

**Arguments for Brexit:
Rhetorical Analysis and Comparison of
The Communication of Key Actors in the Leave Campaign**

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I. Introduction

A. Presentation of the Topic and the Objectives

Brexit is a very large, multi-faced and complex topic. Brexit has been the most talked about topic in Britain since it was announced by David Cameron during the campaign for the general elections of 2013. From the point of view of a foreigner and a citizen of the EU the idea of seeing such a large and important country leave the European Union was quite worrying. I personally always thought everything was fine with the European Union and had no real idea why a country like Britain would be willing to leave. On the 23 June 2016, the British people voted and chose to leave the European Union and a few months later triggered Article 50 of the European Union which started the leaving process. Since then, I have always been interested in the subject and wanted to understand this decision. Leaving the EU implied a lot of questions and uncertainties for Britain but also for the rest of the European Union. This thesis was an opportunity to learn more about the British history and society and above all to try to understand how we came to the present situation.

It also gave me the opportunity to do so from a very interesting point of view, from a communication and rhetoric point of view. To have a better understanding of why the British people decided to leave the EU, this thesis will only consider and analyse the winning side, the Leave campaign.

The objective of this thesis will be to determine if the Leave campaign was a homogenous campaign or not when communicating about the main issues that leaving the EU imply. The Leave campaign was composed of different organizations that I will present in detail further in this thesis. In comparison, the Remain side was only composed of one big organization which could mean that the organizations all campaigning for Britain to leave the EU could be different or had different angles of approach. Our objective will be to determine if those organizations were different and if so, why and how.

To do so, I will take a look at the communication and rhetoric of the different organizations that composed the Leave campaign. I will take a closer look and analyse the communication strategies the different groups put in place, the arguments that were put forward when talking about the main issues of the Brexit vote and explain why those were effective or not according to the political context of Britain during that period but also according to the national mood during this period. Furthermore, I will take a look at the rhetorical tools used

by the different orators of the Leave side to influence their audience and convince them of the need to leave the European Union.

I based my research on articles from British newspapers such as *The Guardian* or *The Telegraph* but also got a lot of information from the BBC website. For the theoretical part of this thesis, I based a very large part of my work on the book “You talkin’ to me?” by the journalist Sam Leith. The different speeches I based my analysis on come from different sources, online libraries, organizations’ websites as well as YouTube.

In the first part of this thesis I will come back to the history of Britain, as it is impossible to understand the motivations of Brexit without taking a look back into the past of the United Kingdom. Then, I will proceed to present the different organizations that campaigned on the Leave side of the Brexit campaign and present the way they communicated as well as the people they are tried to reach out to through their communication. In the third part of this thesis I will proceed to the analysis of the rhetoric of the two main organizations of the Leave side and try to determine their rhetorical strategies as well as point out what they have in common but also how they differ. By the end of the third part, I will draw a conclusion presenting the results of the analysis.

B. Understanding Brexit, its Historical Background and Causes

On the 23rd of June, a narrow majority of the British people voted to leave the European Union during a referendum that has often been described as the most important decision the British people has had to make in a century. Across continental Europe, many parties have emerged which aim to leave the European Union. Their popularity is growing but so far, only the United Kingdom has had a referendum about its membership in the European Union and the United Kingdom is the only nation that has actually triggered article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, the procedure to leave the EU. How do we explain that the UK is the only country that so far has done so? It is impossible to understand and explain the true causes and motivations as well as analyse the main arguments of the Brexit campaign without taking a deeper look back at the United Kingdom’s history.

1. The Notion of Britishness and the Shadow of Imperialism

The British people have always been what we could call, the awkward partner of the European Union. The relationship between the UK and the European Union has always been quite complicated and a recurrent topic of controversy within the United Kingdom. This idea can be partially explained by the “glorious” past of the United Kingdom.

Indeed, the United Kingdom has had an empire with territorial possessions all over the world. This led to the idea that the British people was superior to the other nations, and above all superior to continental Europe which was considered as a long-time rival. Great Britain had an empire, and could be considered as an example to other nations. The British nation was a pioneer in economic liberalism and parliamentary democracy, and the English language was spoken all over the world. This led to a feeling of self-pride across the British society that led to the conception that the destiny of the British people was to be separated from continental Europe. This self-image of exceptionalism, this notion of “Britishness” and the power of nationalism have had a great impact on the relations between the UK and Europe and has been an important driver of Euroscepticism even after the decline of Britain that began at the end of the Second World War.

At the end of the Second World War, Britain was on the edge of bankruptcy, but the main concern of the British elite was to make sure that the country kept its position as “world power”. Therefore, it did not consider that any form of partnership with continental Europe’s countries was of any interest as it would have undermined Britain’s superiority on an international scale.

For this reason, Britain refused to join the ECSC, even though it greatly contributed to its creation. Winston Churchill, for example expressed this idea after the Second World War, when he declared that Britain was “a ‘world power’, which occupied a unique position as one of three interlocking circles – Empire, the United States and ‘Europe’.”¹

However, during the late 1950’s it became evident that Britain’s economic recovery was not doing well, as it continued to perform poorly compared to the United States and continental Europe’s economies. It became evident that the country needed help and turned towards the European Union that was still called the EEC (The European Economic Community) at the time. The UK applications to join the EEC were twice vetoed twice by the French President Charles de Gaulle, in 1963 and 1967. Indeed, the French President considered the UK as untrustworthy because of its special relationship with the United States and the long-lasting rivalry between the two countries. In 1973, the British application to join the EEC was finally accepted by Georges Pompidou, who had replaced de Gaulle at the head of the French government in 1970. Despite the British government’s great effort to be allowed to join the

¹ Taylor G. *Understanding Brexit* p.17

EEC, the adhesion to the EEC remained highly controversial inside the British political sphere.

The way the UK's adhesion to the EEC was justified or being denied was different according to the political orientations but the whole political spectrum got involved in the debate. On the left, Tony Benn and his supporters considered the EEC to be constraining the UK's economic opportunities to trade with Europe when the UK could have been trading with the Commonwealth as well. The EEC was considered as an obstacle to the UK's national interest and to its development. On the right, Enoch Powell opposed the EEC as it represented a loss of sovereignty, a topic that remained very controversial throughout the Britain's whole period of membership in the EU and an important topic of the Brexit campaign. Powell's opinions also became popular again during the Thatcher period, which will be tackled a bit later. The rest of the political spectrum considered the European market as the only solution to save the British economy from its decline.

These controversies around Britain's membership in the EEC led to what has been called the "Europe question" that is to say, what is the place of the UK in Europe, a question that sought to answer whether the island of Britain should belong to any form of union with continental Europe or should remain on its own. This question has yet to be answered as many observers say that Brexit will not unilaterally answer this question.

In 1979, the Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher replaced the previous Labour government. Margaret Thatcher had a very clear opinion on the European Union and the least we can say is that she was not very fond of it or at least fond of its way of functioning. She started her work as PM by negotiating a reduction of Britain's contribution to the European Union. Then, in 1988, Thatcher made her very famous Bruges speech in which she criticized the functioning of the European Union and above all opposed herself to supranational institutions and put the emphasis on her vision of the EU as a cooperation between sovereign nations. Indeed, in this speech, she mentioned the will of certain politicians to have a centralised European power that would regulate the union through supranational institutions.² She compared this project to the functioning of the Soviet Union which history had shown inefficient. This now-famous speech and its vision is among other important aspects what would later be called Thatcherism. This speech in which Thatcher

² BBC: Wilson Sam, *Britain and the EU: A long and rocky relationship*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-26515129>

rejected “a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels”³ has ever since become a very strong driver of Euroscepticism and a model for Eurosceptic movements throughout history. UKIP is for instance a very good example of a political party, whose political base is the values of Thatcherism. However, Thatcher’s cabinet was composed of many Europhile members and she remained unable to impose her views on Europe. Nevertheless, a Eurosceptic movement started to grow in the UK and did, with time, become stronger.

We can observe the emergence of this Eurosceptic movement when we take a look back at what happened during the negotiations of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. During these, a group of MPs successfully opposed important votes on the implementation of this treaty by taking advantage of the government’s very thin majority in Parliament. What has been called the “Maastricht rebellion” happened even though John Major, the Prime Minister of the time, had secured opt outs for Britain on important matters such as the monetary union and the “Social Chapter”⁴. This strong opposition to the Maastricht Treaty highlights the importance of the movement against European integration in the name of the protection of Britain’s sovereignty at that time. It is after those events that the first Eurosceptic movements such as the Referendum Party and the Anti-Federalist League (now considered as the forerunner of UKIP) were created.

The New Labour government that followed Major’s government adopted a very different type of policy towards the EU. Tony Blair, leader of the Labour Party, decided to maintain less confrontational relations with the EU. It is under his government that Britain joined the Single Market and voted the Social Chapter. In the meantime, New Labour was reluctant to accept more European integration. The clear objective being to secure a great deal of influence inside the Union without accepting more European integration. The Thatcherite project and the New Labour project were similar in the sense that they had the same objective, but were trying to reach it in different ways. As Graham Taylor explains in his book *Understanding Brexit*: “Both emerged as movements within their respective parties with a mission to demolish the obstacles to British greatness and prosperity, and both attempted to reconnect ‘state’ and ‘nation’ in an era defined by globalization [...]”. “Thatcherism undermined the class basis of the traditionalist British state through a radical economic programme of

³ Wilson Sam, *Britain and the EU: A long a rocky relationship*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-26515129>

⁴ The social chapter: “The ‘Social Chapter’ is another name for the Protocol on Social Policy and the Agreement on Social Policy annexed to the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty).”

liberalization,”⁵ whereas New Labour “continued the neo-liberal trajectory of the Thatcher era but combined this with radical plans for the modernization of the British state [...]”. “While the Thatcherite and New Labour discursive constructions of ‘Britain’ and ‘Europe’ were diametrically opposed, both contributed to forms of ideological Euroscepticism that would find expression in the forms of anti-EU populism that resulted ultimately in Brexit. Euroscepticism emerged as the principal guardian of a set of powerful national myths concerning the sovereignty of British parliament and British exceptionalism.”⁶

Graham Taylor also explains that the continuous difficult relationship between the UK and the European Union can also be explained by the fact that both had very different economic policies. From 1945 onwards, Britain and continental Europe followed very different economic trajectories. Britain decided to take advantage of the position of the City as international finance centre to push forward an economy based on financialization called the Anglo Model. This model was supported by Thatcher’s policies of deindustrialization and financial deregulation. In France or Germany, a growth model based on mass production and high growth was adopted, that is to say the complete opposite of the British model based on deindustrialization. Britain’s economy, which had been based on industrialization, from the 1970’s onwards was gradually deindustrialized through the financialization policies, with different consequences for the country’s economy such as the uneven development of the country between London, the financial capital, and the rest of the deindustrialized heartlands. These policies completely abandoned the British industry which led to the takeover of those industries by foreign capitals and left millions of people unemployed or with precarious forms of employment. Inequalities rose among the population in the form of an increasingly large gap between rich and poor.⁷

2. The Role of the 2008 Economic Crisis

Even though the economic situation of certain portions of the population was already quite precarious, the situation only got worse after the 2008 world economic crisis caused by the collapse of the US subprime mortgage market. The crisis caused immense damages within the banking sector in the United Kingdom. The nationalization and recapitalization of the banking system caused the country to increase its debt. The Labour government led by Gordon Brown launched austerity measures to balance this increase of the national debt which particularly impacted the already marginalized working class. Wages were lowered as

⁵ Taylor G. *Understanding Brexit* p.23

⁶ op. cit., p.24

⁷ op. cit., p.24,25,26,27,28

well as welfare programmes and non-standard forms of employment such as zero-hours contracts and part-time working increased again.

In the meantime, the deregulated immigration policy of New Labour caused an important rise in the number of migrants from the newest members of the European Union arriving in the UK, which applied additional pressure on the working class labour market. Globally speaking, a large part of the population felt abandoned by the State which helped a toxic nationalist resentment to grow within the country. This growing urge for “national entitlement and priority” (Graham Taylor) is the base of a larger Eurosceptic feeling within the population. This Eurosceptic movement was exacerbated by right-wing Conservatives who began linking the failed national economic recovery with the Eurozone. This scapegoating of the Eurozone increased again as the EU globalized the austerity measures imposed on Greece and Ireland through the *Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the EMU* which led many to consider that the EU “posed an obstacle to British recovery from the crisis”⁸ (Graham Taylor). As a result, Britain growingly started to distance itself from the European Union and from European integration in order to “protect and secure national interests”.

3. From Defiance Feeling to Brexit

As the United Kingdom kept on distancing itself from the European Union and for instance refused to participate in the elaboration of a new financial supervision programme for the EMU, Eurosceptics started to put forward the idea of leaving the European Union. This idea was legitimated by the argument that the Eurozone was harmful to the British economy. The main argument was that the European Union and its common market was not the only viable option, and as things were not working well with the EU, Britain could and should consider other options, including big international economies such as China, Russia and Brazil or the United States as new major trade partners. David Cameron tried to address the demands of the MPs and the concerns of the population by promising in 2013 a new deal with the European Union that would be followed by an in-out referendum on the UK’s membership to the EU before the end of 2017 if the Conservative Party was to win the 2015 general elections campaign. He refused to hold the referendum before as the EU was bound to change and the relationship between Britain and the EU was meant to change as well.⁹ This change took the form of the “new deal” that Cameron negotiated before the referendum and that would reshape the relationship between the country and the union. Cameron’s objective was to secure an even more special status for the UK through the new deal. His goal was to

⁸ op. cit., p.34

⁹ BBC: *David Cameron promises in/out referendum on EU*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-21148282>

obtain a special status over European immigration and European integration in order to ease the Eurosceptics and secure a referendum result in favour of staying in the European Union. However, everything did not really work out in favour of David Cameron, as this new deal did not actually meet the demands of the Eurosceptics, who rejected it, and as Euroscepticism skyrocketed during his mandate leading to a referendum result in favour of leaving the European Union.

The conclusion that we can draw from this historical introduction is that Brexit did not happen by accident or come out of nowhere. Euroscepticism has deep roots within the British society. Rivalries and differences of opinions have always been there. The 2008 crisis may have speeded things up, but it would probably have happened anyway without the crisis. It would just have taken a bit longer. Indeed, the crisis only triggered something that had already been there, and for a long period of time. The different policies of the Labour and Conservative governments from 1945 onwards led to the development of this Eurosceptic feeling that ultimately led to Brexit. Some say that the British people have been bamboozled by politicians constantly scapegoating the Eurozone for everything bad that happened to the British economy instead of taking their responsibilities for policies they put in place which in the end did not work and led to the difficult economic situation of the UK. This is something that I will analyse later on. For now, I am going to put you back into the context of the Brexit referendum campaign by summarizing the key facts and stories of this campaign. Indeed, those moments shaped the campaign and the way key actors of the campaign communicated during the campaign. As those events can be considered to have had an influence on the campaign, it is important to mention them.

C. Key Elements and Stories of the Brexit Campaign

In January 2013, following months of pressure from many MP's and Eurosceptics, David Cameron finally announced that an in-out referendum on the UK's membership would be held before the end of 2017. Of course the Eurosceptics, who had long awaited for this moment, welcomed the news with joy. On the other hand, many others expressed their concerns regarding this referendum and the consequences that it would have for Britain. Ed Miliband for instance, who was openly against holding a referendum, accused Cameron of "going to put Britain through years of uncertainty, and take a huge gamble with our economy"¹⁰ to which the Prime Minister responded that the British people had the right to "have their say" on Europe. Foreign ministers from France and Germany also expressed

¹⁰ BBC: *David Cameron promises in/out referendum on EU*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-21148282>

their concerns regarding this referendum stressing the fact that there would be no turning back if the British people happened to decide to leave the European Union.

As the referendum campaign was about to begin, David Cameron made the heavy decision of suspending collective responsibility for the duration of the campaign. This means that even though the government had a clear position on Brexit, MPs and member of the government would be allowed to campaign on whichever side they choose. According to the Daily Telegraph¹¹, Cameron was forced to make this decision as key members of his government would have threatened to resign if forced to campaign alongside the Remain campaign. Downing Street answered that David Cameron had made that decision long ago and that threats of resignations were not founded. This decision to suspend the collective responsibility implied great consequences for the Conservative Party as well as for the other parties. Indeed, this has had the effect of splitting the party over this question. As soon as the campaign began on the 20th of February 2016, Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Justice and a member of the Conservative Party announced that he supported the Leave campaign and became one of the leaders of Vote Leave, the organization that later became the official campaign for the Leave side. Boris Johnson, another prominent member of the Conservative Party and former mayor of London also announced that he supported the Leave side and also became one of the leaders in the Vote Leave campaign. The same phenomenon happened within the Labour Party which was predominantly in favour of the Remain side. Gisela Stuart, a member of the Labour Party, became the chairwoman of the Vote Leave campaign for instance. As everybody was allowed to campaign according to own convictions it became impossible to actually say which party was more in favour of this or that side, as the main parties were very divided on this question.

A few days later, on the 9th of March, the newspaper *The Sun* claimed that the Queen was backing the Leave side and was therefore in favour of Brexit. This news was based on the statements of an anonymous source who allegedly heard the Queen expressing her will to see Britain leave the EU during a conversation with the former deputy PM Nick Clegg in 2011. Buckingham Palace officially denied these allegations and stressed that the Queen remained neutral on this question.

¹¹ Hughes Laura, Swinford Steven, Dominiczak Peter, *EU Referendum: David Cameron forced to let ministers campaign for Brexit after fears of a cabinet resignation*, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/eureferendum/12082083/EU-referendum-David-Cameron-gives-ministers-free-vote.html>

On the 13th of April, the vote to determine which campaign was to be elected as the official campaign took place. Indeed, it is mentioned in the rules of the referendum that one campaign on each side had to be elected as official campaign, granting the winning campaign several advantages such as higher spending limits, TV broadcast and mailshots to the population. There has been no competition on the Remain side as there was only one main campaign in favour of remaining in the European Union. On the opposite side, the competition became fierce as *Grassroots Out*, a campaign supported by UKIP and its leader Nigel Farage, became a candidate for the official campaign. The subject of the official campaign will be more exhaustively tackled in the second chapter.

The following day, Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the Labour Party, finally broke his silence after a very quiet early campaign and made a long-awaited speech at the University of London's Senate House, where he strongly encouraged the Labour voters to support the Remain campaign. Indeed, the absence of the Labour party leader on the question brought up questions regarding his involvement in the campaign. It is also important to mention that Corbyn had always been a strong critic of the European Union. Like other members of the Labour Party, Corbyn had voted against the entry of the UK into the EEC in the 1975 referendum. The party leader had therefore a strong reputation that led people to doubt his sincere involvement in the campaign. However, he still considers that the UK should remain a member of the European Union even though the latter needs drastic changes in the way it functions: "You cannot build a better world unless you engage with the world, build allies and deliver change. The EU, warts and all, has proved itself to be a crucial international framework to do that.", declared Corbyn during his speech.¹² Key members of the Labour Party feared that the lack of involvement of the party leader would harm the Remain campaign as the Labour Party voters were not sufficiently motivated to be involved in the campaign. Nick Clegg, the leader of the Liberal Democrats and prominent Europhile political actor was hoping to gather the former Labour Party leaders in a meeting to send a strong message to the Labour Party voters in order to show the true support of the Labour Party to the Remain campaign. This meeting, however, never took place.

On 18 April, George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time, presented a 200-page report from the Treasury presenting the forecasted economic consequences if Britain were to leave the European Union and negotiated a bilateral agreement with the EU. This quite alarming report explained that Britain would lose approximately 36bn in net tax receipts

¹² Stewart Heather, Asthana Anushka, *Jeremy Corbyn to urge 'warts and all' backing of European Union*, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/apr/14/jeremy-corbyn-to-urge-warts-and-all-backing-of-eu>

and that a new form of deal with the EU that would not require freedom of movement would cause a 6.2% reduction in GDP. Why is this news important? As we will see later on, one of the main aspects of the Brexit campaign has been this war of figures. On the one hand, both sides put forward figures that the other side immediately accused of being unfounded or put forward other figures to counter. A very typical example is the figures put forward by the Vote Leave campaign saying that every week the UK sends 350 million pounds to the EU. A figure that the Remain side kept on denying during the whole campaign. Even though this figure was proved to be unfounded, it remained a very powerful tool. On the other hand, we can also observe that Brexit has been the trigger of a revolution against experts. The traditional British working class had no trust in the experts anymore and rejected all forms of warning from those economic experts. This fact was also widely used by the Leave campaign to counter those predictions. As those figures were a central aspect of those debates during the campaign, they are worth mentioning as a key moment of this referendum campaign.

On 22 April, the Remain side played its more powerful card as the President of the United States himself made a declaration in favour of the Remain campaign. During the campaign, the Leave side often declared that not having access to the European Single Market anymore was not such a big problem as the UK could negotiate new trade deals with other big countries. The Commonwealth as well as the BRIC countries, those new developing countries have been examples of new trade partners. Among those, a new deal with the US was also considered as not being an issue, the US being a strong ally of the United Kingdom. The declaration of the American President was meant to answer those claims. The American President actually expressed quite the opposite idea in saying that the UK would find itself “at the end of the queue”.¹³ During this press conference, Obama explained that a UK-US trade deal was not a priority and would not happen “any time soon” as the Americans were more interested in negotiating with a big block instead of small deals with single countries. While stressing the fact that his declaration was not meant to be considered as a threat he clearly put the emphasis on the idea that leaving the European Union would have bad consequences for the British economy. This declaration delighted the Remain side as the point of view of the American President would, of course, have a great influence on the voters. On the opposite side, the Leave campaigners did not wait to react to the President’s declaration arguing that Obama was not going to be President at the time of the negotiations and that his opinion was therefore irrelevant.

¹³Asthana Anushka, Mason Rowena, *Barack Obama: Brexit would put UK ‘back of the queue’ for trade talks*, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/apr/22/barack-obama-brexit-uk-back-of-queue-for-trade-talks>

A month later, the official Leave Campaign Vote Leave came under criticism regarding a statement about the accession of Turkey to the EU that would have a negative impact on the British society's security. In this statement, Vote Leave suggested that Turkey's accession to the EU was imminent and that it would have several bad consequences for the UK. Immigration from Turkey would rise and according to the statement, the UK should expect 1 million Turkish migrants to be added to the current high migration figures that the country was experiencing at that time. This would naturally have bad consequences for the country's economy, the healthcare programme, the school system and security in general. Security was the main issue underlined in this statement, which explained that Turkey had crime figures that were much higher than the British ones. As Turkey was, according to the statement, to become a member of the European Union, Britain would not be able to block those people at the border and both crime and insecurity would increase in Britain. Downing Street stressed the fact that the entry of Turkey into the European Union was far from imminent but this statement was undermined by a 2010 statement in which Cameron explained that the UK would strongly support Turkey's application to the European Union. This statement is revealing of the mood and the spirit in which this referendum campaign took place. Immigration has really been a key topic of this campaign during which the Leave campaign regularly reinforced the anti-immigration feeling that the population was developing at that time. Of course it did not come out of nowhere. As I already mentioned in the historical introduction, the British people had already developed this anti-immigration feeling for years. However, the Leave campaign really exacerbated it through statements just like this one, where it takes advantage of the fear that immigration represents for the population to suggest that migrants are harmful to the British economy and that it's the European Union's fault if it happens.

Another very revealing example of the way immigration was tackled during the Brexit campaign is the poster realized by Nigel Farage, leader of UKIP and a key supporter of the *Grassroots Out* and *Leave.EU* campaigns. On 16 June, Farage unveiled a poster representing a long queue of migrants waiting at a border with the slogan "Breaking Point: The EU has failed us all."¹⁴ Shortly after it had been unveiled, the poster was reported to the police with a complaint that it was an infraction against the UK race law. Here again we can see the type of message campaigners from the Leave side were trying to convey to the population.

¹⁴ Stewart Heather, Mason Rowena, *Nigel Farage's anti-migrant poster reported to police*, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/16/nigel-farage-defends-ukip-breaking-point-poster-queue-of-migrants>

On the same day, the Labour MP and Remain supporter Jo Cox was murdered after a constituency meeting in Birstall. The murderer, a far-right activist, was reported to have shouted “Britain first”¹⁵ right before attacking the Labour MP. “Britain first” is also the name of a far-right anti-immigration nationalist party in the UK. It is difficult not to see the link between the two events that happened on the same day. Farage cannot be held responsible for Jo Cox’s murder but, it is conceivable that declarations such as the ones of the Leave campaign which roused hate and fear towards immigrants could have influenced ill-intentioned people to do something as serious and terrible as what happened that day. Following Jo Cox’s murder, the Brexit campaign was stopped for one day as a sign of respect.

On the night before the final vote, the BBC held its *BBC Grand Debate* during which both sides exchanged the final arguments in one final debate before the vote. A lot of people already made their choice, but the objective was to sum up the main arguments of each side in order to convince the last undecided voters as well as to motivate those who may have decided not to go and cast a vote on the next day. I will analyse some arguments of the Leave side during that debate further in this thesis.

This campaign was full of events even though it only lasted for a few months. Each of those events I believed shaped this campaign and all had an influence on the final vote, even though it is impossible to say to which extent. It is important to keep them in mind as they all reflect how this campaign happened and may, to some extent, explain the result of the vote.

II. Major Organizations Supporting the Leave Campaign

A. The UK Independence Party

1. Presentation of the Party

The UK Independence Party, UKIP, is a single-issue, right-wing party founded in 1993 by Alan Sked. Farage, originally a member of the Conservative Party, could not stand the decision of the UK signing the Maastricht Treaty which promised “ever closer union” within the EU. He therefore left the Conservative Party and became one of the founders of the Anti-

¹⁵ Booth Robert, Dodd Vikram, Parveen Nazia, *Labour MP Jo Cox dies after being shot and stabbed*, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jun/16/labour-mp-jo-cox-shot-in-west-yorkshire>

Federalist League which was later renamed UKIP. Since its creation in 1993, the party's main objective has been to leave the European Union. Since his election as leader of the party in 2006, Farage has become the face of the party and probably is the politician that is the most linked to his party across the political spectrum. Farage has not always been a politician; he was first a commodities trader in London before starting a political career. He has always been known for his outspokenness and an image as an everyman that allowed him to attack political rivals for being part of the establishment. His declarations on immigration often raised criticism and protestations across the political spectrum but the man always stood his ground. UKIP played a very important role in the Brexit referendum, but the party has not always been that influential. What influence it has, is due to its long-time fiercest representative.

At the 1997 general elections, the party did poor results to the profit of the Referendum Party, another right-wing organization pleading for the UK to leave the European Union. The party had to wait until the 1997 European election to know its first political breakthrough made possible by the introduction of the proportional representation which helped smaller parties to get seats. Generally speaking, throughout its more than 20 years of existence, the UKIP did very well in the European elections but quite poorly in the domestic elections. Farage took the leadership of the party in 2006 and replaced Roger Knapman.

Thanks to Farage's work and efforts, UKIP became more and more popular, as the party promised something different from the regular political groups and put the emphasis on the reduction of immigration which had become a controversial topic in the British society. Indeed, due to the entry of eastern countries of Europe in the European Union, immigration from EU countries rose in the UK. Farage used to blame EU migrants for the problems the country was facing. Even though Farage has been highly criticized for scapegoating migrants and for making declarations considered as racist or as incitements to xenophobia, the party's popularity kept on rising. At the 2009 European Elections, UKIP scored better than the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats. However, good scores at the Europeans elections were something great but, in the end, would not make the party reach its final goal, making the UK leave the EU.

Farage understood that and decided to run for the position of Speaker, but failed. As the party continued to focus its political pitch on immigration, the party continued to gain popularity, which led to UKIP doing the best score at the 2014 European Election with 26.6% of the votes, winning the election ahead of the Labour and Conservative Party. The party,

however, did poor results at the 2015 general elections, losing one of its two seats at the parliament. Farage, who said would resign if he was to lose the election in his constituency stepped down as party leader the day following the results and his defeat to the profit of the Conservative Party. However, a few months later, to the general surprise, Farage came back saying that he changed his mind and wanted to stick to the party for the referendum campaign that was preparing itself.

Farage spared no effort during the campaign and fought on every front while keeping the focus on immigration, making this topic one of the main issues of the referendum. His poster “Breaking Point” that I already mentioned is one of many other examples.

After the victory of the Leave side, Farage stepped down again, but promised not to come back at the head of the party and to give his successor full support. Farage will, however, remain the leading figure of UKIP.

After this general introduction on the history of the party, I would like to talk more about UKIP’s communication style. I already mentioned some elements of it, the focus on immigration and the outspoken style of its leader but there’s, of course, more than that.

2. UKIP’s Communication Style

When we talk about UKIP’s communication style, we inevitably speak of Nigel Farage’s communication style. As the leader of the party and the most proactive member of the party in general and during the referendum campaign, it is his style of communication that will be analysed. When we take a look at Farage’s way of communicating, the methods and arguments he uses as well as the audience his arguments are directed to, we can clearly recognize the features of the populist style.

To begin with, I suggest starting by defining what populism is. As I would not be able to define it myself in a better way, I will rely on the definition proposed by Elena Block and Ralph Negrine in their article from the *International Journal of Communication* from November 2017:

“we understand populism as comprising certain key elements, mainly drawn on Block’s (2015) categorization of populism: “appeal to the people” (Canovan, 2002; Laclau, 2005; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014); anti politics, antielitist, antiestablishment ideologies, sentiments, and tactics (Mudde & Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012); a “discourse” characterized by a belligerent ethos and plain language that provide a sense of closeness between leaders and their politically disenchanted publics (Bolivar, 2003; Hawkins, 2010; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007); a focus on (a usually charismatic and, sometimes, narcissistic and intolerant) party

“leadership” and “agency” to popularize and legitimize populist issues (van Kessel, 2011); the exploitation of crises of democratic representation, the attempt to bypass institutions of democracy, and the promotion of vague forms of direct democracy to gain positions of power (Roberts, 1995; Taggart, 2002); patronage, paternalism, and party clientelism (Philip & Panizza, 2011); and a complex and fractious relationship with the media (Mazzoleni, 2003, 2008).¹⁶

Let's take a closer look at the different parts of this definition. Populism is primarily referred to as an “appeal to the people”. This appeal to the people is the core element of Farage's political discourse. As I already mentioned in the historical background of Brexit, a large part of the population felt itself abandoned by the different traditional political parties. These disillusioned workers had to face the consequences of the economic decisions the succeeding governments took. First the deindustrialization that deprived thousands of people of their jobs, later the economic crisis was responsible for a reduction of the wages and precarious forms of employment such as zero-hour contracts. In the meantime, immigration grew under New Labour and many migrants arrived on a labour market that was already in bad shape. This explains how people were ready to listen to new types of arguments, to a new type of political discourse in which they felt included and listened to. This is exactly what Farage did, when he put the emphasis on the workers, letting them know that he was fighting for them with slogans such as “Working hard for you, all year long” as we can read it in the 2016 local UKIP manifesto. This “appeal to the people” and this idea of giving a voice to the unheard share of the population is also materialized in the promise of UKIP to use referenda more regularly when decisions are necessary, even on a local scale. “UKIP councillors believe in putting the residents first. We believe in local referenda and the ability of local people to put their communities first.”¹⁷

This is the essence of the appeal to the people, letting those people know they are important to the eyes of the party and that UKIP is ready to give back those people a voice unlike the other traditional parties made of politicians from the elite that do not understand or do not want to understand the needs of the population.

This leads us to the second part of the definition. Populist discourses convey “anti politics, anti elitist, and anti-establishment ideologies”. Another aspect of the populist strategy resides

¹⁶ E.Block, R.Negrine *The Populist Communication Style: Toward a Critical Framework*, p.2 - International Journal of Communication 11(2017), 178–197

¹⁷ Ukip 2016 Local manifesto, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ukipdev/pages/3440/attachments/original/1459984864/UKIP_Local_Manifesto_2016.pdf?1459984864, p.5

in the idea of differentiation. This difference is demonstrated in different ways, the most important being the image of the party and the party leader and how this image is conveyed. To reinforce this idea of difference, Farage used to fiercely criticize the power in place, calling his rivals from the traditional political parties 'members of the establishment', while presenting himself as 'a man of the people'. Another communication strategy of the party is to distance itself from "politically correct" by doing shock declarations on the media, on debates and through other channels as well. Farage got heavily criticized for attacking foreign people affected by HIV allegedly coming to Britain to enjoy the free healthcare without paying taxes in the UK during a TV debate in 2015¹⁸. In 2010, Farage told Herman Van Rompuy that he had the charisma of a "damp rag"¹⁹ in the European Parliament to give another example. During the Brexit referendum campaign, he got criticized for his "Breaking Point" poster, allegedly inciting to racial hate. Even though those declarations are arguable in many aspects, they are a part of the character and appeal to a certain number of people. Moreover, each of those shocking declarations are widely covered by the media, helping the party and its leader to regularly stay in the news.

This idea of antagonism between Farage and the rest of the political sphere is reinforced by the public image that Farage built and maintained during all those years in politics. He presented himself as an everyman, always beginning his visits in constituencies with the same ritual, going to the pub. He was often seen with a pint of beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other greeting local people and talking to them. He reinforced his bond with his supporters through common values such as Britain and the protection of its interest such as its sovereignty, a topic that we will see often in debates.

It is also important to mention the use of the media as a part of the populist strategy of Nigel Farage. He has often been present in the newspapers following his different shock declarations as I already mentioned, but also through a weekly newspaper column in *The Express* called "Farage on Fridays" and writes articles for other newspapers. At the age of digitalisation, Farage was also very active on the social media, particularly on Twitter where he is followed by more than 1 million people. Through social networks, he is able to directly exchange with his followers and reinforce his image of an everyman with whom you can talk about your country's policies without barriers. On TV, Farage is also very often to be seen, for the same reasons as for the newspapers. Again, through television, he is able to maintain

¹⁸ Sky News: *Leaders' Debate – Nigel Farage On HIV And The NHS*,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2m9S1PCiuEs>

¹⁹ Press Association, *Ukip's Nigel Farage tells Van Rompuy: You have the charisma of a damp rag*,
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/feb/25/nigel-farage-herman-van-rompuy-damp-rag>

and reinforce his image through his “pint, fag and cheeky grin routine” as the journalist Nick Robinson calls it.²⁰

B. Vote Leave

1. Presentation of the Organization

Vote Leave is a cross party organization created in October 2015 which campaigns for the UK to leave the European Union. The organization’s founders are the political strategists Matthew Elliott and Dominic Cummings. Vote Leave is, generally speaking, a conservative campaign, but counted members of other parties as well. The Labour MP Gisela Stuart was appointed chairwoman of the organization, for instance. By doing that, the minority of Labour MP supporting Brexit could feel represented. The organization also counted the sole UKIP MP Douglas Carswell as member. The Vote Leave campaign focused mainly on financial issues, compared to UKIP for instance which focused on immigration. Vote Leave highlighted the importance of the financial contribution of the UK to the EU. The argument saying that the UK sends 350 million euros every week to the European Union was recurrent in the Vote Leave campaigners’ speeches. In my opinion, the Vote Leave campaign also put a great emphasis on Britain’s sovereignty issue. Indeed, Vote Leave encourages its supporters to “take back control” over Britain’s laws and parliament for instance which are said not to be sovereign anymore because of the EU. By leaving the European Union, Britain would be able to do more for its citizens. The EU is presented as a non-elected legislative body preventing Britain from issuing its own laws as the EU has the power to override them. It is also mentioned that the EU is imposing a large set of rules on businesses that do not even trade with the EU, but it is something that I am going to explain more in the next paragraph.

2. Communication Style

The communication style of Vote Leave could be considered as way less confrontational than their campaign ally from UKIP. With that said, Vote Leave had, however, a more reactive approach at the very beginning of its campaign work than it has had after. I am referring to the stratagem that Vote Leave used to interrupt a conference during which David Cameron addresses the CBI, the Confederation of British Industry in November 2015. During this conference, two students, members of *Students for Britain*, an organization

²⁰ Robinson N. (2015). *Election notebook: The inside story of the battle over Britain’s future and my personal battle to report it*. London, UK: Transworld Digital.

supporting Brexit, interrupted the meeting singing “CBI, the voice of Brussels”²¹ and waving a banner with the same slogan on it. The students explained that they got into the conference thanks to the Vote Leave campaigners who created a fake company and registered it to get invitations to the conference. This move described as “grubby” by the Remain campaign got highly criticized for its insidious character. The controversy intensified as Dominic Cummings answered the critics by declaring to the Daily Telegraph: “You think it is nasty? You ain’t seen nothing yet.”²² The Remain camp condemned the declaration and suggested that the Vote Leave campaign should not be eligible for the official campaign designation any more as it had intentions of leading a “nasty” campaign. Even though the exchanges and the controversy got quite intense, the Vote Leave campaign did not suffer too many consequences as it got designated as official campaign anyway. It is, important to mention that such events did not happen again and that the Vote Leave campaign changed its way of communicating for something less aggressive and controversial after that.

Indeed, Vote Leave got elected as “official campaign” which granted the campaign, among other advantages, TV broadcast. The members of the organization took part in many debates, on the BBC, for the BBC Grand Debate for instance, that will be analysed later on but also created several TV adverts in which they presented their arguments. Those are quite interesting to watch to have a better idea of the campaign’s communication style. I am going to refer to a video posted on YouTube which compiles the 10 most interesting ads published by Vote Leave²³. Those ads expose facts regarding the membership of the UK to the union and often sounds very dramatic regarding the situation the UK is facing. When taking a closer look at those videos we can clearly recognize the financial aspect of Brexit being emphasized very regularly. Different aspects of the financial contribution of the UK to the EU are tackled. The most important argument being that “every week, the United Kingdom sends 350 million pounds of taxpayers’ money to the EU”²⁴. We can already observe how the advert is addressing the British population by specifying that this money that is sent to the EU is their money. Those arguments are in most cases linked to the NHS, another very important topic for the British population. As the NHS allegedly reached its “breaking point” as mentioned in the seventh video, those 350 million could be used to build

²¹ Tovey Alan, *CBI attacked as ‘voice of Brussels’ by anti-EU campaigners*
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/economics/11982810/CBI-attacked-as-voice-of-Brussels-by-anti-EU-campaigners.html>

²² Watt Nicholas, *Eric Pickles says Vote Leave campaign should be denied lead status*,
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/nov/11/eric-pickles-says-vote-leave-campaign-should-be-denied-lead-status>

²³ Vote Leave: *Brexit: 10 Most Interesting Ads by the “Vote Leave” Campaign*,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hC8qO1nyYoM>

²⁴ Vote Leave: *Brexit: 10 Most Interesting Ads by the “Vote Leave” Campaign*,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hC8qO1nyYoM> - 0’35

a brand-new hospital every week or support and hire new doctors and nurses. This argument goes even further; the EU is held responsible for the critical situation of the NHS because Britain has to send too much money to the EU but also because immigration from the EU is applying too much pressure on the healthcare service. This argument is depicted in the seventh advert of the video where we can see an almost empty waiting room in the “outside the EU” situation and a full one in the “inside the EU” situation.

The NHS is not the only example given by the video. The advert presents alternative ways of spending those 350 million per week, in schools for example or research against cancer, topics that are important to the British population as to make sure that the advert is the most efficient and appeals to the largest number of viewers possible. The 350 million argument really was the main argument of the Vote Leave campaign. It is also what was written in big letters on the organization’s campaign bus, for example. While many agreed on the fact that this figure was overly exaggerated, Boris Johnson declared in January that this figure had been “grossly underestimated”²⁵, claiming that the contribution of the UK to the EU would in fact reach 438 million pounds per week. In the context of the referendum, knowing the truth about this figure was quite useless. Indeed, it could have been two hundred or even 100 million pounds, in the eyes of the average taxpayer it would have remained a very large amount of money leaving the country for an organization that had for them no legitimacy, making of this argument an incontestable and very powerful one.

The Vote Leave adverts also tackle other aspects of Brexit, such as the immigration. The third advert for instance, presents the entry of Turkey in the EU as imminent and stresses out the consequences that it would imply for the UK in terms of immigration but also in terms of security as it insidiously presents the Turkish people as violent and as potentially dangerous with a clip of a fight in the Turkish Parliament. Moreover, the ad encourages the British people in mistrusting David Cameron when he says that Turkey is not about to enter the EU, as he presented himself as a supporter of Turkey’s adhesion in 2010.

The last ad that I would like to tackle is the fifth one. In this advert, key characters of the British history are presented with the great things they did for the world. Politicians, militaries and scientists are named with their achievements, and how those achievements “greatly influenced” and “revolutionized” different aspects of our lives. The video highlights how those

²⁵ Telegraph Reporters, *Leave campaign bus claim that Britain will save £350m a week after Brexit should have been higher, says Boris Johnson*, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/01/16/leave-campaign-bus-claim-britain-will-save-350m-week-brexite/>

“British heroes changed the world,”²⁶ to encourage the viewer not to believe those who said the British people was not capable of handling its own affairs and to “take control”. This ad reminds me of the populist discourse UKIP and Farage often used. Through this enumeration of Britain’s most important historic people and the good they did for the world, the ad highlights Britain’s supposed superiority and exceptionality over other countries and intends to diminish the EU’s legitimacy. As Britain is superior to the rest of the world, no one is better capable than its own people to take care of its affairs. Even Though Vote Leave tried to distance itself from Farage and UKIP as their communication strategy was too controversial they nevertheless occasionally used the same type of argument the populists did. This argument actually is based on a broken logic. The fact that great people once did great things and revolutionized aspects of our lives does not mean that today, you are able to run a country.

3. Official Leave Campaign

Each electoral process has rules, and those rules are issued by the Electoral Commission. The first mission of the Electoral Commission is to regulate what is allowed and what is not during a campaign and more importantly to regulate how much money can be spent by each individual, group and organization during a campaign. Campaigns always involve huge amounts of money being donated and spent. The electoral commission’s job is to make sure everything is done according to the rules of the campaign and the law generally speaking. The electoral commission’s mission was also to designate the official campaign of each side. One official campaign for the Remain outcome and one official campaign for the Leave outcome. Obtaining the status of “official campaign” was very advantageous as it granted several advantages to the winning campaign. Those advantages are:

- a higher spending limit of £7 million
- one free distribution of information to voters
- the use of certain public rooms
- referendum campaign broadcasts
- a grant of up to £600,000, to be used for certain spending including the administration costs associated with setting up and running a referendum campaign and the costs associated with the TV broadcasts and free mailing to voters that they are entitled to as lead campaigners

²⁶ Vote Leave: *Brexit: 10 Most Interesting Ads by the “Vote Leave” Campaign*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hC8qO1nyYoM> 6’37

The Electoral Commission explains on its website²⁷ the different steps involved in the designation process as well as the criteria taken into account for the final decision. Each group was allowed to register for this election to become the official campaign. The criteria used by the Electoral Commission come from the "PPERA", the "Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000" which states how political parties, elections, and in our case, referenda are regulated in the UK. The main objective is this election is for the commission to determine whether the campaigns really represent the people supporting this outcome or not.

As far as the Leave outcome was concerned, the two main groups were Vote Leave, supported by Boris Johnson and Michael Gove and the GO Movement, which was composed of the *Grassroots Out* campaign, Nigel Farage's UKIP and the Leave.EU campaign which united to have a better chance of getting the role of official campaign. As both groups were eligible, the commission had to make a decision. In an article from the BBC website from the 13 April 2016 we can find a chart which presents the different themes that were debated to come to the final decision.²⁸ The five categories being:

- The Organization's Objectives
- Support for Application
- Representing Other Campaigners
- Campaigning Capacity
- Organisational Capacity

For those themes, the group's relevance got marks. Both groups did well, but in the end Vote Leave got the highest score and obtained the status of "official campaign".

C. Grassroots Out

1. Presentation of the Organization

Grassroots Out or more commonly "GO" is an organization created by the Conservative MP Peter Bone, the Labour MP Kate Hoey as well as the Conservative MP Tom Pursglove. This campaign was created as the result of the rivalry between the Vote Leave campaign and the other Eurosceptic campaign Leave.EU. Indeed, even though the groups had the same objective, leaving the European Union, they had different opinions and hardly got along. Indeed, on the Remain side, the objective was clear and simple, staying in the EU, on the Leave side, the situation was more complicated. They all wanted to leave, but for different

²⁷ <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/party-or-campaigner/campaigners-in-referendums>

²⁸ BBC – *Why Vote Leave beat Grassroots Out*, 13 April 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-36037507>

reasons and the opinions differed regarding how Britain should leave. Those differences of opinions regarding the way Brexit should be negotiated later led to the distinction between “Soft Brexit” and “Hard Brexit”. The situation really got problematic as the two Leave campaigns started to make contradictory statements in reaction to the Remain campaign’s claims. As a consequence, the credibility of the Leave campaign started to decrease. Those rivalries even pushed Nigel Farage to call the Vote Leave deciding body of “cretins” as they would have declared that Nigel was “toxic” and “putting off voters”²⁹. As a response, GO was created in an attempt to create one united Eurosceptic front. The Grassroots Out campaign received the support of the UKIP and the Leave.EU campaign but the Vote Leave campaign did not participate. This coalition led to the application of the Go Movement for the status of “official Leave campaign”. The Grassroots Out campaign was highly recognizable thanks to its very green merchandising that the campaigners wore during the events related to the campaign and that was sold to the supporters of the campaign.

2. Communication Style

In order to have a better idea of what the Grassroots Out campaign was about and what their communication style was, I took a look at the campaign opening ceremony that took place in Kettering on the 23rd of January 2016. The founders of the GO movement Peter bone, Tom Pursglove and Kate Hoey were naturally present at the event and shared their opinions and arguments for Brexit in short speeches one after the other. Listening and analysing the arguments of the founding members of the campaign seemed to be the perfect way to have a global idea of what this campaign was about and what aspects of Brexit they emphasized and how. Besides the founders of the campaign other key political actors took part in the launch ceremony such as Dr. Liam Fox, former Secretary of State for Defence and member of the Conservative Party, and Nigel Farage, the leader of the UK Independence Party. I am not going to talk about Farage’s speech in this part as Farage’s communication style has already been analysed in the paragraph devoted to his party. However, Liam Fox’s speech and presence to the meeting are quite interesting as his support to the campaign was only unveiled at the very ceremony.

When we take a look at the different speeches that were made that night, we can clearly see that the GO campaign was intending to highlight the legitimacy of its campaign name and to create a strong bond between the campaigners and the supporters. This is something we can observe in Liam Fox’s speech where he begins by comparing the Leave campaign to a

²⁹ Aitkenhead Decca, *Nigel Farage: ‘They say I’m toxic. Quite the opposite’*
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/20/nigel-farage-ukip-eu-referendum-interview-vote-leave-brief-every-day>

“family”³⁰ that knows “what we want to defend” and “know what we want for our country”. The speakers often try to identify themselves to their audience, for example when Fox says, “What do I want, I think it’s probably what you want.” The orators also put the emphasis on the grassroots aspect of this campaign, compared to the Vote Leave campaign or the Remain campaign that are said to belong to the establishment. Peter Bone highlights this idea at the beginning of the ceremony: “GO is about a people organization, not an establishment organization.”³¹ Liam Fox, during his speech, did not fail to refer to the Remain campaign as “Goldman Sachs funded” and “pro-EU establishment” to support his colleague’s point.

The themes tackled during the different speeches are more or less the same. The main focus is on the supposed loss of sovereignty that the UK is experiencing due to its membership in the European Union and why Britain’s superiority over the European countries makes of the British people the most capable people when it comes to handling the country’s affairs. This idea is highlighted through different arguments, contemporary or historical. Liam Fox mentions that the UK has been “proud and independent and free” and that Britain has been able to “save the European continent twice in the twentieth century from their own falling”. Kate Hoey praises Britain in saying, “we’ve got the fifth largest economy in the world, we’ve got the fourth biggest military budget, we’re a leading member of the G7 and we’re one of the five veto-wielding members of the UN security council [...]” to conclude by asking, “why do we think we have to be timid and stay hiding in a crowd of 28?”³² David Davis, the Conservative MP who made the last speech of the Grassroots Out event in Manchester highlighted Britain’s exceptional history by naming Britain “the nation of Isaac Newton, William Shakespeare, and Rutherford and Faraday, James Watt and Alexander Fleming.”³³ in the way of this Vote Leave ad that I already talked about. After those enumerations, the British people are encouraged to take back their freedom and their fundamental rights from the European Union.

An argument that is closely linked to the loss of sovereignty is the supposed undemocratic way of functioning of the EU. This aspect was also often emphasized by the different orators of the ceremony. Kate Hoey speaks for example of an “unelected commission” and David

³⁰ Leave.EU: *Dr. Liam Fox MP launches the Grassroots Out Campaign*,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gunMEOYwXo>

³¹ Leave.EU: *Peter Bone at the Grassroots Out launch*,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzMhiTkyb1s>

³² Leave.EU: *Kate Hoey Labour MP launches the Grassroots Out Campaign*,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wuk44X32sqs>

³³ Leave.EU: *David Davis MP speaks at the Grassroots Out event in Manchester*,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTvq6tbZldo>

Davis added, “Democracy is not just about casting a vote, democracy is about being able to get rid of bad governments, and how do you get rid of the European Commission?”

The financial aspect of the European Union was also tackled by the Grassroots Out campaigners, mostly by Kate Hoey who reminded the audience of the everyday contribution of the UK to the EU, as Vote Leave did in its ads. Davis also briefly tackled the subject by mentioning how the Single Market was in fact a “disadvantage” for the UK.

On the whole, the speeches had all, in my opinion, more or less the same dynamic. They all drew a link between Britain’s history and its entitlement to more sovereignty and more democracy. Britain’s exceptionalism and difference from the rest of the Union, which was strongly emphasized in David Davis’s speech, is presented as the reason why Britain does not need the European Union anymore. Immigration was mentioned, but was definitely not a main issue. Finally, finance was also tackled, but again, less than the sovereignty topic.

D. Leave.EU

1. Presentation of the Organization

Leave.EU is an organization that campaigned for the UK to leave the European Union. The organization was originally called *The Know* but rapidly got renamed for the official launch of the campaign. The organization was created by the businessman Arron Banks and the property entrepreneur Richard Tice. Banks was especially known for being a political donor and more precisely a UKIP donor to which he gave 1 million pounds in 2014. The two men appointed the business woman Liz Bilney as CEO of the organization to run the organization’s operations. Leave.EU naturally received the support of Nigel Farage and UKIP even though the organization claimed itself to be non-political. Leave.EU presented itself as an organization “very much for the people”³⁴ as Richard Tice explained it during an interview. On the Leave.EU website we can read that the campaign identifies as “The People’s Movement” that will “represent the voice of the British grassroots”³⁵. Banks’ campaign really tried to emphasize its difference with its rival Vote Leave considered as belonging to the “Westminster bubble”³⁶. During an interview, Farage explained that Vote

³⁴ BBC, *UKIP’s Nigel Farage: I support both EU ‘Out’ campaigns*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-34499315>

³⁵ Vote Leave website, *Our Vision*, <https://leave.eu/about/>

³⁶ Kassam Raheem, *Britain’s major anti-EU pressure groups unite behind £1m Ukip donor*, <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/09/24/britains-major-anti-eu-pressure-groups-unite-behind-1m-ukip-donor/>

Leave was “putting forward business arguments” while Leave.EU was “reaching out to millions of ordinary people”.³⁷

To support his campaign and help it succeed, Banks recruited the American consultancy firm Goddard Gunster to assist him. “[...] Their experience and expertise running referendum campaigns in other jurisdictions will help Leave.EU ensure that citizens across the U.K. understand the important issues that will decide this vote. They bring fresh ideas and recognize the importance of making this a campaign about the issue, not personalities. They are without a doubt at the cutting edge of issue management and referendum understanding what the electorate want, I am sure they will help us win this battle.”³⁸

Furthermore, the organization also relied on the services of the company Cambridge Analytica for its experience in micro targeting on the internet.

2. Communication Style

As the organization is clearly presented as a non-political organization, the major representatives of the Leave.EU campaign are its two founders Arron Banks and Richard Tice, the two businessmen. The two men have been very active on TV and on the radio before and during the Brexit campaign, appearing regularly on political shows on the BBC and on Sky News or on the BBC radio and LBC radio, sharing their opinions on Brexit and debating with campaigners from the Remain side. Liz Bilney, the CEO of the campaign also often appeared on TV but less often than the two founders.

To have a better idea of what this organization is about and what it stands for, I took a look at the material posted by the organization on its YouTube page. With more than 100 videos posted on its channel the organization showed itself very active on the platform. The content is very varied and goes from TV appearances to songs through press conferences.

I found quite interesting to observe how often Arron Banks and Richard Tice reminded that Leave.EU is a non-political organization. This need to differentiate itself from the rival campaign Vote Leave is present in a large majority of the speeches and conversations of the two men. Indeed, the rivalry between both organizations has been quite fierce during the

³⁷ BBC, *UKIP's Nigel Farage: I support both EU 'Out' campaigns*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-34499315>

³⁸ Kassam Raheem, *Britain's major anti-EU pressure groups unite behind £1m Ukip donor*, <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/09/24/britains-major-anti-eu-pressure-groups-unite-behind-1m-ukip-donor/>

campaign even though both campaigned on the same side. During his speech which was followed by the presentation of the different key members of the Leave.EU organization Richard Tice clearly encouraged his supporters not to listen to the arguments of the political sphere “We must not be dominated by political voices from one party or another”³⁹. The idea of a merge between all the groups campaigning for the UK to leave the EU has been often mentioned and Banks expressed many times his will to see the different groups unify in one block but it seems the tensions and disagreements were too important.

Through its different videos, the Leave.EU campaign likes to emphasize its grassroots character through videos where we can see people campaigning on the streets and distributing leaflets to people on the streets and explaining their arguments to people passing by. They also often included young people in those videos as we understand they really tried to appeal to this share of the population. They also created a video gathering the opinions of young people around Europe about Brexit and the EU membership of the country they live in, which I find quite interesting as no other major campaign tried to appeal to the young voters as they did. I suppose that the strong presence of the organization on a platform such as YouTube is another way of reaching out to this age group.

As far as the arguments presented by the Leave.EU campaign are concerned, immigration and its consequences for the different aspects of the lives of the British people is often mentioned. The second most tackled topic is the economy and more precisely the ability of the UK to secure trade deals with the US and the Commonwealth countries.

III. Analysis of the Three Main Consequences of Brexit and how the Leave Campaigns Tackled Them

A. Analytical Method and Tools

1. Introduction

The objective of this part of my thesis will be to analyse and compare the way the major actors of the Leave side of the Brexit campaign communicated and tackled the main themes that surround the Brexit referendum. In the previous part I analysed the global communication strategy of the different campaigns, that is to say the audience those

³⁹ *Leave.EU: How to win the EU Referendum*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuPbAX6Lzhc>

campaigns targeted and the different channels they used to reach those people. In this part I would like to take a closer look at the arguments those campaigns and their key members introduced, how those arguments were built and what type of vocabulary they used. I intend to take a closer look at what they put the emphasis on and try to explain why. The objective will be to distinguish the differences they are between the way those campaigners tackled the major issues that surround Brexit. To do so, I am going to review the different debates the members of the Vote Leave campaign and the UKIP leader Nigel Farage participated to, as well as the different speeches the Vote Leave campaigners and the UKIP leader made during the referendum campaign.

In the previous part of this thesis I presented the four major groups that campaigned for the UK to leave the European Union. In this part, however, I will, as mentioned above, only analyse the arguments and speeches of the Vote Leave key campaigners and the UKIP leader. The reason for this is quite simple. The members of the Vote Leave campaign obtained, through the selection of their campaign as official Leave campaign, a wider coverage by the media which included presence on TV shows and participation to TV debates, such as the two televised debates organized by the BBC before the vote. The point is that there is a lot of material available on the internet that can be analysed. It is the same for the UKIP leader, even though not for the same reasons. Even though Farage was not a member of Vote Leave nor was his campaign the official campaign, he enjoyed thanks to his popularity, a massive media coverage. He was invited to participate in debates, such as the one with the Prime Minister David Cameron as well as to many others. Even the debates that happened outside of the TV studios have been recorded by organizers or simply supporters of the UKIP leader. As far as Leave.EU and Grassroots Out are concerned, the materials that can be analysed are quite scarce. The Leave.EU leaders, Arron Banks and Richard Tice appeared on TV but almost did not make any speech that could be analysed and even though they participated to debates, those were quite short and thus are not very representative, in my opinion. The situation is quite the same for Grassroots Out. Nigel Farage, who was also a member of Grassroots Out, put aside, the three other key members of the GO campaign (Hoey, Bone, Pursglove) did not make a lot of public apparitions, or those were not recorded and cannot therefore be analysed. The website of the campaign does not even exist anymore which does not really help either.

2. The Three Branches of Oratory

Analysing the speeches and arguments as well as the words used by politicians and campaigners to influence and convince their audience means taking a closer look at the

rhetoric of those speeches and arguments. But what exactly is rhetoric? Sam Leith, author of *You talkin' to me? Rhetoric from Aristotle to Obama* explains us that "Rhetoric is, as simply defined as possible, the art of persuasion: the attempt by one human being to influence another in words".⁴⁰ Rhetoric is a part of our everyday life, may we be conscious of it or not, but is particularly present and used in politics but not only. There are actually three branches of rhetoric, the judicial, the epideictic and the deliberative.

The first one, the judicial branch of rhetoric will, as its name suggests, intervene within the judicial world, that is to say courts. Its objective is to determine responsibilities and faults for past events. The judicial branch of oratory is, from an historical point of view, the most used branch. Indeed, before being used in politics as we're going to see later, rhetoric was used in courts in ancient Greece to establish responsibilities and faults.

The second branch of oratory is the deliberative rhetoric. If the judicial branch of oratory deals with events that happened in the past, the deliberative branch of oratory is centered on the future. Its main objective is to persuade somebody to believe something and/or to do something. It is most used in politics even though it could not be restrained to politics only. Indeed, "Any exhortation to act or not to act is deliberative by nature."⁴¹

The last branch, the epideictic branch of oratory is sometimes the one that is kind of forgotten, because less used than the two others, as "deliberative and judicial rhetoric are both at the centre of the great functions of the State".⁴² The epideictic branch of oratory covers two different aspects. The first one seeks to praise or blame people or deeds, which is why it is often considered to be mixed with the two other styles. The second aspect is called ceremonial rhetoric and covers the speeches that are made at weddings or funerals for instance.

As you probably already understood, it is the deliberative, also sometimes called legislative, rhetoric that will be the most relevant as far as this thesis is concerned.

3. Ethos, Logos, Pathos

Now that the concepts of the three branches of oratory are clear, I consider I still have to introduce certain concepts before going further into the analysis. Indeed, the three concepts of Ethos, Logos and Pathos will be regularly mentioned as they are a pretty good indicator of

⁴⁰ Sam Leith, *You talkin' to me? Rhetoric from Aristotle to Obama* - p.1

⁴¹ *op. cit.*, p.194

⁴² *op. cit.*, p.235

the dynamic and the objectives of someone's speech. Those three concepts cover the three main parts and aspects of a speech, and will help us analyse the speeches and arguments of the Leave campaigners.

The business of oratory is conventionally divided in five basic parts which are also called the five canons of rhetoric. Those five parts correspond to the way you might imagine putting a speech.⁴³ "You think up what there is to say; you devise an order in which to say it; you light on the way in which you want to say it; you get all the aforementioned into your head; and then you get on your hind legs and let rip."⁴⁴ Those parts are named *invention*, *arrangement*, *style*, *memory* and *delivery*. The part that will be of interest for this introduction will be the "invention" part.

3.1 Ethos

In this part, as an orator you are, so to say, doing your homework, that is to say thinking about the arguments that are relevant for the topic you are tackling, thinking about the arguments of your opponent and how you could counter them. More important, your arguments should also always be adapted to the audience you are addressing. Depending on your audience or the setting of your speech, the words and arguments you will use will not be the same.

Ethos is the way you present yourself at the beginning of a speech. You state why you are here and why you are qualified to speak about this subject and why what you are going to say is trustworthy. The importance of Ethos is vital to the rest of your speech as it will determine if your audience is ready to hear your arguments or not. If your audience does not believe you and is not ready to trust you to tell the truth, your arguments will not have any effect on them. This is also the reason why the appeal to Ethos almost always intends to create a bond between the orator and its audience, to "persuade your audience that you are one of them: that your interests and their interests are identical [...]".⁴⁵

3.2 Logos

If Ethos is the base of your argumentation Logos, is "what drives it forward"⁴⁶. It is what you are going to say to prove your point. It is a chain of ideas that will all lead to your conclusion, your point, your opinion. This argumentation aims at proving that your opinion is the right

⁴³ op. cit., p. 43

⁴⁴ op. cit., p. 43

⁴⁵ op. cit., p. 48

⁴⁶ op. cit., p.57

one to have if not the only one to have. The logic is the most used process in the construction of arguments. Even though logic in rhetoric cannot be compared to mathematical logic for instance. We spoke here of a series of elements that combined with each other reasonably lead to a conclusion. This logic might be wrong technically speaking, but the idea is that truth only has a small impact here, as the idea is to convince that your logic chain of elements sounds reasonable enough as to be believed by the audience. Usually, orators rely on generalizations to reach this objective.

3.3 Pathos

The last element is Pathos. The objective of Pathos will be to stir emotions, fear, pity, anger, sadness, but also joy, pride and patriotism. Pathos can be used to create powerful arguments that have absolutely nothing to do with the logic of Logos but with the same efficiency. While Pathos can be very efficient, the feelings and emotions you want your audience to feel, have to be shared feelings. You also have to be sure that you have the support of your audience, that is to say that your audience cares about the cause you defend. You cannot possibly convince your audience through emotions that death penalty should be forbidden, if your audience is convinced it is the best way to do justice.

Now that those basic concepts are clear, let's move on to the analysis of the way the key actors of the Leave side tackled the main topics that surrounds the Brexit referendum vote.

B. Access to the Single Market

1. Presentation of the Topic

The first issue that the fact of leaving the European Union implies is the fact that the UK will not have access to the European Single Market if it leaves the Union unless they secure a new trade deal with the EU that would allow them to. The Single Market allows the members of the EU to sell goods to the other countries of the EU without any tariffs being imposed, which is a good help for companies. 44% of what Britain exports is sent to the EU. In 2015, the UK sold for 223 billion pounds' worth of goods to the EU and for 288 billion pounds to the rest of the world. As far as imports are concerned, the UK imported for 291 billion pounds' worth of goods from the EU in 2015. This means that the UK has a trade deficit of 68 billion pounds for the year 2015. Being a member of the European Union also means embracing its rules and standards. Every company in the UK has to follow the rules of the European Union regarding trade and standards, even though they may not actually trade with other EU countries.

Supporters of the Leave campaign argue that the Single Market is declining and that it costs more than it brings. The Single Market would be restraining the trade opportunities of the UK and preventing the country from trading with other countries. The main argument is that the UK could do well outside the Single Market by securing trade deals with other nations such as the United States, the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) or with the countries of the Commonwealth. The emphasis is put on the countries of the Anglo-sphere, those countries where English is spoken and with whom the United Kingdom has common roots and history, and which would therefore be better trading partners.

The Remain side argues that leaving the EU and therefore the Single Market is too much of a gamble as there is no conclusive information about how much time it would take to secure new trade deals with other countries. That process can take many years to come to an end which would leave the UK vulnerable to tariffs being imposed on its international transactions. Furthermore, as Britain has actually a trade deficit regarding its trade with the EU, tariffs on trade could have a very bad impact on the British economy. Moreover, many companies that are established in the UK, because the UK is a member of the European Union, could leave the country for another member of the EU to continue to enjoy the benefits of the Single Market, which could have a strong impact on employment across the country.

2. How Did the Key Actors of the Leave Campaign Tackle this Issue?

Our objective here will be to take a look at the way the major actors of the Leave campaign tackled the issue of the Single Market, how they responded to the potential consequences of not having access to this 500 million consumer market anymore, with which words and what arguments. I will also take a look at the solutions they put forward or their own vision of the issue which is as we can expect strongly opposed to the one of the Remain campaign. When needed I will also take a look at the truthfulness of certain arguments put forward by the Leave campaign.

The Single Market is presented by the Remain side as a motor of the British economy, a generator of wealth and a creator of jobs. Those aspects will be recurrently attacked and denied during the speeches of the Leave campaigners. Indeed, in their speeches the Leave campaigners will try to convince their audience that leaving the Single Market does not mean the end of the British economy but what we could call a new beginning. Their objective will be to prove that the Single Market does not represent an advantage for the British economy but on the contrary, acts as a brake.

2.1 The Single Market Is Declining and Changing

Boris Johnson, for example, in a speech he made in May 2016 (See Appendix B) proceeded to show his audience how inefficient the Single Market had been for the British economy and began by reminding the promise of the Single Market:

“Now when the single market dawned, we were told that it was going to be a great dynamo of job and wealth creation - 800 billion euros, the Cecchini report⁴⁷ said, of extra European GDP. We were told it was going to send exports whizzing ever faster across borders. So what happened?”⁴⁸

Johnson sets up the question, the growth provisions that the establishment of the Single Market promised to generate were ambitious, but the reality turned out to be different. “British exports of goods were actually 22 percent lower, at the end of the second 20 year period, than if they had continued to grow at the rate of 20 years pre-1992” (the establishment of the Single Market).

The objective of Johnson is clear, showing that the Single Market did not give the British economy a competitive advantage compared to countries outside the Single Market. On the contrary, countries that were not members of the Single Market performed better than the UK within the same period of time:

“In the period of existence of this vaunted single market, from 1992 to 2011, there were 27 non-EU countries whose exports of goods to the rest of the EU grew faster than the UK's; and most embarrassingly of all - there were 21 countries who did better than the UK in exporting services to the other EEC 11.”⁴⁹

As he continued, Johnson put further emphasis on the comparison between the countries in the Single Market and other great economies outside of the Single Market.

“In the 20 years since the start of the Single Market, the rate of growth in the EU countries has actually been outstripped by the non-EU countries of the OECD. It is the independent

⁴⁷ Cecchini Report: A report on the gains expected as a result of the '1992' programme for unifying the European Community's internal market. The report was published in 1988 as *The European Challenge*, 1992. (<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095557323>)

⁴⁸ Appendix B, p.5

⁴⁹ Appendix B, p.5

countries that have done better; and the EU has been a microclimate of scandalously high unemployment.”⁵⁰

Johnson sets up the conclusion, independent countries did better than countries in the Single Market. The Single Market is not the growth generator it promised to be and did not generate jobs. This conclusion even pushes Johnson to call the claims made for the Single Market as ‘fraudulent’. The different points that are being made by the former Mayor of London are punctuated by rhetorical questions regarding the promises and results of the Single Market.

“So what was the decisive advantage for Britain [...]?”

“So where was this great European relaunch that was supposed to be driven by the 1992 Single Market?”

Those questions supported his argument that the Single Market did not bring what it promised to the British economy and that its efficiency in terms of growth and job creation is quite poor.

The same idea is expressed by Michael Gove who mentioned in his speech from the 19th of April 2016 in which he mentions the poor growth rate forecasts of the EU countries.

“The EU and its members are projected to grow more slowly than other advanced economies in the years ahead. Eurozone members are projected to grow at 1.5% while the US is projected to grow at 2.4%, China at 6.5%, New Zealand at 2.0%, Australia at 2.5% and India at 7.5%.”⁵¹

The argument remains the same, the Single Market that is supposed to boost the EU countries’ economies is not reaching its objectives.

As far as Nigel Farage is concerned, he chose in his speech of the opening of the “Brexit Spectator Debate” to underline the cost of being a member of the European Union to justify the decision of leaving the Union. The financial cost of the EU is a topic that will be tackled in more details later on but the cost mentioned here stands for the rules that countries have to follow if they want to have access to the Single Market. It is commonly admitted by the Remain side that the regulations that are to be followed to have access to the Single Market

⁵⁰ Appendix B, p.6

⁵¹ Appendix A, p.15

are a good trade-off as the Single Market benefits the country economically speaking. However, Nigel Farage has quite a different opinion about it:

“The fact is ladies and gentlemen; we don’t have a good deal with the European Union. For access to the Single Market we pay a membership fee, we have the free movement of people. We have a massive regulatory burden and we are prohibited and stopped from making our own trade friendships with the rest of the world.”⁵²

According to the UKIP Leader, the benefits of the Single Market do not justify its cost.

During the ITV debate on Brexit, Farage also tackled this topic, in a different way but still with the same objective of undermining the Single Market’s legitimacy:

“Why did we join 40 years ago? What did my mom and dad generation vote for, 40 years ago? Tariff-free access to the European market. 40 years on, what we find is that tariffs across the world have come down because of globalization and for the benefit of tariff-free access to a market that sells us more than we sell them that regulates not just the 12% of the economy that sells to the EU but the other 88% as well, gives us unlimited free movement of people and bounds us making our own trade deals with the rest of the world.”⁵³

Farage concludes by saying: “Frankly the cost of membership now far outweighs any benefit.” Farage’s argument is quite simple but efficient. He relies on the past to show that, today, the Single Market has no legitimacy anymore. As a matter of fact, Farage will very often rely on history to support his arguments, it is something very recurrent that we will be able to observe again when we tackle the other topics of the Brexit debate.

We can already here observe small differences in the way the two groups chose to tackle the subject. The speakers of Vote Leave, Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, relied on figures to show that Britain should leave because the Single Market didn’t deliver what it promised while Farage justified his point by pointing out that the Single Market is not anymore what it was originally supposed to be, or what the British people voted for as it was about to be established.

⁵² The Spectator, *The Spectator Debate: Should Britain leave the EU?*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jcrb6tf5uCA> - 1'20

⁵³ ITV, *ITV #Brexit Debate*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOmaQx3qtc> - 6'45

2.2 Leaving the Single Market Means Tariffs Coming Back

The Single Market guarantees that there will be no tariffs for the trade of goods or services between its members. Leaving the Single Market means that the countries of the Eurozone could impose tariffs on the UK as they do for other countries with whom the EU does not have a trade deal that says otherwise. Tariffs would mean it is more difficult and expensive to do trade with the UK and this could have a strong impact on the economy and on jobs. Let's take a look at how the Leave campaigners tackled this issue.

When reacting to the Remain camp saying that tariffs could be imposed on the UK, Boris Johnson made his opinion on the matter quite clear during the BBC *Great Debate*:

"This country receives about a fifth of Germany's entire car manufacturing output. 820,000 vehicles a year, do you seriously suppose that they are going to be so insane as to allow tariffs to be imposed between Britain and Germany?"⁵⁴

According to the former Mayor of London, the Eurozone countries would not dare imposing tariffs on the UK as it represents one of their largest if not their largest export market and it would have huge consequences for the Eurozone's economies.

Michael Gove expressed the same idea but went even further:

"The core of our new arrangement with the EU is clear. There is a free trade zone stretching from Iceland to Turkey that all European nations have access to, regardless of whether they are in or out of the euro or the EU. After we vote to leave we will remain in this zone. The suggestion that Bosnia, Serbia, Albania and the Ukraine would remain part of this free trade area - and Britain would be on the outside with just Belarus - is as credible as Jean-Claude Juncker joining UKIP."⁵⁵

Gove showed himself openly confident regarding Britain's trade future with the EU. According to him, it is a question of common sense that Britain will remain somehow in the Single Market without accepting its conditions. We can also observe the use of a metaphor about the EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker to reinforce his argument and mock his opponent's argument as to make the fear of an economic decline because of Brexit look unfounded.

⁵⁴ BBC: *The Great Debate – EU Referendum*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1pV_RPLA2I - 10'15

⁵⁵ Appendix A, p.9,10

Michael Gove's confidence about this topic is justified by the same idea Boris Johnson expressed during the BBC, "Great Debate". The Eurozone would not dare imposing tariffs on Britain because it would hurt their economies:

"As our European friends adjust to the referendum result they will quickly calculate that it is in their own interest to maintain the current free trade arrangements they enjoy with the UK. After all they sell far more to us than we do to them."⁵⁶

Gove continued his argumentation by mentioning the same example Johnson did, explaining that "[...] the idea that the German government would damage its car manufacturers - and impoverish workers in those factories [...] is ridiculous"⁵⁷ and also mentioned the same type of argument citing the French farmers and the Italian designers. After giving local examples, he turned the argument towards the whole Eurozone: "and the idea that all of them - and 24 other nations - would have as their highest economic priority in the months ahead making it more difficult to sell to Britain - and the belief that they would bend all their diplomatic, political and financial muscle to that sole end - is preposterous."⁵⁸

When we take a look at the words Johnson and Gove used in their argumentation regarding this topic we can clearly see how hard they tried to mock or to undermine the credibility of the point made by the Remain side. However, they did not offer anything relevant to answer this threat. The whole argument was based on assumptions and a bet that the Eurozone will act in their favour, which might not be the case. Their solution to avoid this topic is to draw the audience's attention away by mocking and undermining the legitimacy of the point made by the Remain side.

Let's now take a look at the way Farage tackled this issue. I was quite surprised to observe that the one that often has the most arguable arguments had for once what I would call a more reasoned argument, at least in the surface.

"Every country in the world accesses the Single Market and even in the worst case scenario, that Britain does not have a successful renegotiation and simply has to rely on WTO rules, even in that scenario the cost of tariffs will be less than our net contribution. So don't listen to

⁵⁶ Appendix A, p.10

⁵⁷ Appendix A p.10

⁵⁸ Appendix A p.11

politicians who have never bought or sold a cargo or a product or a good in their lives. Business is done because consumers choose to buy products at the right price.”⁵⁹

What I mean by a “more reasoned argument”, in comparison with Johnson and Gove, is that, in this case, Farage did not try to slur over the question by mocking the opponent’s argument but actually considered that Britain could at the end of the negotiations with the EU not get a good trade deal and/or access to the Single Market. He actually proposed some kind of solution or at least an answer to the point made by the Remain campaign. This solution would be to rely on the WTO rules that regulate trade between nations to control and determine the conditions of Britain’s trade with other countries of the EU. Of course this solution remains quite arguable because it is based on the idea that the cost generated by tariffs (determined by the WTO rules) will not exceed the UK’s actual net contribution to the EU. This reasoning indeed implies two main problems.

First, it is currently impossible to calculate what possibly imposed tariffs would cost, as we do not even know if tariffs are going to be imposed. Farage’s argument has therefore no value as far as facts are concerned. The *fullfact.org* website whose objective is to establish facts over controversial topics give more information about this question:

“After the UK leaves the EU, the future rules on trade will depend on what kind of agreement, if any, the UK reaches with the EU after its departure. Trade in services will be particularly important, because about 80% of the UK economy comes from providing services. The future trade rules on services for a country outside the EU are particularly difficult to predict.”⁶⁰ “This is because even at present for many service sector industries, the single market is far from complete and obstacles remain to true integration of the market.”⁶¹

Second, as we will see in the topic devoted to the cost of the European Union, the way the net contribution of the UK to the EU budget has been calculated is quite arguable. We therefore have an argument based, on the one hand, on no facts and, on the other hand, arguable facts. This argument seemed more reasoned at first, but when we take a deeper look at it, lacks of facts to back it up.

⁵⁹ The Spectator, *The Spectator Debate: Should Britain leave the EU?*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jcrl6tf5uCA> - 1’50

⁶⁰ Full Fact Team, *Everything you might want to know about the UK’s trade with the EU*,
<https://fullfact.org/europe/uk-eu-trade/>

⁶¹ UK in a Changing Europe Fellows and Full Fact Team, *EU facts behind the claims: trade rules*,
<https://fullfact.org/europe/eu-facts-behind-claims-trade-rules/>

Another interesting thing to point out in Farage's argument is the ethos appeal that we can observe at the end of the argument: "don't listen to politicians who have never bought or sold a cargo or a product or a good in their lives". The ethos appeal has for objective to prove, through our status or your expertise that what you say is trustworthy, and this is exactly what we can see here. Why should you believe me and not them? Because I know what it is to do trade goods with other nations and the others do not. Indeed, before starting his political career, Nigel Farage was actually a commodity trader. The objective is clear and simple, reinforcing the strength of your argument and undermining your opponent's credibility.

2.3 The Single Market, a Regulatory Burden

One of the reasons the Leave campaign often put forward to justify their opinion that Britain should leave the European Union and the Single Market is because the latter represents too much of a regulatory burden. That is to say, there are too many rules which prevent small businesses from growing and in the end harm the British economy. The main problem is that the EU rules are to be followed by all businesses within the EU even though they might not be making any trade with the EU.

Michael Gove, during his interview on the Sky News panel shared with strong words his opinion regarding this topic: "I know the European Union depresses employment and destroys jobs."⁶² Gove, when naming "The EU" is actually talking about the EU regulations that all British businesses have to comply with. The reason of this animosity towards the EU regulations comes shortly after:

"I know what it's like to see someone lose their job as a result of the European Union, I saw my father lose his job, I saw his business go to the wall. I saw the 24 people whom he employed also lose their job"—I'm one of many who have seen their friends lose their jobs, lose their income and lose their livelihood as a result of the European Union."⁶³

We understand in the course of the same discussion that Gove's father had a fishing business that went bankrupt allegedly because of the burden of the EU legislation. By sharing his own life experience and the distress the latter might have caused to him and his family, Gove tries to create a bond with his audience. This is clearly what we can call an appeal to pathos, that is to say an appeal to emotion. In this case compassion but also approbation as he will reach out to the many others that might have lost their job or their

⁶² Sky News, *EU: In Or Out?*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8D8AoC-5i8> - 7'57

⁶³ Sky News, *EU: In Or Out?*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8D8AoC-5i8> - 14'45

business or both because of the EU. This is also a very effective way of legitimating the decision to leave the EU.

Boris Johnson, as far as he is concerned, chose to use figures over feelings to support his argument. During the BBC “Great Debate” we could hear him say:

“I’ve been listening to businesses large and small up and down our country over the last few months and I’ve been amazed how many passionately want to come out of the Single Market because of the rules and regulations that it imposes on 100% of UK businesses even though only 6% actually do any trade with the rest of the EU.”⁶⁴

The argument remains the same, why should we potentially harm 94% of the British business with EU rules when they are not even doing trade with the Eurozone countries? It becomes interesting when we take a look at what Nigel Farage says about it:

“Just to give you a sense of perspective, right, only 12% of the entire British economy, 12% is exports to the European Union.”⁶⁵ Or again: “[...] that [The Single Market] regulates not just the 12% of the economy that sells to the EU but the other 88% as well”.⁶⁶

The argument remains the same and the pursued objective is also the same, showing that the number of businesses that trade with the EU and the share of the British economy that corresponds to the trade with the EU is not very large and therefore more or less negligible. However, both Boris and Nigel chose to express more or less the same idea with a different approach; the former Mayor of London focusing on the percentage of businesses, and the UKIP Leader focusing on the share of the economy. As Farage’s figure seems big at first sight, he puts the emphasis on the word “only” twice in the sentence to make people think that this figure is not as important as it seems, even though it is.

The Single Market is a huge part of the debate regarding the decision to remain or to leave the European Union and as we saw, the way the different actors of the Leave campaign tackled the subject is different, with different arguments and strategies. Often, those arguments have the same objective, undermining the credibility or the importance of the Single Market, but the approach is different according to the campaign you listen to. We saw

⁶⁴ BBC: *The Great Debate – EU Referendum*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1pV_RPLA2I - 10’40

⁶⁵ ITV, *ITV #Brexit Debate*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOmaQx3qtc> - 5’15

⁶⁶ ITV, *ITV #Brexit Debate*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOmaQx3qtc> - 7’05

the orators using figures and logic to reinforce their arguments, but also feelings or their sole self-confidence to convince their audience.

C. Immigration

1. Presentation of the Topic

Freedom of movement, this EU regulation which allows citizens from countries of the European Union to travel, live and work in EU countries has become one of the key issues if not the most important issue of this referendum on the membership of the United Kingdom to the EU. The number of EU citizens leaving their home country to live in the UK greatly raised after the expansion of the EU in 2004 (East European countries, such as Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, ...). In 2015, there were 3 million non-British citizens from the EU living in the UK. When we compare it with the number of British citizens living in another EU country we can see that 1.2 million British moved to another EU country. The fact that the immigration figures kept on rising has become controversial as it is considered by the Leave campaign to put too much pressure on the British public services such as the NHS, as people are allowed to enter the country and ask for free healthcare, and the school system where there is a lack of available places in schools. An increasing number of migrants coming into Britain also represents according to the Leave Campaign a risk for the security of the British people. Indeed, terrorists could fake their migrant status to come into Britain to commit an attack.

As the UK is not a member of the Schengen area, EU citizens have to show their passport to enter the country. The EU citizens that are considered to pose a serious threat to the national security can be blocked at the border, but the others can enter freely. Following the migration crisis and the will of many migrants to reach the United Kingdom, open borders are considered by the Leave campaign to be a serious threat to the national security.

On the other side, the Remain campaign puts the emphasis on the contribution of EU migrants to the British economy and stresses the fact that without EU migration, there would be a lot of open positions that would not be occupied within the British public services.

2. How Did the Key Actors of the Leave Campaign Tackle this Issue?

Here again we are going to take a look at the different arguments the Leave Campaign and its key members put forward to legitimate the vote to leave the EU as far as immigration is concerned. This topic, more than the others, was and still remains very sensitive. The topic

was so sensitive and created so much tension that it even led to the dreadful murder of Jo Cox towards the end of the campaign. Scaremongering and scapegoating tactics and arguments played an important role in the violent turn the campaign took as far as immigration was concerned. However, this is not what we are going to tackle in this part as our objective will be to observe and compare the different arguments put forward by the Leave campaign main actors during the campaign. The immigration topic will be divided in three parts each of them tackling an aspect of the debate linked to immigration. The first part will tackle the insecurity question, the idea that immigration poses a threat to the national security, while the second will tackle the pressure put by immigration on the British public services. I will finally briefly discuss the solution put forward by the Leave campaign to overcome the immigration problems.

2.1 More Immigration Leads to Growing Insecurity

The rising number of people immigrating to the United Kingdom has often been linked to a risk for the national security. Michael Gove, for instance, tackled this subject during his speech made in April 2016. Talking about migrants:

“We have no proper control over whether that individual’s presence here is economically beneficial, conducive to the public good or in our national interest. We cannot effectively screen new arrivals for qualifications, extremist connections or past criminality. We have given away control over how we implement the vital 1951 UN Convention on asylum to the European Court. We cannot even deport convicted murderers.”⁶⁷

An interesting thing about Gove’s argument is that it is primarily an economic argument before being an argument about security while both ideas are expressed in the same paragraph. Indeed, Gove starts the argument by underlining the fact that the UK is unable to determine if people are going to be beneficial to the country before underlining the fact that it is impossible to check if those people might represent a danger to the national security. “We cannot effectively screen new arrivals for qualifications, extremist connections or past criminality.” This sentence shows us perfectly what is Gove’s priority regarding the immigration.

When we take a look at Farage’s arguments regarding immigration during his speech at the Grassroots Out launch ceremony, we can see that the same economy-security dynamic is also put in place but with some differences nevertheless:

⁶⁷ Appendix A, p.15

“Too many people coming into our country too quickly has driven down the wages for ordinary workers in Britain, has put intolerable pressure on primary school places, the health service, all of our vital public services.”⁶⁸ [...] “Two of those Paris murderers got back into the European Union posing as migrants coming through the Greek islands. The best way to insure ourselves against future terrorism is to take back control of our borders. And I don’t know about you but I think what we saw happening on New Year’s Eve in Cologne was genuinely shocking. There was no room for complacency here, we know that in this country dreadful things have taken place in towns like Rotherham. But perhaps to see what was happening when a thousand young men in public sexually molesting women in the street I think was a very great shock. And the truth is ladies and gentlemen that the European Union has made a massive, massive error with its open-door policy to anyone that wants to come. An error compounded hideously by Angela Merkel, but bear this in mind, those thousand young men outside Cologne train station on New Year’s Eve will in three to four years all have German passports, which means they will be able to come to our country. And I’m sorry, I’m a great believer in helping those around the world in need, but it’s time to put interests of men and women in our communities first and we’re going to do that by taking back control.”

Farage, like Gove, starts his argument by pointing out the economic consequences of uncontrolled immigration for the wages but also for the public services. Then, Farage rapidly takes on the security topic by mentioning the attacks in Paris to show how immigration is dangerous for national security. The next example Farage uses to show the danger posed by immigration is the sexual assaults that happened in Cologne on New Year’s Eve at the end of 2015. He doesn’t miss the opportunity to point out that those people are migrants that the German Chancellor Angela Merkel let in and that those events happened because of her and her immigration policy. We can also observe a pathos appeal towards the end of the argument “those thousand young men outside Cologne train station within three or four years will have German passports which means they will be able to come to our country”. Farage is clearly encouraging his audience to fear migrants and what they could do once in Britain and implies that voting to remain in the European Union would mean letting similar events to the ones of Cologne, happen in the UK in the future. A very powerful argument as nobody wants to be the victim of a terrorist attack nor of a sexual assault. However, this argument also suggests that migrants are either terrorists or molesters which again stigmatise people generally seeking help.

⁶⁸ Leave.EU, *Nigel Farage at the Grassroots Out launch in Kettering*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Anb6ljuAwrg> - 10’37

When we take a look at Gove's and Farage's argument when can see they tackle the subject with a similar dynamic, that is to say mentioning the economic consequences of migration before mentioning the risk it represents for security. However, the similarity stops there as Gove very generally explained how the EU is preventing the UK from guaranteeing its national security because of its regulations while Farage chose to use fear and dreadful events happening in the EU to prove that immigration poses a threat to national security and to encourage his audience to leave the EU to avoid similar events in Britain.

2.2 Immigration is Putting too much Pressure on the Public Services

The role played by immigration in the problems the British public services are facing is also a key topic when we talk about immigration and the issues that it creates. In this part we will take a look at what Johnson, Stuart and Farage had to say about it.

Johnson, during the BBC Great Debate: "The first thing we should do tonight in the discussion about immigration is celebrate immigrants and immigration for everything they do for our country. I speak entirely personally, my family has benefited massively from immigration and so have millions of people watching us tonight. The crucial thing though is to look in an informed way at what is going on, look at the numbers, look at the pressure that large scale uncontrolled immigration is causing to public services such as the NHS and the downward pressure on wages that I already mentioned [...]." ⁶⁹

In this case, Johnson is starting the debate over immigration and begins his argument by praising immigrants and immigration in a pathos appeal to sympathy towards immigrants and presents himself as being in favour of immigration. This part is actually a bit awkward as it sounds very fake especially as we know the position of the Vote Leave campaign towards immigration. But Johnson knows that the Leave campaign many times fuelled the controversy over immigration and often got accused of scapegoating migrants and scaremongering. For this reason, Johnson tries to ease the audience and presents himself as being in favour of immigration. However, as I previously said, this attempt really sounds fake and, according to me, does not reach its objective. Even worse, it even caused the hilarity of his opponent from the Remain side. The rest of the argument, however, is based on logic. Johnson implies that if we take a look at this issue "in an informed way" and if we "take a look at the numbers" the only thing we can do is to realize that the EU immigration policy is wrong and that leaving is the solution.

⁶⁹ BBC: *The Great Debate – EU Referendum* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1pV_RPLA2I - 41'36

During the same debate, Gisela Stuart, the chairwoman of Vote Leave also tackled the immigration subject and its consequences for the public services:

“I’m an immigrant, I’m also a mother and a grandmother and I think it is important that as we plan for our public services, like the NHS, like the schools, like housing that we actually can plan ahead properly, and if we have uncontrolled immigration, with the best will of the world we will have situations like in the west midlands where there are 50,000 primary school places missing. This is simply a statement of fact if you cannot plan. [...] And I think this is really important, the current immigration policy unfairly discriminates against non-EU citizens.”⁷⁰

What we can see here is, in my opinion, a failed attempt to create an appeal to ethos. The purpose of ethos is to show how what you are saying is the truth and why it is trustworthy, or to prove by your job function or your status that you have a certain ability or expertise to talk about a certain subject. However, in this case, the fact that Stuart is or is not an immigrant does not change or bring anything to what she is saying right after. If she were to talk about the integration of migrants in the British society, she surely could have said that she was an immigrant because it would have given credibility to her opinion or arguments. In this case, however, it really sounds like a second broken attempt (following the one of Boris Johnson) to legitimate the arguments of Vote Leave regarding immigration; I am an immigrant and even I want to leave, we are not against immigrants.

The second part of the appeal to ethos could actually make more sense, a parallelism between the spending plans of a state and the one a mother has to do when she has to handle the household’s budget is interesting even though a bit audacious as a State is a bit more complicated to run than a Household. Another way to interpret this argument could be an appeal to pathos. As a mother or a grandmother, you don’t want your child to end up with no school place as there is a shortage of school places and as immigration is the source of this problem, leaving the European Union in favour of a more controlled immigration is the solution. In my opinion, this argument is a bit muddled as it can be understood in very different ways. But again, it could also be considered as a strength as more people could identify to it.

⁷⁰ BBC: *The Great Debate – EU Referendum*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1pV_RPLA2I - 44’20

Let's now take a look at what Farage said about this topic. He tackled the issue of the public services during his opening speech he made at the Spectator Debate:

"[...] We've lost control over our borders, net migration into Britain is now running at ten times the post-war average, and that is if you believe the official figures, which frankly, I don't. We have to build a new house in this country every seven minutes, just to cope with current levels of immigration. We are short tens of thousands of primary-school places for this September and our National Health Service is under literally intolerable pressure."⁷¹

Here again we can observe how Farage tries to put the emphasis on his non-political, non-elite image by doubting the official numbers that come from the government. According to Farage, The British Government would allegedly be trying to make the population believe that the situation is less alarming than what it really is by faking numbers. In the meantime, Farage is trying to make the situation look worse to make people believe the reality is worse than what the government says. We can also see in the words that are used ("intolerable pressure") how Farage tries to make the situation look very serious. (Even though I do not deny that the NHS is in a difficult situation.)

The message conveyed by Vote Leave and UKIP is obviously the same. However, the way the arguments were expressed was again very different. Johnson tried at the beginning of the debate over immigration to reinforce the immigration-friendly character of his organization by praising immigrants, even though with little success, while Stuart tried to create an appeal to ethos by underlining her foreign descent to reinforce her point, but again with few effectiveness. Farage, on the other hand chose to make the situation look worse and more serious than what it is to convince his audience of the necessity of leaving the EU while underlining the antagonism between him and the government.

2.3 An Australian Point System

The key actors of the Leave campaign are not very fond of the current EU immigration policy, but do they have a solution, a better idea that would solve the current problems? They do, even though they do not say how this will be put in place and how precisely it will work. The Leave campaigners all agree to say that the best solution to the current migration crisis is to put in place an Australian-style point-based system to regulate immigration.

⁷¹ The Spectator, *The Spectator Debate: Should Britain leave the EU?*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jcrb6tf5uCA> - 3'33

Michael Gove: "Instead of a European open-door migration policy we could - if a future Government wanted it - have an Australian points-based migration policy."⁷²

Nigel Farage: "What we need to do is take back control of our borders, to say that our passport shouldn't be available to 508 million people and let's put in place - post Brexit a sensible, proper, normal immigration policy along the style the Australians do."⁷³

Boris Johnson: "What we think should happen is an Australian-style point based system so we get the people we need for the NHS [...]. The only way to do this is to vote leave and take back control."⁷⁴

Gisela Stuart: "We could consider a points system that favours those with the skills that can help Britain."⁷⁵

This solution seems quite fair at first glance and would allow the country to organize and control legal immigration in a better way. However, when we take a closer look at the Australian immigration policy, we quickly realize that this model is far from being perfect and is actually highly controversial. This system raises an important question. What do you do with people that arrived on the British soil illegally? As far as Australia and its zero tolerance policy over illegal immigration is concerned, the illegal migrants are imprisoned in detention centres located on different small islands that surround the country such as Christmas Island, the island of Nauru or the island of Manus which belongs to the Papua New Guinean territory. Those facilities are subject to countless controversies because of the life conditions in those centres as well as because of allegations of mistreatment and torture.^{76,77} I think it is really interesting and important to highlight the reality of a model that the whole Leave campaign is praising and which in the end appears to be highly immoral. I truly fear the British people who voted in favour of this Australian point-based system through their vote to leave the EU were absolutely unaware of the way it was actually put in place in Australia,

⁷² Appendix A, p.16

⁷³ The Spectator, *The Spectator Debate: Should Britain leave the EU?*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jcrlb6tf5uCA> - 4'07

⁷⁴ BBC: *The Great Debate – EU Referendum*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1pV_RPLA2I - 42'35

⁷⁵ Appendix C, p.5

⁷⁶ Davidson Helen, *Manus Island: dark chapter of Australian immigration poised to close*, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/oct/29/manus-island-dark-chapter-of-australian-immigration-poised-to-close>

⁷⁷ Liljas Per, *The human cost of Australia's offshore detention centres, where freedom does not equal opportunity*, <https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/long-reads/article/2143663/human-cost-australias-offshore-detention-centres>

which I find quite worrying. Here again we can see that the Leave campaign is offering a solution that in reality is not one or only the premises of something that could be a part of a solution.

D. The Irish Border

The Irish border issue could be called the forgotten issue of this referendum. Indeed, it is very hard to find speeches or debates over this issue. From a Belgian point of view it seemed to me that the fact that the UK was leaving the European Union would constitute a big problem regarding the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This border has quite a heavy historical background but things have been going well in this region for 30 years, mainly because there is no legal or physical border between the two parts of the island. However, following the decision of the UK to leave the European Union, people living near the border or working on the other side of this border fear the comeback of the previous checks that were taking place when traveling from one country to the other. In December 2016, *The Guardian* published an article⁷⁸ in which we understand that the perspective of having a hard border between the two countries again represents a real concern for the population.

The only political opinion I have been able to find about this topic is the one of Nigel Farage who briefly tackled the subject during a debate at Ulster University in Northern Ireland. According to him “things will pretty much continue as they are now”⁷⁹ as “Ireland is not a part of Schengen”. Despite his opponent, Vernon Coaker, trying to show him that the matter was more complicated than that, the UKIP leader didn’t change his statement and as his opponent was insisting, insinuated that he was trying to scaremonger. It was, in my opinion, a way of getting away with it without answering the question and closing the topic.

Despite Nigel’s confident affirmation that the Irish border would not be a problem within the leaving process, it happened, in the end, not to be so simple. The funny thing is that it is only now, in June 2018 that the subject is actually being seriously discussed between the Republic of Ireland, the UK and the EU as a part of the negotiations of the leaving process. The fact that the border between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland becomes the border between an independent UK and a Republic of Ireland member of the European Union implies that there is no free movement of people between both countries anymore.

⁷⁸ Lehman Anna, *On the Irish border, people fear Brexit will bring back the bad old days*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/16/on-the-irish-border-people-fear-brexit-will-bring-back-the-bad-old-days>

⁷⁹ Nigel Farage & Vernon Coaker – Northern Ireland EU Debate @ Ulster University, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ku4voAVMoqk> - 15’

This situation causes a real problem for both parts of Ireland that will not accept having a hard border between the two territories.

The EU recently proposed a “common regulatory area” in which Northern Ireland would be considered to be inside the customs union, and this, even if the UK left the Union. This would allow the crossing of the border without any control to remain possible. However, the British Prime Minister opposed herself to this proposition: “Just as it would be unacceptable to go back to a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland [after Brexit], it would also be unacceptable to break up the United Kingdom’s own common market by creating a customs and regulatory border down the Irish Sea.”⁸⁰

Even though this topic was not addressed during the campaign I consider it was important to mention it. Indeed, even though this topic was not or almost not tackled during the campaign it remains a strong driver of controversy within the negotiations of the leaving process. It is astonishing to realize that serious topics and potential problems regarding the leaving process have absolutely not been tackled during the campaign. It is, in my opinion, probably due to the fact that the Leave campaign had absolutely no idea how it would work out, but very well knew it would not be that easy. As we observe in Farage’s debate, it is not something he was willing to expend a lot on.

E. The Cost of the European Union

1. Presentation of the Topic

What we could call the “membership fee” to the European Union, that is to say the amount of money that the members of the EU give to the Union as a contribution to its budget, has also been a recurrent topic during the referendum campaign. The argument put forward by the Leave campaign is that Britain is sending 350 million pounds every week to the European Union. A recurrent argument that has even been painted on the battle bus of the Vote Leave campaign on which we could read: “We send the EU 350 pounds a week, let’s fund our NHS instead.”

This figure created a real controversy that I was referring to when I talked about this war of figures earlier on. On the one side, the Leave campaign defended this figure during the whole campaign and even claimed it was not correct but was in reality higher than that. On

⁸⁰ GOV.UK: *PM speech on our future economic partnership with the European Union*, 2 March 2018 <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-on-our-future-economic-partnership-with-the-european-union>

the other side, the Remain campaign, during speeches and debates, tried to show and prove that this figure was misleading if not completely wrong, however, with only little effect on the Vote Leave campaigners and supporters. This controversy even led the influential Conservative MP Sarah Wollaston to change from side towards the end of the campaign and claimed that this figure “simply isn’t true”⁸¹.

In a very interesting article from *The Guardian*,⁸² John Henley takes a look back at the facts and explains why this number just cannot be taken seriously. According to Henley, the first problem with the statement “We send the EU 350 pounds a week” is the verb “send”. Indeed, the contribution of the UK to the EU “does not leave (and has never left) Britain each week, nor does it arrive in Brussels”. Then, the amount itself is wrong because it does not take the EU rebate into account. Out of the 17.8bn that the UK contributes to the EU, Britain gets 4.9bn back in the form of a rebate. This rebate is deducted even before any payment has been made which again confirms the untruthful character of this number.

This rebate has also been a subject of controversy. The Vote Leave campaign, as we will see later, claimed that the UK could not count on this rebate as it was determined by the EU and could be reduced. The UK has, however, a veto right on any modification of its rebate recalculation. Overall, according to this article the UK’s contribution to the EU would equal 136 million pounds a week or 40% less than what the Vote Leave campaign claimed.

2. How Did the Key Actors of the Leave Campaign Tackle this Issue?

The cost of the European Union has really been one of the main arguments of the Vote Leave campaign. On TV, on YouTube, on the campaign bus, this argument was pointed out by the Vote Leave campaigners. Of course, this argument also comes back in the different speeches of the key actors of the campaign. The UKIP leader also didn’t miss the opportunity to use the same figure to support his arguments.

Even though I saw arguments about the cost of the EU in almost every speech of the Vote Leave campaigners I think Michael Gove is the one that extended the most on the topic:

⁸¹ Quinn Ben, *Dr Sarah Wollaston defects from Vote Leave to remain campaign*, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/09/dr-sarah-wollaston-defects-vote-leave-remain-campaign>

⁸² Henley John, *Why Vote Leave’s £350m weekly EU cost claim is wrong*, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/reality-check/2016/may/23/does-the-eu-really-cost-the-uk-350m-a-week>

“If we left the EU we would take back control over nineteen billion pounds which we currently hand over every year - about £350 million each and every week. Now it is true that we get some of that money back - £4.4 billion through a negotiated rebate - and £4.8 billion in money the EU spends in this country on our behalf.” [...] It is also important to recognize that our rebate is not a permanent and unalterable feature of our membership anchored in the treaties. It’s a negotiated settlement - which has had to be re-negotiated before - and which could be eroded, whittled away or rendered less and less significant in future negotiations. One of the reasons we have the rebate is fear Britain might leave. Once we’ve voted to stay then it will be open season on that sum. I also acknowledge that some of the money we send over we get back - whether in support for farmers or scientists - although we don’t control exactly where it goes. And we don’t know how efficiently that money is allocated to those who really need it because of the opaque nature of the EU’s bureaucracy. Indeed, there’s a lot of evidence the money sticks to bureaucratic fingers rather than going to the frontline.”⁸³

I think this part of Gove’s speech is particularly interesting because the Leave campaigner actually goes further in the reflection and the argumentation than the general “we give the EU 350 million a week, let’s leave and fund the NHS” argument. Gove actually also tackles the rebate that Britain “gets back” from the EU and the right use of this money by the EU. For each of those topics, the argument starts with a concession “Now it is true”, “I also acknowledge” which will allow him to reinforce his following argument. In the first part of the argument, Gove seeks to make his audience believe that voting to remain in the EU means giving more money to the EU in the future and that Britain does not have the power to stop this rise from happening. A lot of people identify to this argument as many households in the British society experience financial difficulties and the idea of giving more money to the EU in the future is definitely not something they would agree on. Furthermore, the EU is often presented as an authoritarian organization whom will to reduce the national rebate cannot be opposed.

The following part of the argument will continue to reinforce this idea that Britain is powerless against the EU: “we don’t control exactly where it goes” which reinforces this idea of a general loss of control and sovereignty that the UK is experiencing because of its membership to the EU. The only thing missing here is the usual “Let’s take back control and leave” which usually punctuates each and every end of argument from Vote Leave, but I may be digressing a bit here. The last part of the argument goes even further in the

⁸³ Appendix A, p.12,13

demonization of the EU. The very last sentence of this passage particularly struck me as Gove more or less accused the EU of embezzlement. “[...] sticks to bureaucratic fingers rather than going to the frontline”. Even if those accusations were not real and only a way to reinforce his argument they contributed to give the EU a bad image to convince the audience that leaving is the right thing to do.

Nigel Farage, the UKIP leader also tackled this issue during his speeches but to a lesser extent than his colleague from Vote Leave.

“We will be better off economically, able to make our own trade deals not squandering over 50 million pounds a day as a contribution. We could build a new district hospital every week in this country for the cost of our EU contributions I know which I’d prefer and I’m sure you do too.”⁸⁴

We can observe here the use of “squander” to qualify the financial contribution of Britain to the EU. Farage, as Gove did aim at undermining the credibility of the EU and the legitimacy of this contribution. What I find quite interesting is the fact that Farage is using in the second part of the argument, an argument that was originally used by the Vote Leave campaigners in their speeches and adverts as we saw earlier. I feel it gave more credibility to the Leave campaign as a whole which contrasts with the different rows that happened between the different groups which in the end undermined the credibility of the Leave side. Farage seemed to be willing to create bonds between the UKIP campaign and the Vote Leave campaign even though the latter were not really interested in the idea.

IV. Conclusion

Brexit is a complex topic, which links history and present days, which mixes fears and hopes. Brexit did not happen by accident, the Euroscepticism that led the British people to vote to leave the European Union developed rapidly throughout the British society as the decision to join this union had never been unanimous in the first place. Succeeding policies from Labour and Conservatives reinforced this Eurosceptic feeling. Later, the 2008 crisis and its consequences contributed to this feeling that Britain’s future might be better off out of the European Union.

⁸⁴ Leave.EU, *Nigel Farage at the Grassroots Out launch in Kettering*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Anb6ljuAwrg> - 9’45

The first objective of this thesis was to take a deeper look at the Leave campaign as a whole and analyse the way the different organisations of the Leave side communicated during the campaign, what they put the emphasis on, what topic they put the emphasis on and the channels they used to communicate.

Even though the Leave campaign, as a whole, pursued the same objective, leaving the EU, the different organisations were very different, which also might explain why they haven't been able to unify as a big block as the Remain side did. This might be explained by the fact that many campaigners that decided to campaign for the Leave side did it for very different reasons. Leave.EU, for instance, ran by businessmen was clearly campaigning out of economic interests while many would say that many campaigners from Vote Leave were campaigning out of political interests.

Then, when we take a look at the communication style of the different organizations we can also observe major differences. While the official campaign Vote Leave was running a campaign based on figures about the economy and immigration to try to convince its audience of the need to leave the EU, Nigel Farage, the leader of UKIP chose to create controversies one after the other, mainly with arguable statements over immigration. We then have Grassroots Out, which tried to put the emphasis on the grassroots character of its campaign to create a bond with the population and Leave.EU which had a non-controversial communication style, with its two founders Arron Banks and Richard Tice often sharing opinions and arguments on TV. However, both the GO and Leave.EU campaigns ran a bit out of steam after their defeat in the election for the position of official Leave campaign.

In the second part of this thesis, I analysed, from a rhetorical point of view, the speeches of the key actors of the two main organisations campaigning for the Leave side, Vote Leave and the UKIP. Indeed, those two organisations have been the most successful during the campaign but also the more prolific which made the analysis of their arguments more relevant. Here again, we observed many differences in the way both campaigns tackled the same issues. It was also very difficult to distinguish any pattern in the types of arguments that were being used. According to the topic, the speakers from Vote Leave would base their argumentation on figures as they often did, but sometimes, their whole argumentation was based on assumptions while Farage would put forward a more reasoned argument as for the Single Market question. We can also observe many appeals to pathos in the different arguments put forward by Vote Leave and UKIP. In many cases, UKIP tried to "scare" its audience or at least make the situation seem more serious than it was to provoke reactions among the population, often when it came to the immigration topic. Gove also used pathos

when he spoke about his father's business to underline the destructive character of the EU. However, he also relied on pathos to create fear towards the EU and the possibility of seeing the UK's contribution to the Union rise if Britain voted to remain. As I said, there is no real pattern, the speakers from both sides used many different strategies and different arguments to convince their audience.

I think the rhetorical job done by Vote Leave and UKIP is even more remarkable as we take a deeper look at many arguments they put forward that were incomplete, misleading and sometimes completely unsupported. I particularly think about the Single Market question and more particularly about the tariffs topic where the reasoning of both sides was very shaky, in my opinion, but still received great support from the audience. I think that a possible answer might come from the fact that people were and probably still are disillusioned and have been deceived by the last governments. This led people to consider any new idea as long as it was different from what the current leadership offered.

However, it seems that people may be starting to realize that leaving was no such a great idea or at least want to have a say in the final deal as we hear more and more of a second Brexit referendum over the result of the negotiations between the UK and the EU. The future will tell us whether leaving was the right decision or not.

VI. Appendices

A. The Facts of Life Say Leave: Why Britain and Europe Will Be Better Off after We Vote Leave – Michael Gove

B. The Liberal Cosmopolitan Case to Vote Leave – Boris Johnson

C. The Risks of Staying in the EU – Gisela Stuart

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