



BACHELOR THESIS

THE ROLE OF
PARTISANSHIP IN BRITISH
REFERENDUMS -
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
THE 1975 EEC AND THE 2016
BREXIT REFERENDUMS

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Abstract

This bachelor thesis is the attempt to answer the question whether partisanship in the United Kingdom influenced the outcome of this year's *Brexit* referendum like it did in the 1975 referendum about the British membership in the, back then, European Economic Community (EEC). To test the first hypothesis whether voters are more likely to follow their parties' recommendations if the political party they identify with clearly supports one of the alternatives, the parties' stances on the matter will be elaborated by reviewing their election manifestos as well as speeches of their leading politicians and results from polls conducted by the research institute *YouGov* as well as the official outcome are taken into account. For a comparison of the results, the same procedure will be done for the referendum in 1975. Furthermore, the second hypothesis which states that if the elite of a political party is unified on the referendum's topic, its identifiers will more often intend to vote in line with their party and if the elite is divided, its identifiers are more likely to be divided too will be tested. Therefore, the level of division of the Labour Party's elite in 1975 and the Conservative Party's elite in 2016 and its influence on the voting behaviour will be elaborated using the same method as for the analysis of first hypothesis. Since both hypotheses could be verified in the course of the analysis it can be concluded that partisanship was an influencing factor in this year's *Brexit* referendum like it was in the EEC referendum in 1975.

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1 Introduction

In representative democracies referendums are used as an instrument of direct democracy. The process implies that the power is given completely to the voters who are entitled to directly, and completely on their own, decide between two policy alternatives: the ballot proposition at hand or the current status quo. Whatever the voters decide will be implemented, no consent by any other actors in the political arena is needed. This pretty much sums up the basic idea of the process of a referendum. But, in reality, this process cannot entirely take place without any influences from a country's political environment. Especially the national parties have an immense impact on voter's perceptions about the issue and thereby also on their voting behaviour. The reason is that the topics of referendums are mostly of a specific matter on which most people lack detailed or factual knowledge. It is thus not possible for them to make up their mind individually and free from beliefs and opinions of both the national parties and their leaders. Therefore, the parties barge in as the main source and providers of information by running strategic campaigns in which they share their ideological predispositions with the voters. As a consequence, it may seem as if the voters vote for a party instead of the issue itself (Binzer Hobolt, 2006). One of the reasons why the parties are so influential is the phenomenon of partisanship. The concept of partisanship was originally mentioned in the book *The American Voter* in 1960 by Campbell, Miller and Stokes and has since been worked on and referred to in numerous publications. Hence, it can be said that partisanship is a widely known and accepted concept in political sciences when it comes to the analysis of elections. One of the publications that deals with the phenomenon of partisanship is the paper *Social Identity Theory and Party Identification* by Greene, which refers to the original social identity theory by Tajfel, and which states that the two factors of the voter's identity and party identification lead to the partisan attachment (Greene, 2004).

In their research paper *Referendum Voting Behavior: The Norwegian and British Referenda on Membership in the European Community*, Pierce, Valen and Listaug (1983) state that partisanship was the main factor affecting the United Kingdom European Communities membership referendum in 1975. About 41 years later, on 23rd June, 2016, a referendum about the British membership in the European Union took place in which the voting population of the United Kingdom (UK) was asked to go to the ballot box to make a final

decision on this matter. In May, 88 percent of the population had already made up their mind about how they wanted to vote (YouGov, 2016c). This high number urges the conclusion that the voters had already actively evaluated their options and thought about the choice they wanted to make. As a consequence, this year's referendum raises the question whether partisan attachment is a dominant, if not the most dominant, factor in the process of the voters' evaluation and thus also on the outcome of the national *Brexit* referendum and secondly: Is the influence of the voters' partisanship still as intense as it was in 1975 or has it declined and is not one of the most influential factors anymore concerning the voting behaviour? In concrete terms this leads to the following explanatory research question: *Did partisanship play an important role and thus influence the outcome the 2016 Brexit referendum like it did in the 1975 EEC referendum?* Since there is evidence that, in 1975 the Labour Party and in 2016 the Conservative Party were divided on the matter of the referendum (International Business Times, 2016) an important sub-question analysing the situation to a deeper extend, is: *Did the division of the Conservative Party have any effects on the partisan attachment of the voters?* And what consequences did this circumstance have for the voting behaviour and thus the outcome of the referendum? This question picks up and supports the findings of Pierce et al. (1983) that for partisanship to have maximum impact on the outcome, the parties' national elites have to take clear and uniform positions. Hence, when parties are divided, so are their followers.

The *Brexit* referendum marks a very important event in the history of what is now known as the European Union (EU). The United Kingdom is one of the most influential countries and forces in the EU and its withdrawal could pose threats to both Britain as well as all the other member states, especially in the economic sector. Furthermore, the ruling parties, that was the Labour Party in 1975 and the Conservative Party in 2016, were divided on the matter whereas the opposition parties, in 1975 the Conservatives and in 2016 the Labour Party were unified on the matter. Thus, because of the changing positions the two major British parties take on, the case of the UK is a very interesting case to study the impact of partisanship on the voting behaviour of referendums. In the beginning of this thesis the evidence of partisanship will be outlined and in the following part its theoretical background will be explained. In May 2016, the surveys estimating the outcome of the referendum were very close which made this event even more interesting. This research aims to describe the level of partisan attachment by taking into account the respective positions of the British parties

concerning the referendum in 1975 as well as in 2016. Therefore, secondary data will be used to either support the evidence of partisanship or to find out that partisanship has little impact on the outcome. So far we have learned that partisanship has played an important role in the run of general elections as well as past referendums, but since the degree of topicality of the *Brexit* referendum is so high, because it just took place a week ago, there have not been any publications on it yet. Therefore, the thesis will try to contribute to the existing knowledge in that field by linking the established theories on partisanship to the case of the 2016 referendum.

2 Theoretical Framework

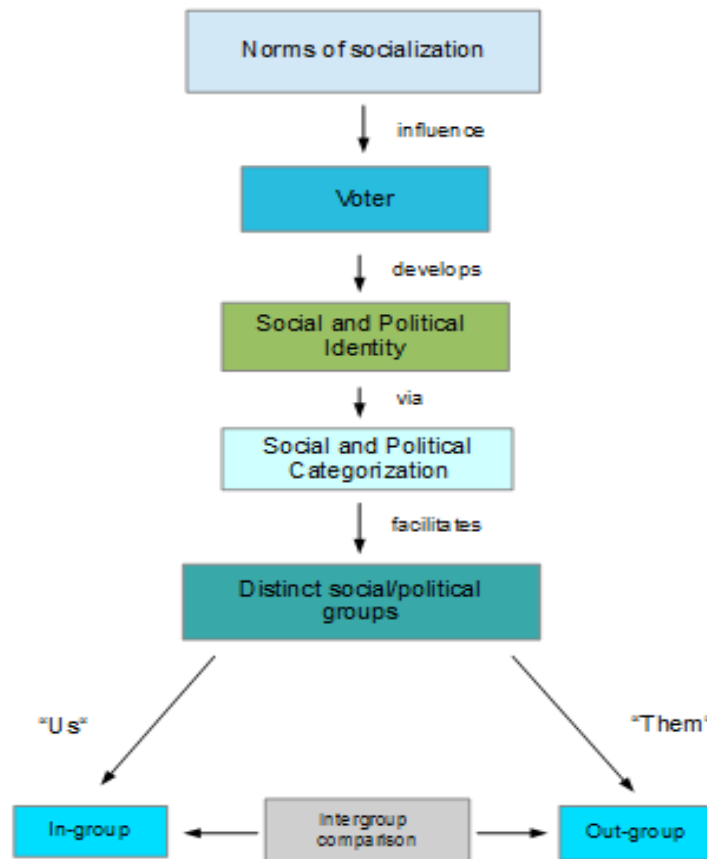
In their book *Political Culture in Contemporary Britain* (1996) William L. Miller et. al wrote that in 1975 pre-existing party loyalty was the most influential factor in forming the voters' attitudes and a predominant trend indicating voting intentions. They state that there is a causal influence between a voter's fundamental principles and partisan attachment which leads to certain positions of the voters towards the issues. From these fundamental principles, amongst others, two concepts derive: the social identity of the voter and their party identification.

2.1 Social Identity Theory

When growing up, children are confronted with their family's norms of socialization and get taught a sense of belonging to and identifying with a certain group. This, in turn, leads to a feeling of oneness with this certain group and its distinction from and negative attitude towards other outgroups (Miller and Shanks, 1996). This is caused by a perceptual screen through which they tend to perceive certain (political) situations from a favourable angle towards their partisan orientation. Furthermore, this development can be described as being a bipolar process: Individuals are clearly differentiating themselves and the group they belong to, the so called in-group, the *Us*, from the opposition group, the out-group, the *Them*. This process leads to favouritism towards other in-group members and the derogation of the out-group by an extreme exaggeration of existing differences. As a consequence this ends up in the in-group members feeling superior over the oppositional group. Partisanship, hence, is substantially influenced by the perceptions of those voters that associate themselves with one particular group of which they think is superior to any other group (Greene 2004). Greene summarized the concept of social identity in his article by saying that it “is a fundamental

aspect of partisanship which, when measured, can lead to superior prediction and understanding of related political attitudes and behaviours“ (Greene 2004, p.136). This process is visually illustrated in the following model:

Model 1. Social Identity Theory



A specific form of social identity is the identification with a political party. The two concepts, social and party identification, go hand in hand as can be seen in Greene's publication in which he says that “just as people identify with various racial, ethnic and religious groups, so too do they identify with political parties“ (Greene 2004, p.136). Campbell et. al stated in their book *The American Voter* that party identification is a psychological identification without the need of a formal membership that produces a tie with a party which leads to a certain attitude and behaviour to some degree of intensity, towards a secondary group, in this case a party. Partisanship is a concept which characterizes an individual's orientation towards a certain group-object, in this case a political party, in their environment (Campbell, 1960). The identification with one specific party is a long-term psychological attachment. It is a long term and stable process because the identification has already taken place and developed in

the individual's early years and is indoctrinated through political socialization as already elaborated in the paragraph above. This process results in an affectionate and persistent attachment to the favoured party, shaping the voters' views and the way they evaluate political events through their lifetime (Weinschenk, 2010). Furthermore, extending the basic party identification theory, Wagner et. al found out that voters judge political discussions by motivated reasoning, desiring to reach the conclusion with a fit of their pre-existing views. In addition, the voters take in information by evaluating them under the directional goal of testing whether they are in accordance with their prior predispositions. Therefore, the concept of partisanship is a directional goal. This directional goal has an effect on the reasoning because it makes the judgement more lenient towards an opinion of the respective party the voter feels attached to and represented by (Wagner, 2014). In total, the strength of relationship between party identification and the dimensions of partisan attitude suggests that responses to each element of national politics are deeply affected by the individual's enduring party attachments. So the stronger one's bond with their party the more exaggerated are their feelings in the process of selection and their perceptual distortion (Campbell et. Al, 1960).

2.2 The initial pre-referendum situations in 1975 and 2016

2.2.1 The context of the EEC Referendum in 1975

In their research paper, Pierce et al. (1983) found out that, at the 1975 referendum, the Labour Party faced a vertical division because two thirds of the cabinet ministers supported the stay of the nation while half of the junior ministers, as well as more than half of the backbenchers and the party's National Executive Committee were in favour of the UK leaving the European Community (Pierce, 1983). In 1974, the Labour Party was the one which initiated the referendum, stating that they would "give the British people the final say, which will be binding on the Government – through the ballot box – on whether we accept the terms and stay in or reject the terms and come out" (Labour Party, 1974). Yet, they were also the party that was split over Europe. While the parliamentary party was overwhelmingly in favour of the UK staying in the EEC, a lot of the party's elite, for example members of the Cabinet wanted Britain to leave the Community (New Statesmen, 2015). The Prime Minister at that time, Harold Wilson, campaigned for the remain side of the campaign which he expressed in several pamphlets that were sent to every British household and in which he explained “why the Government, after long, hard negotiations, are recommending to the British people that (they) should remain a member of the European Community“ (Labour Party, 1975, p.2). In their party manifesto from 1974, the Conservative Party took their position in favour of

remaining in the EEC stating that “by far the most historic achievement of the last Conservative government was to bring about British entry into the European Community.” They said that a membership brought economic advantages and was essential for the nation's interests. Furthermore, they also pointed out the dangers of a potential withdrawal from the EEC by saying that the Community provided an enormous home market for the country's industry and that they needed those economic allies (Conservative Party, 1974).

2.2.2 The context of the British withdrawal from the EU in 2016

In this year's referendum, it was not the Labour Party but the Conservative Party that did not present a uniform front, although, in both cases, the government party was the initiator of the referendum. Therefore, in the following, there will be a short overview of the three positions of campaigning exemplified by the parties that are the biggest representatives of each position. On the one hand, there is the Labour Party which uniformly promoted staying in the EU, on the other there are the Conservatives who were divided internally into either remaining or leaving. The Labour Party stated in their 2015 Manifesto that they believed in the country's EU membership since it is central to the country's prosperity and security. The party especially focussed on the economic component, saying that the “economic case for membership in the EU is overwhelming“ since more than three million jobs in the UK are directly linked to trade with the Union. The party's priority was not to take Britain out of Europe (Labour Party, 2015, p.77). The United Kingdom Independence Party, as the name already indicates, promoted the British withdrawal from the European Union. In their manifesto they dedicated several pages to listing all the reasons why the country should leave the Union, claiming that the EU dictates the country's business and employment legislation as well as their immigration policies. They said that they had “nothing to lose but everything to gain“ from leaving the EU (UK Independence Party, 2015, p.70) The Conservative Party did not formulate their opinion on the *Brexit* as clearly as the other parties. In their manifesto they focussed more on the democratic act of the referendum itself. The manifesto just presented actions the government wanted to undertake to protect the country against the EU, like reclaiming powers from Brussels, protecting the Single Market, avoiding a further integration into the Eurozone (Conservative Party, 2015). The division within the party is also clearly visible in YouGov survey results from 2nd March, 2016 with a sample size of 1705 British adults. The poll shows that 69 percent of the population thought that the Conservative Party was divided, whereas just eight percent thought they were united and the remaining 23 percent did not know (YouGov, 2016b). Nevertheless, Prime Minister David Cameron, the

Leader of the Conservatives, took a clearer position when he discussed the future of the European Union at Bloomberg in 2013:

So I speak as British Prime Minister with a positive vision for the future of the European Union. A future in which Britain wants, and should want, to play a committed and active part ... I want the European Union to be a success. And I want a relationship between Britain and the EU that keeps us in it. Because I believe something very deeply: That Britain's national interest is best served in a flexible, adaptable and open European Union and that such a European Union is best with Britain in it. (Cabinet Office, 2016)

Although there were voices as well as clear evidence that the Labour Party was also divided on the EU referendum matter, I am going to focus on the Conservative Party's division concerning the topic because "the Conservative Party seems to have taken over the debate, with the most prominent Tories in both camps having a higher public profile than Labour politicians" (Opinium, 2016a). 78 percent of the voters thought that David Cameron wanted Britain to stay in the EU. On the other hand, the people also perceived the opinion of Boris Johnson to leave the EU as nearly equally strong (74%). Since those occupy top positions in the Conservative Party, David Cameron as the party leader and Boris Johnson as London's former Conservative mayor as well as Member of Parliament they had a lot of influence concerning campaigning as well as the opportunity to spread their opinions in very broad scope (Opinium, 2016b,c).

In 1975 the Labour Party was divided, yet the outcome was very clear: 17 million voters voted to remain a member of the ECC whereas just eight million voted in favour of leaving. (Butler & Kitzinger, 1976) In this year's referendum campaign the Conservative Party was divided. The polls conducted in the run-up of the 2016 referendum suggested that the outcome would be very close. In both cases, the initial situation was the same, yet the outcome of 1975 and the expected as well as the final outcome of 2016 are not even close. Taking into account the knowledge of the two theories, the social identity theory as well as the party identity theory and the parties' stances on the referendums in 1975 and 2016, the following hypotheses should be tested: *Voters are more likely to follow their party's recommendations if the political party they identify with clearly supports one of the alternatives.*

There have been quite a few membership referendums in the history of the European Union. However, most of them were held to let the population decide whether their country should join the Union or not, as it was the case, for example, in Norway, Austria, Finland or Sweden or in all the countries that were part of the Enlargement of 2004 (Jahn & Storsved, 1995). On the other hand, there have also been a few referendums in countries that were thinking of leaving the EU such as the first British referendum in 1975 as well as in Greenland which actually left the Union in 1984 after having held a referendum (de la Baume, 2016). Notwithstanding, the British referendum is of special importance: The UK is one of the major economic forces in the Union and the consequences of a Brexit do not just concern the country itself but also all other Member States. There are a lot of Member States that have a high exposure to the Brexit: The Netherlands, for example, are very closely aligned with Britain concerning trade policy objectives and regulatories. In general, trade in Europe will be impeded because the cost of trade will increase and bilateral trade agreements as well as the supply chains will be damaged which, in the end, will have negative consequences not just for businesses but for all consumers. Furthermore, foreign direct investment will be more difficult. Currently, the UK is, out of all Member States, the biggest recipient of foreign direct investment. But because of new regulations, there will be a reduction of investments (Irwin, 2015). A third, very important factor that has to be considered in the case of a Brexit is not an economic but a political one. Since there have been a lot of crises in the EU in the last couple of years, nationalist parties have made an upswing. This development cannot just be witnessed in Britain where the UKIP plays an important role in the political arena now but also in countries like Germany, France or Austria. The nationalist parties use the fear and discontent of the population and train to gain power by turning those fears into their advantage. The UKIP, for example, wants Britain to be independent and set their main goal for Britain to leave the EU. Thus, the Brexit can be seen as the victory of the party and boosts their popularity massively sending a clear signal to all the other countries (Aisch et. al, 2016).

2.3 Other influential factors on the voting outcome

2.3.1 Partisan cues

Cues are very important in the decision-making process of voters. The political parties are the suppliers of cues by which they inform the citizens, and the partisan then evaluates the events in the political world based on those cues. The parties are the main source of information because most elements of politics do not get through to the citizens due to their complexity for example. Therefore, there is a lack of personal knowledge which the parties try to fill by

simplifying the matters. Of course this awakens a sense of competition for the parties since they are of immense importance in their role as an opinion-forming agency for the public (Campbell, 1960). Voters rely on cues and heuristics to overcome their information shortfalls. It is said that in European referendums political parties have a high heuristic value because “all that is necessary is to learn the candidate endorsed by a group and one’s own attitude toward the group, and an obvious cognitively-efficient inference can be made” (Binzer Hobolt, 2006, p.628). This circumstance makes referendums more of a contest between the national parties than a contest of issues. Furthermore, partisan heuristics are also described as ‘the quintessential shortcut in direct democratic votes’ (Hobolt, 2006, p.628) and therefore are an important factor which should be considered when analysing this topic.

2.3.2 Issue or second-order voting and the proximity model

But there are various other factors why people vote the way they do in referendums. People are asked to vote for one out of two options, hence, choosing the alternative that is more beneficial according to their rational voter needs. This rational choice the voter makes is based and calculated on reasons and is called issue voting. Another, less rational, approach that people take when coming to the conclusion on how to vote is second-order voting in form of “punishment traps” (Hobolt, 2007). When voters follow this approach they vote to express their current satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their national government (Hobolt, 2007). An additional model, that is helpful when analysing the voting behaviour of people in referendums is the proximity model which states that voters vote for the candidate or party whose issue positions are made on the basis of preferences and are closest to their point of view (Hobolt, 2006).

2.3.3 The role of party leaders and elites

Party leaders play a very important role in people's perception of their group identification. They are symbols and representatives of certain values that specify the attitudes people can identify with and on which the voters base their affiliation. They, furthermore, are perceived to be the legitimate spokesperson for the particular parties and are therefore entitled to articulate the party's ideology (Miller & Shanks, 1996). Hanspeter Kriesi states in his book *Direct Democratic Choice: The Swiss Experience* that:

Democracy is a competitive political system in which competing leaders and organizations define the alternatives of public policy in such a way that the public can participate in the decision-making process ... Conflict, competition, organization, leadership and responsibility are the ingredients of a working definition of democracy (Kriesi, 2005, p. 45).

Thus, the political elite is very important in the process of direct democracy. They are the force that has the power to convince the voters and mobilize them to go to the ballot. Kriesi, furthermore, found out that the division of the political elite on a matter automatically brings unpredictability into the political decision-making process. He says that in the case that the elite is unified and there is no conflict, the voters basically have no other option but to follow the elite's recommendations. But, in the case that the elite is divided, citizens do have a real choice and as a consequence look for another information source which makes them fall back to the cues they received from the parties. These cues are then processed and evaluated based on the voters' political predispositions like their preferences, values or beliefs. It is only when the elites are divided that the citizens' choice becomes unpredictable and the outcome depends on various factors like the type of coalition and the intensity and direction of the party's campaign. Due to this unpredictability the political elite has to compromise and find a consensus among them to make the voters follow their recommendations because the more extreme the division among the political elite is the less controllable is the outcome of the vote (Kriesi, 2005). On the basis of this knowledge the following hypothesis emerges: *If the elite of a political party is unified on a referendum's topic, its identifiers will more often intend to vote in line with their party and if the elite is divided, its identifiers are more likely to be divided too.*

3 Research Methodology

For the bachelor thesis the focus is going to lie on the phenomenon of partisanship being an influencing variable on the outcome of a referendum. By testing the two hypotheses, firstly, whether voters are more likely to support a *Brexit* if the political party they identify with supports the exit and secondly whether the type of appearance of the elites influences the voters' decisions, the influence of partisanship, if it does exist in the cases of the referendums, shall be detected. Thus, to test the hypotheses, the focus of the research will lie on one case: the *Brexit* referendum in June 2016. The research is supposed to describe the behaviour of the

voters as a whole at that specific time and the UK as a place. Therefore a certain population, the British electorate, will be assessed at one point in time by taking a snapshot during the run-up of the referendum. The same applies to the referendum in 1975 which will also be taken into account in the analysis of the thesis. Thus, the bachelor thesis presents a case study in the form of a cross-sectional research design. When working with a cross-sectional research design, reversed causation can potentially be a threat because the question about the time order cannot be answered, as the measurement takes place at just one point in time. Nevertheless, the time order is not a threat in this study because the social identity and the party affiliation have their effects on the voters before they go to the ballot box in the process of making up their mind about how they want to vote. Hence, X, being the partisanship, has to precede Y, the voting outcome, in time which makes reverse causation impossible as a threat for the thesis. Furthermore, spuriousness is known to be a threat when using a cross-sectional research design. It is certain that the variables of the research are correlated because of earlier research on the effect of partisanship on voting outcomes, so an association is given. Nevertheless, spuriousness is a threat because we know for sure that there are other variables, such as partisan cues and second-order voting which are listed in the theory part, that contribute to the outcome of a referendum because the reasons for people to vote are multifaceted and cannot be narrowed down to just one reason.

3.1 Case selection and sampling

The case of the British referendum was chosen because of its enormous relevance for the future of the European Union, which we, as citizens, living in one of the Member States, are directly affected of. Furthermore, the choice had to be a popular referendum because of the availability of data to work properly on the topic, especially, since there will be made use of secondary data. The media presence of this referendum was immense, especially in the two prior months, since the referendum was imminent. The level of topicality is very high, which, on the one hand, makes the thesis more relevant but, on the other hand, brings some difficulties with it because of all the fast changes that took place in the run-up of the referendum. Moreover, partisanship already played a leading role in the referendum in 1975 (Pierce et. Al,1983), which gives an incentive to find out whether it does have an impact on the voting outcome again and furthermore can provide explanations about the change of the political landscape in the last decades. In addition, since the topic is so up-to-date, there has not yet published any research concerning the *Brexit* referendum. This also implies the choice of secondary data to work with during the analysis. The choice to rely on secondary data is

the best way to answer the research question because neither qualitative nor quantitative research would have been possible to conduct. Doing interviews, for example, would have been very difficult, due to geographical reasons because the referendum takes place in another country as well as difficulties to find truly relevant interview partners. For the same reason, it was not possible either to conduct quantitative research because the only relevant target group of participants for the survey would have been British citizens, who are rather impossible to reach and contact from the location of the Netherlands. Therefore, the use of data bases of renowned research institutes appears to be the best solution to achieve profound results.

3.2 Operationalization of the main concepts and data collection methods

By testing the two hypotheses I want to find out whether party identification still plays an important role as it did over 40 years ago in the 1975 EEC Referendum. Furthermore, I want to test whether the elites really have as much power as they are perceived to have. Therefore, I am going to conduct an analysis of secondary data by re-using quantitative data from research institutes' electronic databases like weekly polls from *YouGov* about current voting trends in Great Britain and about the official outcome of 23rd of June, 2016. I will be using quantitative data because I want to get a broad overview of the general political atmosphere in the UK during the period of the run-up of the referendum. It is important to get a high number of participants because I want to detect a trend to make the results profound which I am hoping to get from the *YouGov* surveys since the research institute is a large community with a high reach of 750,000 people in the UK and which states that “it is the largest daily updated records of people's habits and opinions” (*YouGov*, n.d.). Furthermore, I am also going to use data that has been collected on the case of the referendum in 1975 as a basis to compare the two referendums with each other and to detect trends and similarities or differences. A source to estimate the positions of parties is the use of election manifestos because of their various purposes. They are sometimes conceived as an advertisement and a statement of principles or even as a kind of contract between the parties and the voters. Because of these purposes, the manifestos contain realistic assessments of all political matters the parties are concerned with. They are, furthermore, used by the parties to work out and underline their differences to other parties. Since they contain arguments directly from the party at first hand they are representing the parties' identities and policy preferences as well as their general philosophy (Ray, 2007). Therefore, the election manifestos from 1974 and 2015 will be a source for the analysis. In order to test the hypothesis, only the election

manifestos of the two biggest parties in the UK will be analysed. There are, of course, more parties present in the British party system which, however, are being left out in the analysis of this thesis. There will be a focus on the two major parties because of various reasons: The two parties covered more than 70 percent of the votes in the latest national general election (BBC, n.d.) and can thus be seen as the representatives of most of the British population having the most widespread influence by reaching out and representing and thus influencing more than two thirds of the voting population. Furthermore, the UK Independence Party, as the name of the party already indicates, want the country to be independent and make it their main goal to achieve a withdrawal from the EU for their country (UKIP, 2015). But they were only founded in 1993 mainly to campaign for the country's withdrawal and, hence, did not exist in 1975 which makes a comparison of the influence of this party in terms of the referendum impossible and thus unusable for the thesis (UKIP, n.d.).

To test the first hypothesis (*Voters are more likely to follow their party's recommendations if the political party they identify with clearly supports one of the alternatives*), I am going to do an extensive review on the two most relevant party manifestos of the Conservative Party and the Labour Party. Moreover, speeches of politicians of the Conservative Party are taken into account for to work out the special situation in which they find themselves. For the second part of the testing polls from YouGov are taken into account presenting the data gathered in their survey which asked the participants: “If there was a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union and this was the question, how would you vote: Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?” (YouGov, 2016a). as well as the final outcome of the referendum. To either verify or falsify the hypothesis I am going to take the position of the respective party as a basis and then look at the survey outcome to see whether or not these positions are reflected in the numbers of the poll. If the percentages of identifiers highly match with the position of their party, the hypothesis is verified, if the voters' choice does not match, the hypothesis is falsified. To put this year's referendum into perspective I am also going to take data from the 1975 referendum into account and to analyse the parties' manifestos to elaborate their respective positions on the referendum at that time as well as the numbers of the outcome to support the findings that partisanship was one of the main factors, as already pointed out in the introduction.

To test the second hypothesis of my thesis (*If the elite of a political party is unified on the referendum's topic, its identifiers will more often intend to vote in line with their party and if the elite is divided, its identifiers are more likely to be divided too*) I am firstly going to work out the division of the Conservative party by taking a look at the oppositional campaigns and speeches of their respective advocates and then take a look at the published list of the positions of Conservative Members of Parliament and calculate the percentages of the remain side, the leave side and the undecided ones. Then I will take a look at the poll already used for the analysis of the first hypothesis that asks “If there was a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union and this was the question, how would you vote: Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?” (YouGov, 2016a) and look at the column of the Conservative supporters and see how the percentages are divided between them. If the hypothesis were to be true these two factors should be correlated and be displayed in the numbers of the survey. As a contrast, the current situation in the Labour Party's elite will be portrayed applying the same method. (International Business Times, 2016; YouGov, 2016a) Furthermore, like for hypothesis one, a comparison will be made with 1975 which means that the division of the elites will be elaborated at first and then concrete numbers of the division will be taken into account as well as the outcome of the referendum in which the effect of the division will be either reflected or not.

4 Analysis

4.1 First Hypothesis

4.1.1 The positions of the parties in 1975 and 2016

4.1.1.1 The stances in 2016

In their manifesto of 2015, the Conservative Party mainly focussed on the renegotiation of Britain's position in the European Union. The Party listed several points they want to discuss to better their position within the Union, for example, the continuation of their Single Market, their absence from the Eurozone and thus the refusal of the Euro as their currency. Furthermore, they want to push through a fundamental reform on the workings of the EU, criticizing its immense red tape as well as the power it has over the member states. They do want to work together as a “family of nation states” (Conservative Party, 2015, p. 72) but without any unnecessary interferences. In addition, the Conservatives wish the Union to

support Britain moving ahead instead of building barriers which interfere with the country's future. Moreover, since the manifesto was published before the national election in 2015, the other main point the Conservative Party focuses on, next to renegotiations, is the referendum itself. In case of a victory at the election the party promised to give the power to decide to the British people by holding a referendum about the stay or the exit from the Union (Conservative Party, 2015).

Since the Conservative Party did not clearly take a stand on whether to stay or leave the EU, other sources, like speeches of some of the party's representatives, have to be taken into account to establish the position of the party. For this purpose speeches of David Cameron and Boris Johnson will be regarded since these two are key figures in the Conservative Party that have divergent views on the matter. To clarify the position of the Conservative Party, I am going to take a look at David Cameron's Bloomberg Speech which he held on January 23rd, 2013 in London at the headquarters of Bloomberg. This speech is very important to consider in the analysis, firstly because Cameron is the leader of the Conservative Party and thus represents the party's main values and interests and secondly because the speech was already held in 2013, two years before the general election and even more than three years before the referendum. At that time, Cameron already had a clear point of view concerning the future of the UK in the European Union and publicly presented his view on the matter for the first time. Moreover, as will further be elaborated in the analysis of the second hypothesis, Cameron published a newspaper article in *The Times* in which he clearly stated his pro EU position which shows that his position has not changed in the last three years but underlines that he is still as convinced about the membership as he already was more than three years ago. In his speech, Cameron took a look at both sides of the argument but eventually started to counter argue the points brought forth about leaving the EU. He said that even if the country left the Union, its decisions would still effect Britain however with the additional disadvantage that the UK would not have the power to veto those decisions anymore but just would have to deal with the consequences (Cabinet Office, 2016). Thus, actually leaving the EU would be a disadvantage to the nation's interests and its position as a powerful country within the community. Furthermore, he drew attention to the fact that, even in the case of breaking loose from the Union, the country would have to follow a web of legal ties and commitments which, hence, would not make the country immediately independent but only after a process which would take several years. He also emphasized the importance of the access to the Single Market and foreign investments which their industry depended on

heavily. Lastly, Cameron promised to discuss several points in the negotiations with the EU to better Britain's situation in the future (Cabinet Office, 2016). Nevertheless, other very important figures of the Conservative Party joined the *Vote Leave* campaign as we will also see in the analysis of the second hypothesis. One of those important figures, Boris Johnson, being a Conservative MP as well as the former mayor of London, publicly stated that he clearly was an advocate of leaving the Union. On March 11th, 2016 he gave a speech at an "Out" campaign event at *Europa Worldwide Freight Company* in Dartford in which he explained why he was in favour of leaving the EU. Johnson stated that being a part of the Union, Britain had to give up its right to make its own laws which are currently administered by Brussels, a fact that makes every process very bureaucratic and costly. Moreover, he said that the EU budget was spent wastefully and influenced by corruption which has brought a lot of economic disadvantages instead of benefits for the UK. Furthermore, according to him, actually leaving the EU would have economic advantages since right now all the regulations made by the EU cost the British industry a lot of money. He said that, since Britain had a very strong economy, it wanted to make its own business relations with the US or China and not follow the ones made by the Union. All in all, Johnson wanted the country to get back control which would lead to a "new and better deal" for both, the UK as well as the European Union (YouTube, 2016).

The Labour Party, on the other hand, was way more straightforward in their approach on the referendum and the representation of their position on the matter. In their election manifesto of 2015, the party, like the Conservatives, advocated standing up for and protecting the country's interest in the European Union as well as in the whole world. Isolation, however, for them would be the worst outcome if the European politics continue the way they are doing right now. Therefore, different from the Conservatives, they are supporting this view by clearly stating that they want to strengthen their long-standing alliances as a member of the EU. They are advocates of a Union which represents stability as well as peace and which secures the country's prosperity. Therefore, they want to change the structures of the EU and re-engage into their relationship. One of the main arguments they see for remaining is the economic factor: the party states that over three million jobs are closely linked and dependent on European trade and foreign investment (Labour Party, 2015, p.76). The situation, as it is now, makes the country thrive through innovation and helps to maintain or even boost the living standard of the citizens. Like the Conservative Party they also aim for the completion of the Single Market and do not want to join the Euro but still making their voice heard by

being one of the non-Euro members. Moreover, they, as well as the Conservative Party, want to facilitate the whole apparatus of the EU by, for example, opening up the decision-making process and implementing institutional reforms. This is supposed to make the public trust the Union again. Also, the influence of each single member state should be strengthened, so that they have more influence on European legislation. Moreover, they also do support the idea of the referendum, by saying that there will not be any transfer of powers from the nation towards the EU anymore without the consent of the country's citizens (Labour Party, 2015).

All in all, the Conservative Party is rather neutral about the position it takes on in the referendum. They mostly refer to the opportunity they have created for the citizens to be the powerful force to decide about the country's future inside or out of the European Union (Conservative Party, 2015). They do, however, focus on negotiations they want carry out to better the country's position within the Union. This can be taken as a sign that they believe in a future of the relationship between the country and the Union and are willing to work on their relationship by figuring out a plan to satisfy the wants and needs of the UK and its citizens. They, nonetheless, never clearly stated that they wish for the country to stay or leave the Union. After taking into account speeches of two very important representatives of the Conservative Party, David Cameron and Boris Johnson, it is noticeable that the party is divided on the matter of the *Brexit*. The manifesto can be seen as rather neutral, maybe a bit more in favour of staying in the EU, as the terms which the party wants to discuss at the negotiations are listed; This can be seen as an indicator that the party sees a future in the relationship between Britain and the Union. David Cameron, the Leader of the party as well as the present Prime Minister, also clearly pointed out in his speech that he wants the country to remain in the Union and sees a lot of benefits in doing so. On the other hand, the Leave campaign also has a very popular and important figure in British politics, by its side Boris Johnson, a fact which makes this campaign quite powerful as well. Thus, the party is not unified on the matter, on the contrary, it is split into two camps. Unlike the Conservative Party, the Labour Party already went a step further in their manifesto and did not just talk about the referendum as an act itself but has already positioned itself on the referendum. They are clear advocates of staying in the Union because they do not want the UK to turn their backs on Europe which would ultimately lead to an isolation from the European countries, but want Britain to figure out a way to better its relationship to Brussels and to better its position within the Union so that people will start to trust the institution again.

4.1.1.2 Taking a look 41 years back in time

For a comparison with the present situation, the 1974 manifestos of the Conservative and the Labour Party are to serve as a basis because, as pointed out in the theory part of the thesis, in 1975 partisanship was one of the main factors influencing the outcome of the referendum and thus can be regarded as an important indicator for the voters' decision-making process.

The Labour Party published two manifestos in 1974: one in February, before the general election, and one in October of the same year, after the election, which made the Labour Party the ruling party. Hence, in the second manifesto, the referendum was a certain matter. Both manifestos promised a renegotiation of Britain's interests as a member of the EEC. During the renegotiations, the following topics were supposed to be of concern: a common agricultural policy, as well as the country's contribution to the Community's budget which they wanted to be more equal and fairer. Furthermore, the party demanded less risky capital movements to be able to protect their balance of payments and to minimize the risk of unemployment. In addition, it was the Labour Party's initiation to give the citizens the main voice and therefore hold a referendum on whether to stay or leave the Common Market (Miller, 2015). The Conservative Party also dedicated paragraphs of their manifesto to the issue of the relationship between Britain and the European Economic Union. They started off with mentioning the historic achievement of the British entry into the European Community, made by the last Conservative government, and that a membership in the Community was essential for the country's interests. They stated that the membership was especially beneficial for the country's economy. Furthermore, they argued in favour of the existence of the EEC by recalling to memory World War I and World War II which had brought a lot of destruction and harm to Europe and that the institution of the EEC was helping to make a similar war impossible for the future (Conservative Party, 1974). Another concern at that time were the US and the Soviet Union, about which the Conservative Party said that Western Europe could just take over control if the states were unified so they could decide over their destiny themselves. The party, moreover, shed light on the dangers of a withdrawal from the Community mentioning especially economic reasons as it provided a huge home market for their industries by being the biggest trading bloc in the world. In the case of a withdrawal a lot of export opportunities would extinguish which in turn would mean a decline of industrial development. This process would then have direct consequences for Britain's population in form of the loss of jobs. The withdrawal, and hence the isolation of Britain, would just minimize the country's power and influence in the world. Therefore, their solution to reduce

the people's doubts about a membership were negotiations in which the interests of the country were to be represented, brought forth and secured. Aspects they wanted to focus on were making the body of the Community more democratic and improve its policies so that they were more beneficial for the country. Their ultimate goal was a closer European unity due to their contribution to a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Europe (Conservative Party, 1974).

Since, in 1974, the second manifesto of the Labour Party was written and published after the election the referendum had already been appointed. In this manifesto the Labour Party, like the Conservatives in 2015, did not clearly point out their position on the matter but focussed on renegotiations they wanted to carry out. This can be seen as a sign of rather wanting to stay a member of the EEC whereas the Conservative Party did clearly support staying in the Community and regarded a withdrawal as a danger, for example, to the country's economy. At that time, they were as clearly an advocate of staying, as the Labour Party was in 2016. In general, the manifestos of 1974 showed that the initial situation of the Union, which was the European Economic Community back then, was a totally different one from 2016. Britain had to face and was confronted with issues which were different from those nowadays. The formation of such a community in the aftermath of the two World Wars was still seen as a major achievement and as a chance to prevent such events from happening again.

4.1.2 Voting patterns

The following part of the analysis contains survey results from 1975 and 2016 which reveal whether the parties' stances they have taken or not taken on had an influence on the voting behaviour of their supporters.

4.1.2.1 How people voted in 2016:

The research institute *YouGov*, in collaboration with the newspaper *The Times*, made a poll about the current voting intentions of the public on the 16th and 17th May, 2016. In their survey (Table 1) they questioned 1648 British adults about how they intended to vote on the *Brexit* issue by asking them: "If there was a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union and this was the question, how would you vote: Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?".

Table 1. *YouGov Survey Results Referendum Membership 2016 (May 18th) in percent*

	Total	Headline Voting Intention	
		Conservative	Labour
Remain	44	44	71
Leave	40	44	21
Would Not Vote	3	0	0
Do Not Know	13	12	8

Source: YouGov/The Times Survey Results; Sample Size: 1648 GB Adults; Fieldwork: 16th - 17th May 2016

A total of 44 percent said they wanted their country to remain a member of the Union whereas 40 percent wanted the country to leave, three percent intended not to vote and another thirteen percent were still unsure about how to vote at the ballot box. The results show that the remain side was leading with four points at that moment. The survey, furthermore, distinguished the votes between the different parties the people are supporters of. The followers of the Conservative Party were equally divided on the matter. Both camps would have gotten 44 percent of the votes. Most partisans of the Labour Party, on the other hand, were clear advocates of remaining in the European Union. 71 percent of Labour supporters would have voted for Britain to stay in the Union whereas just 21 percent would have been in favour of leaving which makes a 50 percent difference between the two options. The Labour Party clearly stated in their manifesto that they are in favour of remaining in the European Union. The party is unified on the matter and so are its supporters. They feel the same way about a *Brexit* and would have voted for remaining in the Union with an overwhelming majority as the survey shows. On the other hand, the Conservative Party did not clearly point out their position on the matter of the *Brexit* in their manifesto and two of their most important representatives are advocates the two different camps. As a consequence, the numbers of the survey exactly mirror that the party's supporters were split on the matter in the same ways as the party was itself.

Moreover, the research institute YouGov did a survey on the exact day of the referendum on June 23rd, 2016, asking 4772 UK adults: "In today's referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, how did you vote: Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?".

Table 2. *YouGov Survey Results Referendum Membership 2016 (June 23rd) in percent*

	Total	Headline Voting Intention	
		Conservative	Labour
Remain	48	43	68
Leave	45	56	30
Did Not Vote	6	1	2

Source: YouGov Survey Results; Sample Size: 4772 GB Adults; Fieldwork: 23rd June, 2016

The results in Table 2 show that the Conservative supporters voted diversely at the ballot box. 43 percent of the Conservative identifiers voted for remain, while 56 percent, so the majority, voted for Britain to leave the Union. The comparison of this result to the result of the survey conducted in May reveals that the supporters were obviously not equally split anymore but were tending towards the leave option, making a gap of 13 percent between the two options. The Labour Party's supporters however were still majorly in favour of remaining in the EU: 68 percent voted for the status quo while 30 percent voted for the ballot proposition. In comparison to the results of May when 71 percent intended to vote for remain and 21 percent intended to vote for leave there cannot be seen a huge difference. However, those eight percent of the voters who, in May, had not yet made up their mind on how to vote more or less joined the leave side on the referendum day. Nevertheless, the outcome of the poll shows that the division of the Conservative Party was still noticeable on the day when the referendum took place, while the Labour Party stuck to their advocacy of remaining. Conclusively, in May and even on the day of the referendum the total outcome according to the surveys determined that the UK would stay in the Union because the remain side lead with four percent but at the ballot box (YouGov, 2016g), this outcome turned around and the majority of the voters voted for a *Brexit* with 52 to 48 percent for leaving (The Guardian, 2016).

4.1.2.2 How people voted in 1975

As already presaged in the operationalization part of the thesis the final results of the EEC Referendum of June 1975, displayed in the following table, are taken into account into the analysis.

Table 3. *Outcome of the EEC Referendum June 1975 in percent*

	Total	Headline Voting Intention	
		Conservative	Labour
Remain	67	65	35
Leave	33	12	28
Would Not Vote/ Not Certain To Vote	-	23	37

Source: Butler and Kitzinger, 1976

In total, 67 percent of the population voted for the United Kingdom to stay in the European Economic Community. Contrarily, just 33 percent wanted their country to leave the EEC. The votes of the supporters of the Conservative Party reflected this unambiguous result. 65 percent voted Yes, whereas just twelve voted No. The supporters of the Labour Party, however, were nearly split in half: 35 percent wanted the UK to stay in the Community, whereas 28 percent voted against. Again, like in 2016, there is a mutual trend. The party that clearly stated their position on the matter in their manifesto could count on their supporters to vote in their interest. In the case of the 1975 EEC Referendum this applied to the Conservative Party which advocated remaining in the Community. The Labour Party supporters, however, were nearly split in half in their votes as was their party in the run up of the referendum.

There has been research published on the topic of partisanship as an influencing factor in the EEC referendum of 1975. In her conference paper, Samantha Laycock included a table with the percentages of partisan voting of both the Conservative supporters as well as Labour supporters. According to her findings, 88.8 percent of the Conservatives made their choice concerning the referendum on the basis of their partisan attachment while just 58.9 percent of the Labour supporters did so as can be seen in the following table:

Table 4. *Partisan voting in referendum 1975*

Party Identification	Percentages
Conservative	88.8
Labour	58.9

Source: Laycock, Samantha (2011)

These findings support the other statistics about the voting choice in the referendum. The Conservative Party presented themselves as a united front and clearly stated their support for staying in the Community. Their supporters not only also voted for remaining with a large majority which can be seen in Table 3 but even more they made this decision on the basis of and guided by their partisan attachment towards the Conservative Party as can be seen in the table above. The Labour Party, on the other hand, was openly divided on the matter of the referendum and supported both, the 'Yes' and the 'No' campaign in the pre phase of the referendum. Their division can also be noticed in the numbers of the outcome in Table 3. The Labour supporters were also divided which side to vote for or whether to even vote at all. Since the party offered no clear guidance and thus no help in the decision-making process of their supporters just 58.9 percent based their decision on their partisan attachment towards the party but instead fell back on other means to help them make a decision on the matter.

4.1.3 Comparison of 1975 and 2016 and evaluation of the first hypothesis

A fact which all four manifestos clearly establish is that Britain as a country is discontent with its current situation in the European arena. Thus, the two parties, back then as well as now, both agree that there had and have to be renegotiations to better Britain's situation. Despite the span of time, all actors involved had and have Britain's prosperity in mind as their main goal. The opposition parties, back then the Conservative Party and the Labour Party nowadays, were and are in favour of staying in the EEC respectively the EU which they also clearly state in their manifestos. The ruling parties, on the other hand, the Labour Party back then and the Conservative Party today, which for the time being initiated the referendums, did and do not clearly state their respective positions on the matter but focus on the possibility of the referendum itself and on renegotiations that they want to bring forth. In Table 5 these reversed positions the parties respectively took on in the two referendums are visible.

Table 5. *Parties' stances in the two referendums*

	1975	2016
Conservative Party	Pro EEC	Divided
Labour Party	Divided	Pro EU

Both referendums show that the way the parties presented themselves on the matter - unified or split - heavily determined the voting behaviour of its supporters. When a party already took a stand in the manifestos the year before the referendum and stuck to this position in the run of the referendum, its supporters followed the party's opinion and voted in accordance

with the party's interest. This proved to be true for the Conservative Party in the 1975 referendum about the EEC and for the Labour Party in the 2016 referendum about the *Brexit*. On the other hand, if a party did not clearly make a statement in their manifesto or was even publicly split on the matter of the referendum, so were its supporters which is also clearly reflected in the results of the surveys. This appears to be true for the Labour Party in 1975 and likewise the Conservative Party in this year.

While in 1975, the outcome seemed to be clear at all times in the pre phase of the referendum which can be seen in Table 6, the outcome at the 2016 referendum was always estimated very close which can be seen in Table 7.

Table 6. *Majority 'Yes' May 1975 in percent*

	Time			
	May 7 th	May 14 th	May 21 st	May 29 th
'Yes' % Minus 'No' % Among Decided Voters	+ 31	+ 32	+28	+34

Source: Butler and Kitzinger, 1976; Majority Yes, May 1975 (Yes % minus No % among decided voters)

Table 7. *Majority 'Yes' May and June 2016 in percent*

	Time			
	May 9 th	May 18 th	May 25 st	June 1 st
'Yes' % Minus 'No' % Among Decided Voters	+2	+4	+0	+0

Sources: (YouGov, 2016d), (YouGov, 2016c), (YouGov, 2016e), (YouGov, 2016f)

Table 6 shows that the remain side was, at all times in the pre phase of the referendum, majorly in the lead of the surveys compared to the leave side, from plus 28 percent, measured on May 21st, 1975 even up to 34 percent, measured on May 29th. Table 7 shows that a few weeks before the referendum the remain side was at all times just slightly in the lead if even at all. The maximum percentage was measured on May 18th, 2016 with four percent in favour of remaining but the polls conducted the two weeks after show that both sides then would have received equally as many votes. In comparison to this year's referendum, where the remain side lead with just four percent before the referendum, if at all, the results from 1975 were way clearer than they were this year.

All in all, on the basis of the review of the parties' manifestos as well as speeches held by leading politicians and on the basis of the surveys and the outcome of the referendums, it can

be concluded that the hypothesis that voters are more likely to follow their party's recommendations if the political party they identify with clearly supports one of the alternatives can be verified for the cases of both referendums. The parties which actually respectively promote their advocacy of remaining in the Union can count on their identifiers' support. This shows that the supporters follow their parties' recommendations and support their interests by voting in their favour and thus portrays the influence the parties have on the whole process as well as the final voting outcome.

4.2 Second Hypothesis

In both referendums one of the big parties did not present themselves unified on the matter of the referendum as will be elaborated in the following analysis: In 1975 that applied to the Labour Party and in 2016 to the Conservative Party. Nonetheless, in 1975, the public voted for remaining in the European Economic Community, so in favour of the recommendation of the Prime Minister and Labour Party Leader Harold Wilson. In 2016 it is as well of interest to see whether the division of the Conservative Party was an influencing factor on the outcome. As of May 2016, in the polls, both sides were really close together. Thus, the following hypothesis will be tested: *If the elite of a political party is unified on the referendum's topic, its identifiers will more often intend to vote in line with their party and if the elite is divided, its identifiers are more likely to be divided too.*

4.2.1 How the elites presented themselves on the matter in 1975 and 2016

4.2.1.1 The presentation of the elites in 1975

In 1975, the Labour Party's elite was divided on the matter of the EEC referendum. The party leader at that time, Harold Wilson, initiated the referendum but, at the same time, since the cabinet was divided on the matter decided to suspend the constitutional convention of the *Cabinet Collective Responsibility*. As a consequence, the members of the cabinet did not have to publicly support the government's decisions made in the Cabinet, if they had a different opinion on it but could support the campaigns according to their conscience and could even publicly campaign against each other. Furthermore, already the decision to hold a referendum was criticized. The former leader of the Conservative Party, Edward Heath, as well as the then newly elected Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher, were not fond of the act of the referendum, calling it “a device of dictators and demagogues” (Miller, 2015, p.20). In the rows of the Labour Party, it was mostly the left-wingers that supported the referendum

because they wanted the country to leave the Community but the rest of the party was rather sceptical towards the event (Miller, 2015). Two campaigns were initiated in the run up of the referendum. The campaign for the 'Yes' side was called *Britain in Europe* (BIE) and the campaign for the 'No' side *National Referendum Campaign* (NRC). The Labour Government and the majority of the Cabinet of Harold Wilson supported the *Britain in Europe* campaign and recommended to the public to support a membership through a pamphlet that was printed and published and sent to every household in Britain in the weeks before the referendum. Furthermore, the Conservative Party, foremost, its leader Margaret Thatcher, collectively supported the BIE campaign as well (Miller, 2015). In total, there were three different pamphlets published: The first one was charged by Her Majesty's Government and Harold Wilson, the Prime Minister advertising 'Britain's New Deal in Europe' in which they summarized all the terms they wanted to discuss during the renegotiations with the Community (Miller, 2015). A second pamphlet was published, explicitly saying that it was a statement from the initiative *Britain in Europe* and reasoned “Why You Should Vote Yes” (Butler & Kitzinger, 1976). The pamphlet ended with a quote by Edward Heath saying: “Are we going to stay at the centre of the stage where we belong, or are we going to shuffle off into the dusty wings of history?” which, again, shows the major support of the Conservative Party towards the 'Yes' campaign (Butler & Kitzinger, 1976). The third pamphlet sent to every household in Britain was made by the *National Referendum Campaign* and was published with the headline *Why You Should Vote No* listing all the arguments why a withdrawal would be beneficial for the United Kingdom. On 9th April, 1975 the House of Commons approved the Government's recommendation, 396 votes to 170, that the country should stay in the European Community. Butler and Kitzingers also concretized those findings in numbers stating that in 1975, the Cabinet was split as followed: seven out of 23 members (30%) as well as 148 out of the 318 Labour backbenchers (47%) opposed continuing the membership in the Community, whereas just 138 (43%) Labour Members of Parliament supported it and 32 (10%) did not support either side (Butler & Kitzinger, 1976).

4.2.1.2 The presentation of the elites in 2016

As already elaborated in the course of the analysis of the first hypothesis, the Conservative Party did not present itself as one unity on the matter of the *Brexit* referendum. On the one hand, there was David Cameron, the party leader, who is a proponent of the remain side. He saw more advantages in staying in the European Union and also feared the dangers an exit would entail for the country which he, for the first time, already expressed in a speech held in

2013 and since then has done so on numerous occasions (Cabinet Office, 2013). On 23rd May, 2016 he and George Osborne published an article in *The Telegraph* in which they explained what consequences a withdrawal from the European Union would have for the country, especially mentioning the economic shock the UK would face. They see it as their duty to maintain Britain's security and prosperity concerning the working people's jobs as well as their living standards and thus recommend to the people to vote 'Yes' at the ballot box (Government UK, 2016). On the other hand, there were other prominent politicians from the Conservative elite who are publicly backing a *Brexit*. As means of their support towards the *Vote Leave* campaign, Boris Johnson and five out of the six Cabinet ministers who are advocates of the withdrawal, amongst others Michael Gove, the Justice Secretary and leader of the official *Brexit* campaign and Priti Patel, who is Britain's employment minister, lead a "Brexit Blitz" in which they held speeches across the whole country trying to convince the voters to support their campaign (The Telegraph, 2016). As in the case of 1975 there are also specific numbers which show exactly to what extent and in which ratio the Conservative Party was split in 2016. The *International Business Times* as well as the *BBC* have published lists of Members of Parliament who have put their intention to support the campaign to remain in the Union on the record. According to their lists, 69 (20%) out of 330 of the Conservative Members of Parliament were backing a *Brexit*. As a comparison, in the Labour Party, just nine out of 229 MPs had decided to support a withdrawal which is just about four percent of the party's elite (International Business Times, 2016). Furthermore, out of the Conservative's top leaders that is the members of the Cabinet of ministers, 78 percent wanted to stay in the EU whilst 22 percent wanted Britain to leave. The clearest division can be seen among the backbenchers. Just 41 percent opted for staying whilst 48 percent wanted Britain to leave the Union and the remaining eleven percent had not ultimately decided, a month before the referendum took place, which side they wanted to support (Goodenough, 2016).

All the facts above demonstrate that in 1975 the Labour Party, and especially its elite, was split on the matter of the referendum: The Cabinet was in conflict: both campaigns had supporters from its members since it was legally allowed to do so. Most of the Conservative elite, however, agreed upon supporting Edward Heath as well as Margret Thatcher and their recommendation to stay in the Community which they demonstrated in their manifesto as well as in the *Why You Should Vote Yes* pamphlet (Butler & Kitzinger, 1976). In the case of 2016, the same pattern can be seen again. 20 percent of the Conservative Members of

Parliament opted for leaving and the two contrasting campaigns both had prominent figures as their supporters who publicly showed their respective position by holding speeches and trying to mobilize the voters to vote in their interests. Most of the oppositional Labour elite, however, supported Prime Minister Cameron in his campaign to stay a member in the EU. Hence, in both years one of the parties, interestingly enough the ruling party, was presenting themselves divided, giving mixed signals to the voters by their recommendations.

4.2.2 The voting patterns

The next step of the analysis deals with the voting outcome of the referendum in 1975 to see whether the division of the Labour Party had any impact on the people's decision at the ballot box compared to the numbers of a current survey of YouGov asking its participants about their voting intention in the 2016 referendum.

On 26th April, 1975, the Labour Party held a conference, debating about Britain's membership in the European Community where they also let their members vote on whether to stay or leave the EEC. The proportion of members of the party that wanted to leave was 2-1 opposite to the ones who wanted the country to stay, about 3.7 million voters voted for a withdrawal while about two million wanted to continue the membership (BBC, 2016). At the final referendum, the numbers had changed again. As Table 3 shows, the Labour supporters turned their internal earlier result around: in the end, 35 percent voted for Britain to remain in the Community while 28 percent voted in favour of a withdrawal. This result shows that the mixed signals the elite sent, made a lot of the party's supporters undecided on the matter. The politicians publicly manifested themselves in the competitive campaigns, resulting in a split vote of their partisans. In the end, the government around Harold Wilson could convince more people to vote 'Yes' but just with a seven percent difference. On the other hand, the Conservative Party presented itself as one unity on the matter, already in their manifesto they had published the year before the referendum took place. The party's elite did not split up to support either side of the referendum but followed the recommendation of its leader, Margaret Thatcher, who was an advocate of remaining in the Union. This unity also gets reflected in the numbers of the outcome of the referendum. 65 percent of the party's supporter followed the recommendation given by the party and voted 'Yes' while just 12 percent voted 'No'. Moreover, far less Conservative supporters than Labour supporters were undecided on the matter.

In this year's referendum the roles of the parties seem to be turned around according to the pre-referendum polls: 41 years ago the Labour Party was deeply divided, which was clearly reflected by their voting outcome in the 1975 referendum. In this year the supporters mostly tended to follow the recommendation of their party to stay in the European Union. As can be seen in Table 1, 71 percent of the participants of the poll stated that they wanted to remain in the Union while just 21 percent wanted Britain to leave. On the other hand, since the Remain as well as the Leave Campaign both had supporters from the party's elite, the Conservative supporters seemed to be deeply divided. In May 2016, each side would have equally received 44 percent of the votes. The final outcome from June still shows the exact same trend: The Conservative supporters were still divided on the matter, even though not equally but more in favour of a *Brexit* (43% versus 56%) while the percentages of the Labour identifiers had barely changed: 68 percent voted for remaining while 30 percent voted for leaving.

4.2.3 Comparison of 1975 and 2016 and evaluation of the second hypothesis

In October 1974, the Labour Party won the election by receiving 39 percent of all the votes which gave them 319 seats in parliament while the Conservative Party received 36 percent of the vote and in turn got 277 seats (Butler & Kitzinger, 1976). Thus, the gap between the percentages was very close with just three percent and the Labour Party just had 42 seats more than their biggest competitor. In 2015, the Conservatives won the election with 37 percent followed by the Labour Party which received 30 percent of the votes. In total, the Conservative Party holds 331 seats now whereas the Labour Party holds 232 seats, being a difference of 99 seats, double as much of a difference as there was between the two parties was in 1974 (BBC, 2015). Hence, the difference between the seats of the ruling and the opposition party is quite remarkable between the two years. Nevertheless, when taking into account the concrete numbers of Members of Parliament of the divided parties that were in favour of leaving, there were quantitatively more Labour backbenchers in 1975 who wanted to leave the Community, namely 148 out of 319 (46%) (Butler & Kitzinger, 1976) whereas in 2016 121 out of 331 (36,5%) Conservative backbenchers backed a *Brexit* (Goodenough, 2016). This shows that the level of division was stronger in 1975 than it was in 2016. The factor of the nearly equal split of the backbenchers in both referendums can be seen as a strong force influencing the outcomes because they are simply outnumbering the members of the Cabinet and the ministers and therefore have the power to determine the level of unity or division of the whole parliament.

Exactly like in hypothesis one, the two parties have switched their roles as can be seen in Table 8. While in 1975 the Conservative elite presented itself unified as supporters of remaining in the Union they were split on the matter in this year's referendum. Reversely, the Labour Party elite was deeply divided on the matter 41 years ago but backed a stay in the European Union in 2016.

Table 8. *How the parties' elites presented themselves*

	1975	2016
Conservative Elite	Unified	Divided
Labour Elite	Divided	Unified

In the course of the analysis the numbers of the outcome of the EEC referendum in 1975 as well as the survey results of 2016 detect a certain trend: In 1975 the Labour supporters were not just divided into two camps but into three. The mixed signals the voters received made them not just equally divided into either voting for remaining or leaving but also made them undecided for which side to vote or even hesitant to vote at all. In this year, the Conservatives were exactly equally divided in May, both camps got 44 percent of the votes whilst prominent representatives of the party tried to convince more and more voters through public appearances. On the day of the referendum, however, 43 percent of the Conservative supporters voted for remaining and 56 percent for a *Brexit*. Obviously only the parties' elites that uniformly supported just one stance could count on their supporters to also vote as a uniform front which is clearly reflected in the numbers. So, as a result, the outcomes show that the hypothesis that *if the elite of a political party is unified on the referendum's topic, its identifiers will more often intend to vote in line with their party and if the elite is divided, its identifiers are more likely to be divided too* is definitely true for the referendum in 1975 and it again is 41 years later.

5 Conclusion

The general intention of this bachelor thesis is to analyze the extent to which partisanship influenced the voting outcome of the *Brexit* Referendum in 2016 in comparison to the EEC Referendum in 1975. The specific task of this paper is to examine the research question whether partisanship played as an important role influencing the outcome the 2016 Brexit referendum as it did in the 1975 EEC referendum. The thesis also aims to provide a first insight into the topic of in this year's referendum on the EU membership of the United Kingdom and especially into the role of partisanship therein since, due to its topicality, there has not been published any research on the topic yet.

The research question to what extent partisanship was of importance in both referendums was evaluated in the analysis of the first hypothesis which verified the assumption that voters are more likely to follow their parties' recommendations if the political party they identify with clearly supports one of the alternatives. The results showed that that the more a party took a clear stance towards the referendum matter the more it was assured to receive the support of its identifiers. The results of the secondary data provided by *YouGov* in form of a survey conducted in the run-up of the referendums as well as the official outcomes of 1975 and 2016 showed that this, firstly, was the case for the Conservative Party in 1975 which presented itself in their election manifesto of 1974 as an advocate of staying in the Community and whose supporters also unanimously voted for Britain to stay. Secondly, for the same reasons, this was also the case for the Labour Party in 2016. On the other hand, in 1975, the Labour Party did not campaign as one unity for either staying or leaving the Community which, in turn, was also reflected in the allocation of the 'Yes' and 'No' votes their supporters chose for at the ballot box. The votes were about equally split on both camps with a high percentage of supporters that did not know for what or whether to vote at all. This trend could also be detected for the Conservative Party in 2016 which did not take a clear stance in their election manifesto and with two of their most important party members, David Cameron and Boris Johnson, each campaigning for one of the oppositional alternatives. The outcome of the Conservative supporters reflected the conflicting situation the party found itself in by voting equally as much for either of the options. Hence, the first hypothesis could be verified.

Furthermore, the analysis of the sub-question whether the division of a party's elite had any effects on the level of partisan attachment could be verified, too. It was clearly detectable that

the elites of the the Labour Party in 1975 and of the Conservative Party in 2016 were divided which had a huge influence on the identifiers' voting behaviour. In 1975, some members of the Cabinet were advocates for leaving although the then Prime Minister Harold Wilson supported remaining in the Community. These Cabinet members were even allowed to campaign according to their own conscience due to the suspension of the Cabinet Collective Responsibility. Thus, the highest authorities of the state publicly appeared deeply divided on the matter, and, moreover, especially the Labour backbenchers were nearly equally divided into the two camps. As the outcome of the analysis of the first hypothesis already laid open the way the Labour Party its elite presented itself clearly affected the supporters who then were divided on the matter as well. Likewise, the Conservative Party found itself in the same situation this year. On the one hand, the Prime Minister David Cameron as well as the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne campaigned for Britain to stay in the EU while, on the other hand, Boris Johnson, former mayor of London and other important politicians of the Conservative Party travelled around the country during their 'Brexit Blitz' to hold speeches trying to convince the voters to vote 'Leave'. Comparable to 1975, both camps within the Conservative elite found support from their identifiers, which made both camps earn equally as many votes in the survey conducted in the pre-phase of the referendum and also lead to quite divergent results in the final outcome. Thus, the hypothesis that if the elite is divided so are its voters could also be verified according to the findings of the analysis.

On the basis of the verification of both hypotheses it can be concluded that partisanship was an influencing factor in this year's referendum like it was in the referendum in 1975. Various scholars have published as the result of their researches that partisanship was an important factor influencing the voting behaviour and thus the outcome of the referendum in 1975. The contexts of both referendums show a striking number of similarities in respect to the positions of the parties as well as especially their elites which basically just switched their position towards the referendums around: the ruling parties which initiated the referendum, in 1975 the Labour Party and in 2016 the Conservative Party did not take on a clear stance while the opposition party, in 1975 the Conservative Party and in 2016 the Labour Party were pro remaining. The effects of the behaviour of the parties was also reflected in the polls and outcomes in both years revealing the fact that the voters are immensely influenced by their partisan attachment when making a decision at the ballot box. Hence, it can be said that partisanship was also of importance in 2016.

There are several possible explanations for these findings because of how partisanship works in different ways. The role of partisanship can be seen as a causal mechanism: If the party is a deciding force it has to present a clear position which the voters then internalize and vote according to that proposed position. If this impulse is not given by the political party the voters let themselves be influenced by either other actors or other reasons and vote according to their own conscience and the information they gathered elsewhere. Therefore, the recommendations of the parties and the way they communicate and present themselves are of immense importance. One possible reason for that is that the supporters simply have faith in the party itself and just follow the party's direction no matter on what occasion. This, for example, originates from partisan ties that go way back in time and can be rooted in the social identity of the voter's self. On the other hand, the party can convince and win over a voter because of its arguments towards the referendum. For the parties that were unified on the referendum matter, the supporters could just blindly follow the parties' recommendations because according to their identification with the political party they feel represented in whatever this party does and there is no attention paid to any other option. This is supported by Sarah Lanccock's findings (2011) who stated that, in 1975, 88.8 percent of the Conservative supporters based their vote on partisanship. Therefore, the party that took a clear stance on the matter of the referendum and was convinced of one way to be the right one could count on their supporters to vote in their favour. The situation is different for the identifiers of a party that is divided: When there was not a single path clearly determined for the voters they cannot just follow the recommendation of their party because they are confronted with two options. Thus, they have to evaluate the arguments of both sides to get to a decision and cannot let the party make the decision for them. In general, one way the voters can get to a decision is by orienting towards the leading politicians of their party since they are the key figures who represent the parties' values and mindset. The voters choose politicians they feel most connected to and see which proposition they articulate. In case of a division of the elite this is becoming a more difficult task. Therefore, if the party is not sure itself which future way the country should go and which alternative would be the best for the country, its followers are not sure either about what alternative to choose. The party's identifiers are missing guidance the party usually offers them and which they need because of the complexity of the contents of such events. They have to rely on cues to get their information and if these cues are not given they have to re-evaluate the situation on their own without the guidance of the party they feel connected. This, again, is reflected by the numbers of Sarah Lanccock (2011) who stated that, in comparison to the Conservative supporters in 1975, just

58.9 percent of the Labour voters based their decision on partisanship. This indicates that they had to look for alternative ways to come to a decision to overcome the information shortfall as well as the missing guidance. This process also applies to the 2016 *Brexit* referendum and thus was noticeable in both referendums referred to in this thesis.

The applied research design involves the use of a case study which investigates the phenomenon of partisanship in the context of two British referendums. Its strengths are the provision of in-depth details and individual aspects. Furthermore, the two cases were selected with the purpose of an analytical focus, which strengthens the used data by making them comparable. Also, further strengths are the possibility of conducting an intensive analysis that provides much more details than a rather general statistical analysis. On the other hand, the weakness of such an approach is the existence of many possible independent variables in contrast to only a small number of two cases researched on in the thesis. In order to reduce the amount of variables, similar cases were chosen which also enabled an in-depth comparison between the two cases. Another obstacle within comparative case study design was sorting out rival explanations. On the other hand, those rival explanations can be the inducement for further research.

Despite the fact that the two referendums show a lot of similarities in terms of the mechanism of partisanship their outcomes differ. In both years, one party clearly advocated remaining in the Union while the other party was divided on the matter which was reflected by the voting behaviour of their respective supporters and, hence, the outcome of the referendums. In addition, in each case the elite of one of the parties, were deeply split on the matter which, as a consequence, made the parties' identifiers vote divergently at the ballot box. As pointed out in the analysis of the second hypothesis, the elite was even more split in 1975 than it was in 2016, yet the British voters still voted 'Yes' back then whereas in this year the level of division of the elite was not as high and the electorate voted 'No'. This raises the question which other factors possibly have influenced the voting behaviour of the partisans. One explanation could be the changed political landscape. One item to take into consideration is the constitution of the UK Independence Party which did not exist in 1975 but which made it their number one goal for Britain to leave the European Union. They thus gained a lot of votes for 'Leave' and therefore most likely had an influence on the voting outcome. Furthermore, there is a general political notion towards nationalism which is currently noticeable not only in Britain but also in several other European countries. This also could

have been an influential factor in contrast to the political situation in 1975 when the Conservative Party stated in their election manifesto that all countries that are part of the Community should be proud of its formation after the World Wars. Those findings could be the possible starting points for future research on the topic. They indicate that it is necessary to conduct further research which might even exceed the broad field of partisanship in order to extend the knowledge and to research more widely on this topic.

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