outside the EU.

The principal theme of immigration also favored the Leave side, since the result suggested that people were concerned about the levels of migration into Britain over the past ten years and their impact on society. Crucially, Leave campaigners demonstrated that the EU was responsible for about half of migration, while they pointed out that due to the freedom of movement provisions, Britain could not sufficiently control the numbers of migrants coming from the EU to live and work in the UK. There were also suggestions that migration from the EU potentially exposed Britain to a terrorist threat (Curtice, 2017). Moreover, the Leave campaign attempted to combine the migration issue with the subject of national sovereignty, reminding voters that Britain had to implement EU directives, which the government might have opposed in the Council of Ministers, and accept any judgments made by the European Court of Justice. The fact that decisions should be taken in London rather than Brussels constituted a central argument of Leave side. On the other hand, the Remainers realized that the migration crisis was "*their Achilles' heel*" and, for the most part of the debate, they tried to divert the campaign onto a territory more comfortable for them, most notably the economy, rather than try to oppose the Leave side's arguments directly (Curtice, 2017, Oliver, 2016). However, some attempt was made to suggest that Brexit might threaten collaboration with the police services and the intelligence of other EU countries, and consequently increase the risk of terrorism (Curtice, 2017). It could be indicated that the economic case of the Remain campaign failed in the face of the strong anti-immigration sentiment and the effective 'take back control' slogan of Leave side. Nevertheless, the final result should be attributed to the communication

failures of the Remain side (Hughes, 2016). David Cameron and his allies made a series of decisions that may have contributed to their defeat. The Prime Minister put himself in the front and centre of the Remain campaign and framed people's choice as a question of trust. Having set high expectations about his ability to secure a fundamental reform in Britain's relationship with the EU, it was inevitable that his deal – which included only a few concessions – would be dismissed as inadequate by Eurosceptics in his party. Apart from this, it is worth noting that Cameron used to be one of the most eurosceptic Conservative Prime Ministers in the UK's history, until he tried to change his position in February after his negotiations with Brussels (Shipman, 2017). Having said nothing positive about Europe during his premiership, it was impossible to convince the public of the advantages of the EU membership. Furthermore, George Osborne's analysis showed that he and Cameron miscalculated *“the scale of division within the Conservative Party that left nearly half their MPs against them”* and tried to plan their strategy without knowing whether two of the party's key figures, Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, would be on their side (Shipman, 2017). It was commonly admitted that Johnson and Gove's decision to support Brexit had a material effect on the outcome. Regarding especially Johnson's choice to back the Leave campaign, Tim Shipman argues that he was the embodiment of the nation at that moment. *“Every voter weighted self-interest and the national interest: By plumping for Brexit after personal agonies, Johnson mirrored the decision of the country”* (Shipman, 2017). Undeniably, both cabinet ministers gave to the Leave campaign intellectual heft and publicity, which otherwise it might have lacked. At that point, it should be also mentioned that Cameron was particularly concerned about keeping his party united after the EU referendum and hence he avoided any blue-on-blue confrontations during the campaign. That attitude deprived him of an opportunity to defend himself and his team against the personal attacks repeatedly launched by the opposing side. Eventually, Cameron's failure to persuade his own Tory voters of the Remain case stemmed *“not just from weak communication and weak strategy but from a lack of real commitment to the strategic case for the EU and for the UK to play a strategic role in Europe”* (Hughes, 2016).

Overall, it has been argued that 'Vote Leave' ran a superior campaign to their pro-EU rivals, on the grounds that it was more disciplined, better organized, with tighter messaging. On doorsteps, posters and during the TV debates, Brexit side always followed a careful plan, devised by the campaigning masterminds, Dominic Cummings

and Matthew Elliott, based on focus groups and internal research. On the other hand, an important deficiency of the ‘Stronger In’ operation was its failure to pursue an offensive strategy, mainly because of Andrew Cooper’s polling. Although studies of the polls after the referendum suggested that ‘Leave’ was ahead throughout the campaign, Cooper’s polling put ‘Remain’ ahead, which undoubtedly strengthened his team’s belief that they would win (Shipman, 2017). The fact that they did not deviate from their original planning up to the final day was due to a degree of complacency in ‘Stronger In’ that their policy was actually working.

Last but not least, the contribution of Steve Baker and his parliamentary guerillas was also significant to the Vote Leave cause, depriving the government of key advantages (Shipman, 2017). ‘Conservatives for Britain’ succeeded in changing the referendum question from yes/no to remain/leave, which may have been worth several percentage points to the Leave side, while they also saved the four-week purdah period, allowing ‘Vote Leave’ to secure a better broadcast coverage particularly at the moment “*when their attacks became most potent*” (Shipman, 2017). Similarly, the neutrality of the Conservative Party prevented Cameron and his allies from canvassing data which otherwise they could have utilized to their advantage. Taken together, all these factors may have been decisive to swing the balance in favor of Leave.

## **CONCLUSION**

In theory, the Remain campaign had a number of advantages. First of all, staying in the European Union constituted the status quo option, while Brexit represented a choice of radical change (Mullen, 2016). Additionally, much of the establishment, not only in the UK but internationally, supported Remain. Finally and most importantly, until the official ‘purdah’ period, Prime Minister David Cameron had the ability to exploit the political communication machinery of the country in favor of Remain. Although the Conservative Party was officially neutral, the Remain side could utilize some of the party’s resources (e.g. voter data and activists), along with the official support of the Labour Party and its own political communication devices (Mullen, 2016). On the contrary, the Leave campaign, which lacked the support of any establishment or political party and was prohibited from accessing the state’s resources, had to build its operation largely from the beginning. Eventually, in terms of political communication,

both the Remain and Leave campaigns deployed effective strategies and similar digital approaches. The critical difference, though, lies in the fact that the Leave campaign was more successful at targeting than the opposing side (Mullen, 2016).

With respect to the rhetoric of the EU referendum campaign, the Leave side emerged victorious by making long-standing assumptions about how Britain was being “*mistreated*” by the EU (Crines, 2016). In line with this, their arguments were mainly based on immigration, expense of membership and loss of sovereignty. Conversely, the Remain side tried to highlight the fiscal stability, the access to the single market, and also the potential risk to the UK’s economy in case of Brexit. Both campaigns deployed a variety of rhetorical devices to deliver their messages. First and foremost, the Aristotelean modes of persuasion – *pathos*, *logos* and *ethos* – are particularly traced in their rhetorical positions. It could be indicated that ‘Vote Leave’ used appeals to *pathos*, while ‘Stronger In’ relied more upon *logos*-driven assertions. This significant difference framed their debate and the kind of arguments both sides used (Crines, 2016). For instance, by appealing to *pathos*, the Leave campaign used the potential risks of Turkey joining the EU and the fear of immigration to incite a sense of dread regarding the future. Aided by a eurosceptic and sympathetic media, ‘Vote Leave’ was well positioned to form their narrative during the debates. On the other hand, the Remain campaign used appeals to *logos* by pointing out that Turkey was unlikely to join the EU and that Britain gained considerable economic and social benefits from EU membership. However, the Leave side declared victory because it also appealed effectively to *ethos*, the third of Aristotle’s rhetorical devices, which is related to character and credibility. More specifically, Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage presented themselves to the audience as credible sources, constructing a public image that seemed to be likable and open, while David Cameron and his allies – such as John Major and Tony Blair – epitomized the distant establishment (Crines, 2016). The premise of this rhetorical strategy concerns to persuade the voters that your abilities and background reflect their own. Based on this, Leave campaigners demonstrated that they understood and sympathized with the electorate’s concerns (Crines, 2016). On reflection, there were a number of strategies and psychological operations employed by both sides, which can explain the outcome. The Leave campaign argued repeatedly about immigration and sovereignty, the two issues that resonated most with the public, whereas the Remain side failed to convince the voters about the impacts on economy. Ultimately, the EU referendum seemed to be highly divisive, highlighting a

wide range of geographical, social and other differences in the United Kingdom.

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