The 2014 European elections in Britain: the counter-revolt of the masses?

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The 2014 European Elections in Britain
The Counter-Revolt of the Masses?[1]

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BACKGROUND

The British have always tended to be more conservative on European integration than most, if not all of their fellows on the Continent. An opinion poll conducted by the Electoral Reform Society just a month before the 2014 European elections revealed the yawning disconnect between the British public and the EU: three in five respondents (59%) believe that the European Parliament does not represent the views of voters; 74% that their voice does not count in the EU; and 80% that their vote makes more of a difference in a UK general election than in the election for the European Parliament (EP)[2]. These public opinion trends must be of concern to British political elites. In the words of Prime Minister (PM) David Cameron: "Membership of the European Union depends on the consent of the sovereign British people – and in recent years that has worn wafer-thin"[3]. The 2014 European elections, then, took place against a backdrop of a heightened degree of scepticism about the EU.

Euroscepticism amongst the general public has been accompanied by the increasingly good electoral performance of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in the EU elections. UKIP's entire *raison d'être* is to secure Britain's withdrawal from the EU. The party began to be noticed in 1999 when they won three seats in the European Parliament on 7% of the vote. This was a significant rise over the 1.2% of the vote they had won five years earlier in the 1994 elections. Five years later, in the 2009 elections, UKIP won 2.4 million votes, or 16.5% of the total – second only to the Conservative Party (27.7%) and ahead of both the Labour Party (15.7%) and

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1 Inspired by Christopher Lasch's thesis. See Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, W. W. Norton & Co., New York, London,1995.

2 The Electoral Society, "Close the Gap", 28th of April 2014, [online] available at: http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/close-the-gap-2 (last accessed 3.08.2014)

3 Conservative Party, "Conservative Party European Elections Manifesto", 2014, p. 101, [online] available at: https://www.conservatives.com/europe (last accessed 2.07.2014)

the strongly pro-European Liberal Democrat Party (13.7%) – which translated into 12 seats in the EP. In 2013, a full year before the 2014 European elections, the polls were already predicting very good results for UKIP. The political establishment across the ideological spectrum effectively declared war on Nigel Farage, the leader of UKIP, in the run-up to the elections, accusing him of racism and fraudulent misuse of his expense account as a member of the EP[4]. The accuracy of these allegations is a moot point; UKIP continued to top the polls throughout the election campaign. At the end of April 2014, only a month before the elections, YouGov polls showed UKIP in the lead with 31%, followed by Labour with 28%, and the Conservatives with 19%[5]. UKIP did in fact win, making history for it being the first time since 1906 that a political party other than Labour or the Conservatives won a national election[6].

CAMPAIGN ISSUES & RESULTS

Elections to the EP are governed by the rules of proportional representation (PR) across Britain, except for Northern Ireland, which uses the Single Transferable Vote. By contrast, national elections for domestic offices follow the rules of first-past-the-post, which until lately produced a stable two-party system. Forty parties fielded candidates competing for 73 seats in the 2014 EP elections, a melee that resembles the fragmented party system characteristic of Eastern Europe (see the Annex, Table 1). Out of those forty parties, however, only a handful were really competitive: UKIP led by Nigel Farage, the Conservative Party led by Prime Minister David Cameron, the Labour Party led by Ed Miliband, and the strongly Europhile Liberal Democrats led by Nick Clegg.

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4 Phillip Johnston, "Would a Constitution Save Britain from the EU? The European Arrest Warrant Would Be Given Short Shrift If We Had a Modern Magna Carta", *The Telegraph*, 8th of July 2014[online] available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/10951442/Would-a-Constitution-save-Britain-from-the-EU.html (last accessed 10.07.2014)

5 Andrew Sparrow, "Ukip Likely to Come Out Top in European Elections, Warn Hain and Tebbit", *The Guardian*, 27 April 2014 [online] available at: http://www.theguardian.com /politics/2014/apr/27/ukip-likely-win-european-elections-despite-racism-scandals (last accessed 1.07.2014).

6 Jim Pickard, Stacey Kiran, "Ukip Leaves Britain's Main Parties Reeling in European Elections",*Financial Times*, 26 May 2014, available at:http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/54fa2190-e3fe-11e3-8565-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3IxRbuHkL (last accessed 7.07.2014)

The United Kingdom Independence Party

The most significant news out of the 2014 European elections in Britain was the spectacular success of UKIP. It came out on top – ahead of all the mainstream political parties, – winning 27.49% of the votes, nearly an 11% increase over 2009, yielding eleven additional UKIP MPs in the European Parliament for a total of 24 (see the Annex, Table 1)[7].

UKIP is a relatively new party, having emerged in 1993 from the Anti-Federalist League set up in 1991 by Alan Sked, an Oxford-educated historian and Professor of International History at the London School of Economics[8]. The League's purpose had been to oppose the Maastricht Treaty, which transferred significant powers to the European Commission with no prior consultation of the British people through a popular referendum. The League's agenda and membership overlapped with The Bruges Group, a think tank affiliated with the Conservative Party, and included some of the Conservative Party's foremost public figures (*viz.* Michael Howard, Iain Duncan Smith, Baroness Thatcher). The ambition of The Bruges Group is to "spearhead […] the intellectual battle against the notion of 'ever-closer Union' in Europe and, above all, against British involvement in a single European state"[9]. Its founding had been inspired by a 1998 speech by Margaret Thatcher, in which she stated, "We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them reimposed at a European level, with a European superstate exercising a new dominance from Brussels"[10].

UKIP is the UK's only major party that puts Britain's exit from the EU at the core of its agenda and manifesto. Its uncompromising opposition to European integration is distinctive, and is clearly summed up in the words of UKIP's leader, Nigel Farage: "I want friendship, co-operation and trade with the EU. I don't want to be part of a political union … I don't find it acceptable that 75% of our laws are now made by the institutions of Brussels"[11].

UKIP claims to be a "patriotic party" that –

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7 BBC, "Guide to the 2014 European and Local Elections", 21 May 2014, [online] available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-27039093 (last accessed 8.09.2014).

8 Although Sked was one of UKIP's founders, he has since turned against it.

9 The Bruges Group, "The Bruges Group: About" [online] available at: http://www.brugesgroup.com/about/index.live (last accessed 10.08.2014).

10 *Ibidem,*Baroness Margaret Thatcher, quoted by The Bruges Group.

11 Nigel Farage quoted in BBC News, "EU Referendum: MPs Call for Public to Have their Say", 5 July 2013, [online] available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-23186128 (last accessed 6.07.2014)

> "… believes in Britain becoming a democratic, self-governing country once again. This can only be achieved by getting our nation out of the European Union and reasserting the sovereignty of Parliament. As a party we are unashamedly patriotic: we believe there is so much to be proud about Britain and the contribution it has made to the world. We believe that Britain is good enough to be an independent nation, trading and building harmonious relations with the rest of the world. We believe Britain must get back control over its borders, so that it can welcome people with a positive contribution to make while limiting the overall numbers of migrants and keeping out those without the skills or aptitudes to be of benefit to the nation. UKIP believes in promoting self-reliance and personal freedom from state interference. We believe the state in Britain has become too large, too expensive and too dominant over civil society"[12].

UKIP's 2010 manifesto titled *Empowering the People* stressed the freedoms that Britain would regain by withdrawal from the EU, and spotlighted three: of action, of resources, and of the people. "Freedom of action" means that Britain would be unfettered in deciding how to spend its money and how to run its economy: "No longer will our country have to grovel to the EU for permission to spend our own money to save our Post Offices, car plants or power stations, or to negotiate our trade deals and determine our destiny"[13]. On this point, the manifesto points out Britain's *gravitas* in the world: "While we face serious challenges, the UK's 'portfolio of power' is still considerable as the world's sixth largest economy, with London the world's largest financial centre"; yet its antithetic minority status in the EU: "In the EU, the UK now has only 9% of deciding votes". By "freedom of resources", UKIP refer to the money that Britain would save by pulling out, which some have estimated at an incredible £356 million by 2018:

> "[T]he UK will save an extra £6.4 billion a year in net cash to spend how she wished. Even more money will be saved by scrapping EU red tape on business, which cost £106 billion in 2008 and will cost £356 billion by 2018 ….".

Finally, "freedom of the people" refers to the EU's unsolved democratic deficit:

> "We will no longer be governed by an undemocratic and autocratic European Union or ruled by its unelected bureaucrats, commissioners, multiple presidents and judges. UKIP will give power back to Westminster and to the people through binding national and local referenda and more effective, locally-elected representatives. Britain will be free to choose a new positive vision for her future, free from the EU straightjacket".

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[12] UK Independence Party, "What We Stand For", 2014, [online] available at: http://www.ukip.org/issues (last accessed 10.06.2014).

[13] *Ibidem*, p. 3 (the next two paragraphs refer to the same document).

With electoral success has come electoral responsibility. UKIP are no longer (if they ever were) a single-issue party, as witness their most recent manifestoes. Beyond exit from the EU, which frames UKIP's *Empowering the People*, the manifesto addressed issues in the following policy domains: (1) The Economy: Tax, Budget & Regulation; (2) The Economy: Jobs, Enterprise &Skills; (3) Immigration and Asylum; (4) Law & Order/Crime; (5) Education & Training; (6) Pensions; (7) Welfare and Social Security; (8) Foreign Affairs & International Trade; (9) Energy & the Environment; (10) Transport; (11) Housing & Planning; (12) The Constitution & How We Are Governed; (13) Culture & Restoring Britishness; (14) Food, Farming & the Countryside; and (15) Fishing. The manifesto detailed the measures UKIP would enact, if elected.

One example may suffice to give an inkling of where UKIP stands. "The Economy: Tax, Budget & Regulation" addresses taxation and EU regulations. The pledges read like the standard libertarian small-government programme: Britain's economy is "suffocated by high taxation, excessive EU regulation, overgenerous welfare and punitive bureaucracy", which are to be reformed in the following ways: (1.1) raise the tax threshold to £11.500 (from £10.000); (1.2) introduce a flat income tax rate of 31%; (1.3) stimulate job creation by phasing out Employers' National Insurance ("tax on jobs") over a five-year period (20% reduction *per annum*); (1.4) reduce the public sector to its 1997 size so as to "exchange two million public sector jobs for one million new skilled jobs" in manufacturing and services; (1.5) cut council tax by scrapping EU laws like the landfill tax that costs every district council an average of £3 million per year; (1.6) replace the EU's VAT with a "Local Sales Tax", a proportion of which is to accrue directly to local authorities; (1.7) allow a standard 50% of the Uniform Business Rate collected locally to be paid directly to the corresponding local council, with the remaining 50% to be paid centrally; (1.8) abolish the Inheritance Tax; (1.9) scrap up to 120.000 EU directives and regulations that impact on the UK economy; (1.10) restore responsibility for overseeing the UK banking system to the Bank of England, which must remain independent, and require banks to increase minimal capital ratios from the current 4% to at least 8% of total assets; (1.11) require the Bank of England to enforce a rigid division between retail banks and investment banks, modelled on the US Glass-Steagall Act; (1.12) reinstate the banking "corset", *i.e.* require lenders to make non-interest bearing deposits at the Bank of England when lending beyond approved limits[14].

UKIP's position on banking is of note, many of the issues raised having been subject to much public debate in Britain since the 2007/8 banking crisis and the massive government bail-out that ensued. According to the National

[14] *Ibidem*, pp. 3-4.

Audit Office, since 2007 the UK government have committed themselves to spend £1.162 trillion on bail-outs, the equivalent of 31% of GDP as of 2011[15]. UKIP's proposal to follow the US Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 would bring about a strict isolation of companies engaged in consumer banking, handling the general public's money, from those engaged in investments, which are much riskier. No company would be permitted to do both at once, and if a 'corporate group' wanted to do both through different companies, then it would have to keep their respective accounts so separated that the losses of the one could have no effect on the solvency of the other. This is so investment losses may not be shifted onto consumers directly or indirectly, in the event the company had to be dissolved and its assets (which might otherwise have included consumer loans and thus deposits) sold up[16].

Immigration has also become a chief concern of UKIP. In the words of an academic commentator, "UKIP is no longer a single-issue [anti-EU] party. Since 2010, the party has successfully merged Europe and immigration in the minds of its voters"[17]. The two issues may have been "merged" not merely for strategic reasons, as this commentator claims, but because they may in fact be objectively interconnected.

Immigration has become so politicised in Britain that non-experts find it difficult to work out where the truth lies. The findings of academic studies differ depending on the assumptions made and methods used. Even government figures must be doubted, given the politicisation of the civil service: "The rival camps in government – the anti-immigration Tory-led Home Office and the pro-immigration Lib Dem-led Business department – will seize on any stat and brief against each other in an effort to prove their case"[18]. The Migration Advisory Committee which supports Theresa May, the Conservative Home Secretary, reported in 2012 that "an extra 100 non-EU working-age migrants are initially associated with 23 fewer native people

[15] Polly Curtis, "Reality Check: How Much Did the Banking Crisis Cost Taxpayers?", *The Guardian*, 12 September 2011, [online] available at: http://www.theguardian.com /politics/reality-check-with-polly-curtis/2011/sep/12/reality-check-banking-bailout (last accessed 7.06.2014).

[16] Since UKIP's 2010 manifesto, the Coalition government has enacted the Financial Services (Banking Reform) Act 2013 that forces banks to legally isolate ("ringfence") consumer banking activities so as to protect them from the vagaries and risks of the investment markets. It also includes measures like holding the senior management of failed banks liable to criminal sanctions.

[17] Matthew Goodwin, "Nigel Farage: Leading A Modern Peasants' Revolt against Westminster", *The Guardian*, 24 September 2014 [online] available at: http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/24/nigel-farage-ukip-peasants-revolt-westminster-working-class-britons (last accessed 7.08.2014).

[18] Nick Robinson, "Immigration What Is the Impact on British Workers?", *BBC News* 5 March 2014, [online] available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26447244 (last accessed 7.06.2014).

employed" and that "[b]etween 1995 and 2010 employment of … working age migrants rose by approximately 2.1 million. The associated displacement of British born workers … [being] around 160,000 of the additional 2.1 million jobs held by migrants, or about 1 in 13"[19]. This report was challenged by "some economists", who claimed its estimates were "out of line with other research"[20]. According to the BBC, a majority of economists claim that immigration has increased the size of the British economy, and therefore the number of jobs available[21]. If the USA is any indicator, immigrants there have taken a significant number, and quite possibly all of the jobs created since the dot-com bubble burst in 2000[22]. Britain might not be that different.

UKIP favour tough immigration controls. *Empowering the People* dedicates a lengthy section to the issue of immigration:

> "As a member of the EU, Britain has lost control of her borders. Some 2.5 million immigrants have arrived since 1997 and up to one million economic migrants live here illegally. Former New Labour staff maintain that this policy has been a deliberate attempt to water down the British identity and buy votes. EU and human rights legislation means we cannot even expel foreign criminals if they come from another EU country. This is why immigration control is so essential and overdue"[23].

In response, UKIP pledges to:

- End mass, uncontrolled immigration. Introduce an immediate five-year freeze on immigration for permanent settlement. Confine immigration in the future to 50.000 people per annum.
- Regain control of UK borders by leaving the EU. Allow time-limited work permits only. Entry for non-work related purposes will be on a temporary visa. Criminalise overstaying.

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19 Migration Advisory Committee, "Analysis of the Impacts of Migration", 1 January 2012, [online] available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/analysis-of-the-impacts-of-migration (last accessed 10.07.2014).

20 Nick Robinson, "Immigration…cit.".

21 *Ibidem*.

22 Centre for Immigration Studies, "All Employment Growth Since 2000 Went to Immigrants", 2014, [online] available at: http://cis.org/all-employment-growth-since-2000-went-to-immigrants (last accessed 13.07.2014); for attempts to refute the Centre's claims see Jeff Jacoby, "The Stolen Job Myth", *The Boston Globe*, 2 July 2014, [online] available at: http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2014/07/01/the-stolen-job-myth/PT2ulTub6L2z2Pwq1g05FL/story.html (last accessed 9.08.2014), and FactChecked. Org., "Does Immigration Cost Jobs?", 13 May 2010 [online] available at: http://www.factcheck.org/2010/05/does-immigration-cost-jobs/ (last accessed on 11.08.2014).

23 UK Independence Party, "Empowering the People",2010, p. 5, available at http://www.barnetbugle.com/storage/manifestos/National%20UKIP%20Manifesto.pdf (last accessed 7.09.2014).

- Record the entry and exit of non-UK citizens travelling to or from the UK. To enforce this, triple to 30.000 the number of border staff.
- Immigration for permanent settlement will be on a strictly controlled, points-based system.
- Deport those living illegally in the UK to their country of origin; no amnesty for illegal immigrants.
- Require those living in the UK under "Permanent Leave to Remain" to abide by a legally binding "Undertaking of Residence", ensuring they respect our laws or face deportation. Such citizens are to be ineligible for benefits.
- Asylum seekers are to be held in secure and humane centres until applications are processed, with limited rights of appeal. Those refused will be required to leave the country.
- Require non-work permit visa entrants to the UK to take out health insurance. Crack down on bogus educational establishments.
- Repeal the 1998 Human Rights Act and withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights. Prohibit appeals from UK courts to international treaties that override UK Parliamentary statutes[24].
- End the active promotion of the doctrine of multiculturalism by local and national government[25].

At the most recent UKIP Conference in September 2014, UKIP called for having separate immigration queues for British citizens at border entry points; stripping terrorists of their passports; denying entry to asylum seekers without identity documents; increasing the number of frontline border staff and search teams by 2.500; and supporting abolition of the Dublin Convention[26], which stipulates that asylum seekers must remain in the first European country they enter. Party leader Nigel Farage believes Britain has become "borderless" and urges, "We must take back control of our border"[27].

Despite their strong views on immigration, UKIP has trod carefully lest they are perceived as racist. In *Empowering the People* UKIP rejects outright "the 'blood and soil' ethnic nationalism of extremist parties", and has barred

[24] This is a puzzling pledge. According to the UK constitution, no international treaties are valid in UK courts unless they have already been enacted by Act of Parliament.

[25] UK Independence Party, "Empowering the People", cit., pp. 5-6.

[26] This pledge is puzzling too. One would expect UKIP to be in favour of the Dublin Regulation as it provides that asylum seekers cannot migrate from other EU countries to the UK.

[27] Farage quoted in BBC News, "UKIP Calls for UK-Only Immigration Queues", 26 September 2014 [online] available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-29376259 (last accessed 30.09.2014).

from its membership members of the British National Party and the English Defence League. What is rejected is also the pervasive "multiculturalism and political correctness", in favour of a "uniculturalism" which aims "to create a single British culture embracing all races, religions and colours"[28]. UKIP's position on multiculturalism is interesting, for this topic has been much less controversial in the UK than in other Western nations like the USA, where the social impact of multiculturalism has been found far from positive[29].

The foregoing proves that, despite the derisive academic and media commentary from the Left that they have no domestic policies, UKIP actually have quite an elaborate domestic policy agenda. UKIP have also taken issue with domestic shibboleths like the welfare state. Additional evidence can be found in UKIP's 2014 manifesto *What We Stand For* (see the Annex, Table 2). It shows that they have steered a type of "middle" course on domestic policy that does appeal to many on the right, but no lessto very many working-class Labour voters. In classical ideological terms, UKIP may be classified as Liberal and Nationalist. In terms of contemporary labels, it most resembles what in the USA is called Libertarian, and many observers find more of a parallel between Nigel Farage and Rand Paul than between Farage and, say, Jean-Marie Le Pen. UKIP might be said to occupy a dimension of its own that is "perpendicular" to the left-right axis. One thing it quite consistently and reliably is, is anti-statist.

Euroscepticism and immigration are issues that resonate with a large proportion of the British public. It is not surprising, then, that UKIP have attracted voters from across the political spectrum. UKIP are also attracting people dissatisfied more generally with the mainstream political parties and the political class at Westminster[30].In the words of one British commentator, those who vote for UKIP are "a coalition of left-behind Britons who once voted Labour, and social conservatives who dislike Brussels and loathe Cameronism even more"[31].

In comparison with the European elections, UKIP lagged behind in domestic elections until very recently, eking out only 1.5% of the vote in the 2001 general elections compared with 7% at the European elections two years earlier. However, by 2010 UKIP could boast more than 100 local councillors across Britain (as well as two Lords in the Upper House)[32]. The local elections

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28 UK Independence Party, "Empowering the People", cit., p. 13.

29 Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000.

30 Philip Lynch, Richard Whitaker, "Rivalry on the Right: The Conservatives, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the EU Issue", *British Politics*, vol. 8, no.3, 2013, pp. 285-312.

31 Matthew Goodwin, "Nigel Farage: Leading A Modern Peasants' Revolt…cit.".

32 *Ibidem*.

in 2014, which were held at the same time as the European election, saw a significant increase in UKIP votes (see the Annex, Table 3).

UKIP's strong performance in both the 2014 European and local election results bears implications for the Conservatives' strategy concerning the EU. A Cabinet reshuffle and a publicly visible hardening of the Conservative leadership stance on EU reform followed on in the aftermath of the elections. The Tory leadership had already begun to talk about renegotiating Britain's relationship with the EU in 2012, when the Government initiated a "balance of competences" audit of the EU's impact on Britain as the first step toward such a renegotiation[33]. The Cabinet reshuffle of 17 July 2014 engineered a more Eurosceptic Cabinet perceived to be more determined than its predecessor to reform the EU. Phillip Hammond, for example, is described as "the most openly Eurosceptic Foreign Secretary for generations"[34], seemingly committed to Britain's withdrawal from the EU unless substantial powers are returned to it[35]. It was hoped the move would win back backbenchers as well as voters sympathetic to UKIP's agenda[36]. Whether any of these Eurosceptic ministers will actually have an impact, or whether it is all smoke and mirrors, remains to be seen. Their room for manoeuvre may be constrained by Whitehall in key Departments such as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which may well be determined to support an integration agenda. An even higher stumbling block is PM Cameron, who is committed to the EU and European integration and is the ultimate veto player in the Cabinet; although even Cameron has sharpened his rhetoric lately, as witness his words following the 2014 Conservative Party annual conference, that the EU "is not working properly for us at the moment" and that "I feel a thousand times more strongly about our United Kingdom than I do about the European Union"[37].

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[33] Steven Swinford, "Philip Hammond: I Am Serious About Reforming EU", *The Telegraph* 15 July 2014 [online] available at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/10969136/Philip-Hammond-I-am-serious-about-reforming-EU.html (last accessed 9.09.2014); BBC News,"France and Germany Opt Out of UK's EU Membership Review", 2 April 2013, [online] available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-22000196 (last accessed 7.08.2014).

[34] Georgia Graham, "Michael Fallon: We Will Win Back Voters Who 'Flirted with Ukip'", *The Telegraph*, 16 July 2014, [online] available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/conservative/10970038/Michael-Fallon-We-will-win-back-voters-who-flirted-with-Ukip.html (last accessed 7.07.2014).

[35] Steven Swinford, "Philip Hammond…cit.".

[36] Georgia Graham, "Michael Fallon…cit.".

[37] Matthew Holehouse, "Conservative Party Conference: Live Coverage from Birmingham", *The Telegraph*, 30 September 2014 [online] available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk /news/politics/conservative/11129802/Conservative-Party-Conference-live.html (last accessed 18.05.2014).

UKIP's success may also have influenced the Government's ongoing plans to renegotiate the terms of the UK's membership of the EU. The supranational gambit of appointing a British Conservative, Lord Jonathan Hill, as EU Financial Services Commissioner may be seen as a concession by Brussels to forestall such an eventuality. If Hill's description of himself as a "consensual, pragmatic, European politician" is true, his appointment may have been calculated to blunt the edge of Britain's revisionism on the one hand, and that of France's and Germany's hostility over Britain's "cherry-picking" notion of EU membership on the other[38]. The significance of Hill's appointment remains to be seen. For now, doubts cannot but arise as to how a Tory will square even a softly Eurosceptic ideology with the task of overseeing the creation of a banking union, one of the key items in Lord Hill's portfolio; and indeed as to whether he wields any real power at all, given his formal subordination to two Vice Presidents of the European Commission who have just recently been vested with veto powers on the legislative proposals of other Commissioners[39].

Even more spectacular was UKIP's by-elections performance in the autumn of 2014, which saw the election in the House of Commons of UKIP's first MP. This was precipitated by the resignation of Conservative MP Douglas Carswell, who moved to join UKIP amid rumours that his Party will never actually deliver an in/out referendum under the leadership of David Cameron[40]. As predicted, Carswell retained his seat in a by-election of 9 September with 59.7% of the vote, making this by-election result historical as "the biggest increase in the share of a vote for any party in any by-election" in Britain[41]. Labour-safe seat, which saw Labour's majority sliced to a wafer-thin 617 votes: evidence of the fact that UKIP are attracting working class votes from Labour and in fact from across the spectrum, including the Liberal Democrats whose stance on Europe could not be more opposite to UKIP's. Still, yet another forthcoming by-election is much awaited, following the resignation of a second Conservative MP, Mark Reckless, who like Carswell does not believe that renegotiation of Britain's EU membership[42]. The result will be a further indication of whether UKIP have peaked and are in fact in

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38 BBC News, "Cameron Promises Referendum on EU", 23 January 2013, [online] available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21148282, (last accessed 17.06.2014).

39 Open Europe, "Lord Hill is the EU's New Financial Services Commissioner - But What Is His Remit and Who Does He Report To?", 10 September 2014, [online] available at: http://www.openeuropeblog.blogspot.co.uk/ (last accessed 19.08.2014).

40 Ben Riley-Smith, "Tory Donor Defects to Ukip", *The Telegraph*, 1 October 2014 [online] available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/ukip/11132737/Tory-donor-defects-to-Ukip.html (last accessed 20.08.2014).

41 Professor John Curtice interviewed on BBC Newsnight, 18 October 2014.

42 Matthew Holehouse, "Conservative Party Conference...cit.".

decline, if Reckless fails to win, or whether they are still on the rise and may be expected to significantly impact the 2015 elections. Their successes to date have raised expectations that UKIP might win up to eight seats in Westminster in 2015. If this should happen, UKIP would become the fourth-largest party in the Commons, ahead of the Scottish National Party, the Welsh Plaid Cymru, and the Northern Irish Sinn Fein[43].

The 2014 by-elections certainly suggest that UKIP are taking voters away from the Liberal Democrats, too, whose support has crashed. Yet it is the Labour and Conservative Parties which are losing the most. UKIP have attracted Conservative voters in well-off, non-urban southern England who are dissatisfied with the policy compromises the Conservatives have had to make for the sake of their Coalition partners, the Liberal Democrats[44]. They also distrust PM Cameron's stance on Europe, a palpably widespread sentiment hinted in one of the comment sections in *The Telegraph*, a newspaper traditionally followed by Conservatives: "The fact that this government is opting IN to the European Arrest Warrant, when it has a choice not to, should teach even the dimmest that Dave [Cameron] is no Eurosceptic. Next year, I'm voting UKIP. There's nothing left"[45].

UKIP have also attracted especially voters in poorer areas of the North who have traditionally voted either for Labour or for the British National Party[46]. Labour voters appear to be the ones defecting to UKIP more than anybody else, prompting the comparison of UKIP's rising popularity – a "new insurgency against London elites" – to Wat Tyler's Revolt of 1381. The Labour Party is losing "working class Britons who feel left behind economically, are angry about the political elites in London, and profoundly anxious over the pace of social change"[47]. This may be due to Labour's becoming ever more the party of the upper class and the intelligentsia even under the current leadership of Ed Miliband, despite his purported affiliation with Old Labour. The working class feel that even Old Labour has failed to take account of working class concerns on issues like immigration. Miliband's speech at a recent Labour Party Conference (September 2014) drew massive criticism when he omitted the issue of immigration (and that of the budget deficit) altogether. But even if he had addressed it, it would only have been in passing, as witness the speech he had originally planned, which had addressed

[43] Matthew Holehouse,"Ukip: Nigel Farage's Plan To Win Eight Seats", *The Telegraph*, 7 October 2014, [online] available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/ukip/11143161/Ukip-Nigel-Farages-plan-to-win-eight-seats.html (last accessed 10.10.2014).

[44] Phillip Lynch, Richard Whitaker, "Rivalry on the Right…cit.",pp. 285-312.

[45] Phillip Johnston, "Would a Constitution Save Britain from the EU?...cit.".

[46] David Denver, "The Results: How Britain Voted", *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 63, no.4, 2010, pp. 588-606; See also Phillip Lynch, Richard Whitaker, "Rivalry on the Right…cit.", 285-312.

[47] Matthew Goodwin, "Nigel Farage: Leading A Modern Peasants' Revolt…cit.".

immigration in terms that most working-class Britons would probably have cared little for: "Immigration benefits our country but those who come here have a responsibility to learn English and earn their way. And employers have a responsibility not to exploit migrant workers and undercut wages"[48]

The Conservative Party

UKIP's rise has been of gravest concern to the Conservatives, the senior partner of the governing Coalition with the Liberal Democrats since 2010. Out of the two dominantparties, the Conservatives have the most to beware as they compete with UKIP for votes on the Right side of the spectrum. Traditional Conservatives would probably be openly sympathetic to UKIP's agenda, were it not for the opprobrium it attracts from the elite establishment, which includes the "respectable" media like the BBC. Many are switching to UKIP out of dissatisfaction with Cameron's "modernisation" of the party, which does not cater sufficiently for traditional Conservatives on the issues that matter the most to them. In the words of a Conservative politician worried about the defections to UKIP:

> "We need to work out a strategy, certainly in the west country, for dealing with the issue of traditional voters shuffling off and voting UKIP because they don't think our leadership is Conservative enough … The UKIP vote is not just about Europe … It's also about a hard core of traditional Conservative voters saying, 'actually we don't like the kind of small 'l' liberal decisions this government is beginning to take – it offends our values and we're going to protest and vote UKIP"[49].

The mounting Euroscepticism of the British people and the correlative rise of UKIP – both of which may be parts of one process, *viz.* the spreading perception that the EU is becoming less an asset and more a liability to Britain, objectively – has led the Conservative Party to announce in November 2013, six months before the European elections, that they will hold an in/out referendum in 2017 to give the British people a say over whether Britain

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[48] The Staggers, "Ed Miliband's Speech to the Labour Conference: Full Text", 23 September 2014 [online] available at http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/09/ed-miliband-s-speech-labour-conference-full-text (last accessed 13.10.2014); *The Telegraph*, "Ed Miliband: I Forgot Parts of My Speech. Labour Leader Faces Criticism for Dropping Mention of the Economy from his Keynote Conference Speech", 24 September 2014 [online] available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/ed-miliband/11117748/Ed-Miliband-I-forgot-parts-of-my-speech.html (last accessed 3.10.2014).

[49] Conservative MP Gary Streeter quoted in BBC News. 2012: BBC, "UKIP's Nigel Farage Hails 'Steady Progress' in Local Elections", 5 May 2012 [online] available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-17949549 (last accessed 7.07.2014).

should remain a member or not. It is notable, however, that the Bill was introduced not by the Cabinet but by Conservative backbenchers as a private member's bill[50]. Such a motion reflects the division in the Conservative party over EU membership. The Conservative Party has always had its Eurosceptics, but over the last few decades they have begun to proliferate. The Tories appear to be getting torn asunder over Europe. The line of scrimmage runs between the party leadership, especially PM Cameron, who favour the EU, and the growing number of backbenchers (and voters) who endorse withdrawal from it, or at least an overhaul of its terms of membership.

The Single Market still attracts Conservatives, and is what motivated them to join in 1973 in the first place. The British people did have a referendum on EU membership in 1975, in which 67.23% voted in favour. Back then, however, membership was still new, the European Union was less assertive and encompassing, and few in Britain foresaw that it would evolve as much as it has toward an "ever closer political union". In the words of the Tory backbenchers who moved the EU Referendum Bill, the EU is now a "fundamentally different creature"[51]; as such, it requires "fresh consent" from the British people[52].

It is therefore not surprising that the common thread of the Conservative Manifesto is the urgency of reforming the EU. Unlike UKIP, the Conservatives believe that Britain would benefit from membership of (a reformed) EU. Their key pledges are: an in-out referendum on membership in 2017; more powers devolved to Britain; a better deal for British taxpayers; control of Britain's borders and a crackdown on benefit tourism; more control of justice and home affairs; more trade and economic independence by saying "no" to both the Euro and "ever closer union"[53]. Here is the PM himself sympathising with voters' concerns:

> "I hear time and again from people about their frustrations with the EU: it is too bureaucratic and too undemocratic. It interferes too much in our daily lives, and the scale of EU migration triggered by new members joining in recent years has had a huge impact on local communities. For young people who need it to generate more jobs, for communities facing pressures on public services and housing, and for businesses struggling with red tape, the need for real change in Europe is urgent. I completely understand and share these concerns. So do many across Europe. We know that if we are to succeed in an intensely competitive world, where countries in the South and East are steadily growing in economic power, the EU must become much more competitive, or at

[50] The EU Referendum Bill was passed by the House of Commons in November 2013, but has since been delayed in the House of Lords because of Labour and Liberal Democrat opposition.

[51] Conservative MP Andrew Tyrie declaration in 2013 quoted in BBC News.

[52] Conservative MP James Wharton public statement quoted in BBC News.

[53] Conservative Party, "Conservative Party European Elections Manifesto", cit., p. 3.

> least not prevent Britain from becoming more competitive. It is not 'ever closer union' and ever more red tape we need, but ever more ways of creating new businesses, trading and doing deals … To regain people's trust, the EU must demonstrably help people prosper"[54].

The Conservative Manifesto outlines in some detail its EU reform agenda (see the Annex, Table 4). What is omitted without a trace is how they suppose they will prevail on the EU to let itself be reformed. France and Germany have already signalled their rejection of Britain's "à la carte" approach to integration[55]. Without a showing of *How*, it is all too easy to doubt the Tory leadership is serious about EU reform, or rather about mollifying the Party's "right wing" with shrewd marketing. Certainly the Justice section of the Manifesto stands out for its failure to accommodate British sovereignty and popular self-government to the EU agenda; thus, Britain "will not join in EU policy or criminal and justice legislation" but this promise is qualified by the escape clause "without appropriate Parliamentary scrutiny"; Britain will not sign up to an EU criminal justice code … except that "practical cooperation" will be "necessary"; Britain will not opt in of the European Arrest Warrant, without explaining how the UK, once opted-in, will prevail unilaterally over the Warrant's demands when brought before the European Court of Justice. It is promised that the Warrant will somehow "not apply to minor crimes, that lengthy pre-trial detention can be avoided, and that individuals are not extradited for doing things that are not illegal in the UK"[56].

Unlike Labour, the Conservatives do not evade the issue of immigration (see the Annex, Table 4), but recognise it as the "real challenge", while blaming the Labour Party for having contributed to creating:

> "uncontrolled immigration – such as we saw under the last Labour Government – [which] makes it difficult to maintain social cohesion, puts pressure on public services, such as housing, and can affect wages for people on low incomes. We are clear that, under Labour, immigration was far too high. Net migration more than quadrupled between 1997 and 2010, totalling 2.2 million people – equivalent to two cities the size of Birmingham"[57].

Strategy-wise, the Conservative Manifesto emphasises the Party's achievements at home and abroad as evidence of their credibility to be considered *the* British party that can reform the EU:

> "The Conservatives are the only party with a track record of delivering change in Europe – and the only party that can and will hold an in-out referendum on Britain's membership of the EU … if I am Prime Minister after the election, I will negotiate a new settlement for Britain in Europe, and then ask

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54 *Ibidem*, p. 7.
55 BBC News, "France and Germany Opt Out of UK's EU…cit.".
56 Conservative Party, "Conservative Party European Elections Manifesto", cit., pp. 41-46.
57 *Ibidem*, p. 34

the British people: do you wish to stay in the EU on this basis, or leave? I will hold that in-out referendum before the end of 2017, and respect the decision. In contrast, Labour and the Liberal Democrats won't stand up for Britain and they refuse to give people a choice in a referendum. UKIP offer no serious plan and simply can't deliver on anything they promise. So the choice at these elections is clear: Labour and the Liberal Democrats won't give people a say. UKIP can't give people a say. Only the Conservatives can deliver real change in Europe – and only the Conservatives can and will deliver that in-out referendum"[58].

And seemingly responding to Labour's claims that –

"David Cameron has no clarity about what he is negotiating for, no support from the rest of the European Union for his treaty change, and no strategy for achieving it. He cannot even say whether he would recommend staying in or leaving the European Union. David Cameron's promises on Europe are undefined, undeliverable, and are now unravelling. His approach could result in Britain sleepwalking out of the Europe Union instead of reforming and re-shaping it from within"[59].

the Conservatives claim just the opposite:

"We know the changes we are seeking. And unlike any other party standing in these elections, we don't just talk about 'real change' – we have delivered it. I vetoed a treaty that was not in Britain's interests. We cut the EU budget for the first time in its history, saving British taxpayers billions of pounds. Where Labour weakly signed us up for Eurozone bail-outs, we got Britain out. We stood up to Europe on a financial transactions tax that would have hurt our economy. We protected our rebate – whereas Labour gave £7 billion away. None of these things were inevitable. They happened because Conservatives in Europe fight hard for Britain's interests"[60].

The Labour Party

The Labour Party's *European Manifesto: Your Britain* centred on the idea that "Britain's future lies at the heart of a reformed EU. The benefits of being in the EU are strategic, economic and are about the character of our

[58] *Ibidem*, pp. 6, 11, 12.
[59] Labour Party, "The Labour Party European Manifesto 2014. Your Britain", 2014, p.8, [online] available at http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/agenda-2015/europe-2014 (last accessed 04.10.2014).
[60] Conservative Party, "Conservative Party European Elections Manifesto", cit., p. 10.

country – an outward looking, confident Britain" (p. 3). The key points of Labour's Manifesto were: (1) jobs and growth; (2) promoting trade; (3) reform of the European banking system; (4) tax avoidance; (5) reform of the EU. Labour believes that all these issues are achievable within the framework of the EU *status quo*. These claims could be better defended. About (1) jobs and growth, for example, the Manifesto asserted that jobs and growth will be secured by staying in the Single Market:

> "The UK is currently facing a major cost of living crisis (e.g. low and insecure pay). The economic case for membership is overwhelming. The EU Single Market is the biggest in the world, good for UK business; half of the UK's trade and foreign investment comes from the EU, providing around 3.5 million jobs. Either we would end up outside the Single Market or be under terms and rules dictated by others"[61].

This assumes that if Britain withdraws, she will have no trade with the EU and be shut out of the Single Market, yet China, Russia and other non-EU countries do trade quite extensively with the EU and on terms becoming ever more liberal. Exit might make trade more cumbersome with the EU, on the one hand, but might make it easier to trade with emerging markets like China, Russia, etc. The counterclaim is not rebutted that exiting the EU would mean exiting the constraints imposed by the EU on trade between UK and other parts of the world. The EU is also dependent on the City for financial services, a state of affairs Brussels appears determined to unravel through supranational regulation, with the effect that the financial centre of Europe will shift to the Continent. The planned 'financial union' may benefit Germany and France, but not likely the UK. On this Labour is silent.

Another major promise in Labour's Manifesto is EU reform:

> "[We will] work with our allies in Europe to advance a reform agenda which promotes economic growth and more secure, better-paid jobs across the EU. The budget should focus on those items where spending at an EU level can save money at the national level, and resources should be shifted from areas such as CAP [Common Agriculture Policy] and put into research and development for new technologies and industries …. Labour will seek ways to make the European Parliament and Commission more streamlined and effective. Labour will continue to campaign for the wasteful second seat of the European Parliament in Strasbourg to be scrapped. Labour believes we can bring down the cost of the Parliament and reform the Commission to help it operate more effectively as well as reforming how the EU spends its money and how Britain gets best value. …. Labour is calling for national parliaments to have more of a say over the making of new EU legislation. Currently the 'yellow card' system – which the Lisbon Treaty initiated – gives national parliaments the ability to push legislation into review if there is significant opposition to it from a third of

[61] Labour Party, "The Labour Party European Manifesto 2014…cit.", p. 5.

> member states. Labour is looking at extending this to form a collective emergency brake procedure – a 'red card' system – that could further amplify the voice of national Parliaments within the EU law making process"[62].

Labour appears also to be over-optimistic about reforming CAP, for example; which has been on the agenda for a long time, with disappointing results. Delivering many of the other reform promises is equally unlikely as by the history of such promises in elections past.
Another Labour strategy to create jobs and growth is –

> "to argue for the completion of the Single Market in digital, energy and services, providing potentially huge gains for Britain and helping deliver the economic recovery that Britain needs. The operation of the Single Market in existing sectors must also be protected in the face of possible closer integration between Eurozone states"[63].

Whether this strategy can lead to anything remains to be seen. The chances look slim considering that Britain has one vote out of twenty seven. Too many small EU states depend on German fiscal subsidies. Britain hardly has any power to undertake the Single Market reforms Labour promises.

Trade is a source of job creation and growth, and Labour links membership of the EU with growth in trade in the following terms: "Our membership of the EU is a vital platform for agreeing bilateral EU trade deals, providing an additional engine of growth that will benefit not only the UK, but the EU as a whole"[64].

However, bilateral trade deals are likely to happen anyway, given the general frustration with the lack of progress on multilateral trade agreements. The Labour Party can do little on trade anyway, which is under the competence of the European Commission. While EU member-State governments may influence the Commission's external trade agenda, and while Britain may have more leverage than other member-States, it will be less influential than the balance of member-States, which might have strategic reasons to side with Germany and France rather than Britain.

One major concern in Europe in the aftermath of the financial crisis has been the banking sector, which Labour promises to contribute to reforming at the European level by "changing rules so bankers" bonuses are properly controlled[65]. This pledge is achievable only at the cost of an enormous top-down regulatory burden. Labour manifests only the tip of the iceberg, presenting voters the only aspect of it they would find palatable: the

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62 *Ibidem*, pp. 6, 24
63 *Ibidem*, p. 5.
64 *Ibidem*, p. 7.
65 *Ibidem*.

bonuses scandal. These cannot be tamed without a scale of micromanagement that might force banks to relocate out of London. The voters might also pause if they understood Labour's commitment to financial union, which would shift a massive amount of financial trade from London to Paris, Frankfurt, Milan and, likely, elsewhere by bringing all finance in the EU under a common regulatory regime disfavouring Britain. The world comes to London for finance because London is a freewheeling financial marketplace. A financial union imposed on the City would put at risk its global prominence, reducing it to a regional financial centre if EU regulatory constraints drive international enterprises elsewhere. Large financiers in the City who have branches abroad might be little affected by the EU's financial union, in the sense that they would maintain an establishment in the City, but smaller (and often more innovative) houses might have to consider actually removing offshore. In either case, the volume of trade would shift away from the UK not only to the Continent but also, internationally, to altogether greener pastures in locations like Singapore.

Labour's Manifesto also promises to tackle tax avoidance:

> "Labour is backing international efforts to prevent the erosion of tax bases and the shifting of profits, for example by increasing the transparency of what tax multinationals pay. But multinational action should not be used as an excuse for delaying reforms – there is more we can do domestically as well. Labour will extend the successful Disclosure of Tax Avoidance Schemes regime which we set up in Government, and we will open up tax havens, with the introduction of requirements to pass on information about money which is hidden behind front companies or trusts. Labour is in favour of an international financial transaction tax – one that is agreed by all of the world's financial centres, including those in the US"[66].

What is left unspoken by Labour (as by the Left in general) are the costs the current level of taxation imposes. Taxation depresses production by companies and individuals, while failing to strike at the root of contemporary economic problems (which are ignored by the Right as well); especially the unsoundness of a floating monetary regime in which currency cannot hold its value, and a financial architecture which reinforces the natural tendency toward concentration of ownership. Neither Labour nor their opponents promote or encourage ownership of the means of production. Even the great neo-liberal thinkers of the recent past failed to address these fundamental issues: Thatcher's "ownership society" stopped short at home ownership, the least productive type: oblivious to the dynamic essence of capitalism – "money making more money".

[66] *Ibidem*, p. 8.

The Labour Manifesto was cautious not to tie their commitment to the EU to a commitment to reform the EU, and is redolent of their pledge to offer a referendum: "The public should have a guarantee that no future transfer of powers should take place without the public having their say in an in/out referendum"[67]. Labour was forced to make this concession only in the wake of the Conservatives' announcement of their own in/out referendum.

The Labour Manifesto still sees the Conservatives as its main competitor in the European elections, censuring Cameron's commitment to renegotiate Britain's relationship with the EU and put the result to a referendum in 2017:

> "David Cameron's approach has created unnecessary economic uncertainty during a cost of living crisis, at the precise time our economy needs stability based on growth and investment … What he is guaranteeing is up to four years of damaging uncertainty and division, risking jobs and growth at home and British influence abroad … By setting a date of 2017 for a referendum on whether we should leave the European Union, companies around the world have come to the view that this is placing great uncertainty over decisions to invest in Britain. The CBI described the Government's plan as a 'diversion' and 'distraction' from 'the economy, jobs and the cost of living', while global companies from Nissan to DHL have openly warned of the dangers of exit"[68].

Labour's tactic of contrasting themselves only with the Conservatives is noteworthy. The unwavering Euroscepticism of UKIP would make them the natural enemy, yet Labour must have realised that attacking UKIP could too easily backfire. Political viability consists in the net difference between the public's positive and negative attitudes toward a party. The Tories' net favourability is in comparison with UKIP much lower. The public is more likely to jump on a bandwagon berating the Conservatives than UKIP. Directly confronting UKIP might only exacerbate Labour's own net unfavourability with the public, which is perilously thin. If the public debate should come to centre on those policies of UKIP's opposite to Labour's on which Labour's negative ratings were rising, such as immigration and welfare, it could end up underscoring Labour's failings. It is not surprising, then, that the Party leadership have adopted a strategy of diverting attention away from these issues, instead associating UKIP's success with economic hardship. This they may do at the expense of their future success; it is precisely issues such as immigration that concern many defecting voters and may actually explain UKIP's popularity.

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[67] *Ibidem*, p. 3.
[68] *Ibidem*, p. 8.

The Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats' Manifesto on Europe, titled "In Europe, in work", reflects their stance as the leading pro-EU major party in Britain. It begins with a strong statement in support of membership of the EU. In the words of party leader Nick Clegg:

> "On 22 May, your choice is simple: do you think Britain is better off in Europe or do you want us out of it? Will you back a party that will lead us towards the exit, or do you want your representatives to make sure Britain remains engaged with our neighbours – a leading nation in our European backyard? I want you to choose the Liberal Democrats because we are now Britain's only party of IN. We want Britain to stay in Europe – because that is how we keep our country strong, prosperous, safe and green. As members of the European Union, our businesses have access to 500 million European customers. Trade with other European countries supports millions of British jobs. As members of the European Union, Britain is part of a global economic superpower. We have far greater influence as part of a powerful, 28-member bloc. As members of the European Union our police can work with their counterparts abroad to crack down on the criminals who cross our borders. Collectively, our governments can be much bolder in the fight against climate change too. Over the coming weeks you will hear other parties blame all of Britain's problems on Brussels. It's certainly true that the EU's institutions are not perfect – just as Westminster isn't – and across these pages you'll find details of the ways in which we want to reform them. But don't be fooled: being in Europe is good for Britain. Leaving the EU is the surest way to trash our economic recovery. Pulling up the drawbridge would leave our nation isolated and diminished in the world"[69].

In Europe, in work elaborated many themes, testifying to the earnestness of the Liberal-Democrats' commitment to the EU. Here are a few examples: (1) Creating jobs: Britain's trade with the EU and power as part of a global superpower creates millions of jobs for Britain, providing £1225 "benefits" per year per British citizen. This can be further enhanced by "removing barriers to trade for British companies, slashing red tape for small businesses, securing funding for innovation and competitiveness, and by using the EU's collective strength to promote trade with the rest of the world"[70]. (2) Fighting crime and protecting rights: EU membership will enable supranational initiatives like: a missing child alert system across the EU; an EU database of unidentified bodies to help families searching for missing loved ones; a European Cyber Crime Centre against cyber-attacks; extension of the EU's criminal record information system; the European Arrest Warrant, an "essential crime-fighting tool"; full implementation of "Eurobail" allowing

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[69] Liberal Democrats, "European Election Manifesto 2014", 2014, p. 4, [online] available at http://www.libdems.org.uk/european_election_manifesto_2014, (last accessed 04.10.2014).

[70] *Ibidem*, pp. 6-9.

British citizens arrested in another European country to serve their bail in the UK; buttressing human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in new member-States[71]. (3) Regulating finance: The Manifesto promises to "build[…] a stronger and fairer economy" by: creating a safer financial system, and ensuring "tax justice" by legislating at EU-level new rules requiring large companies to pay fair taxes to the countries in which they operate; mandating clear and simple EU-wide information reporting which explains the risks and costs of financial products: clamping down supranationally on insider manipulation of energy and financial markets to yield fairer mortgage rates and fuel prices for consumers; stabilising the Euro; bearing in mind, however, that "it will not be in the British national interest to join the Euro in the foreseeable future"[72]. And finally, (4) EU membership and reform: Liberal Democrats strongly support membership of the EU but claim they will concede an in-out referendum if in future "further significant" powers are to be transferred to the EU: "[We] will campaign for an 'in' vote because it is overwhelmingly in Britain's national interest to stay in and pursue the policies on jobs, crime and the environment". As for EU reform itself, the Manifesto promises to: end the wasteful travel of MEPs between Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg, saving £150m a year; audit existing EU bodies to rationalise them; protect UK influence in the Single Market as plans for a Banking Union advance[73]; agree a new treaty that will give member-States inside and outside the Euro-zone "a full voice in the regulation and application of the single market"; enhance national parliamentary scrutiny of the EU by introducing regular EU question times and demanding that ministers report back to MPs both before and after Council meetings, and by allowing MPs a chance to influence the Government's EU negotiations; promote British talent in Brussels – only 5% of European Commission staff come from the UK – by better supporting potential UK candidates, *e.g.* through mentoring and networking.[74]

One of the most interesting events in the months leading up to the European elections was a series of televised debates between Nigel Farage and Nick Clegg, the leaders of the most and the least Eurosceptic parties in Britain, respectively. These debates stood out as a "rare chance" for the British

[71] *Ibidem*, pp. 11-13.
[72] *Ibidem*, p. 21.
[73] The Manifesto claims that this can be done only if Britain remains a full member of the EU. This is a puzzling claim. Is it really true that a banking union that only applies to EU members can only be defended against if the UK remains a member? Surely it is self-evident that NON-membership is the only guarantee that the UK will never be harmed by such a union.
[74] *Ibidem*,pp. 32-35.

public to hear the pros and cons of Britain's membership of the EU[75]. Liberal-Democrats' motivation for participating was reportedly their fear of a wipe-out in the elections. Taking on Farage was thought to "play well" with Liberal-Democrat voters[76]. Focussed on Britain's membership of the EU (see the Annex, Table 5 below), the debaters' sound-bites were predictable: Farage reasoned in favour of Britain's exit in the form of an "amicable divorce", while Clegg argued for membership, claiming that Britain's exit would be "suicidal" for its economy. Polls revealed that Farage had won the debate[77]; in other words, the manifesto garnering the most votes was the one seeking Britain's exit. This outcome anticipated pretty accurately the electoral outcome a few months later when the Liberal Democrats were indeed wiped out, retaining but one MEP (see the Annex, Table 1).

CONCLUSIONS

Commentators especially of the Left have interpreted the European election outcome as symptomatic of the collapse of trust in the political establishment; *e.g.The Guardian* newspaper: "A collapse of trust in the political establishment"; or Peter Hain, a former Labour Cabinet minister: "Wake up because UKIP are capitalising on the big anti-politics sentiment that is out there"[78].

It is striking how often one comes across evidence of dissatisfaction with the mainline parties. If the comments sections of broadsheet and tabloid newspapers alike may be assumed a rough and ready proxy for public opinion, it is impressive how many newcomers to UKIP are claiming that, having voted for the Party in the 2014 European elections for the first time, they plan to stay. This may be anecdotal evidence, but lots of it are to be found on media websites. The main post-elections story in Britain may be that UKIP has won a significant mass following; the 2014 elections may have marked a party-identification turning-point. If indeed such a shift has taken place, it bodes ill for the established parties: the Tories and Labour, too, not just the Liberal Democrats. UKIP might overtake the Liberal Democrats in the 2015 elections, which would be significant, and/or Labour might not be able to form a

[75] Brian Wheeler, "Nick Clegg v Nigel Farage: Tale of the Tape", *The Telegraph*, 26 March 2014 [online] available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10723653/Nick-Clegg-v-Nigel-Farage-Tale-of-the-tape.html (last accessed 07.06.2014).

[76] *Ibidem.*

[77] *Ibidem.*

[78] Peter Hain, a former Labour Cabinet minister quoted in Andrew Sparrow, "Ukip Likely to Come Out Top in European Elections…cit.".

majority in the next Parliament, its plurality notwithstanding, no matter how unpopular the Tories had become (and the Tories are in the same position). One might suspect therefore that after 2015, Britain would see a grand Coalition of Labour and the Conservatives to quarantine the UKIP contagion. It is, of course, also possible that UKIP splits the Right, enabling the Labour victory in the first place, a scenario over which the Conservatives have not been slow to raise the alarm. One might suppose that a centre-right Conservative-UKIP coalition would be the most logical outcome of a Right partition in 2015, but though conceivable, it is quite unlikely, given the establishment's fear and loathing of the mass insurgency UKIP represents. This is the kind of seismic shift which can only unfold over many electoral cycles.

In 1995 *The Revolt of the Elites,*by American historian and social critic Christopher Lasch, was published in the United States. A scathing critique of the increasing isolation of a relatively small, privileged class of "new elites" from everyone else, and of all of the social and political ills that were resulting from it and could be expected to continue, the title was a pun on José Ortega y Gasset's *The Revolt of the Masses.* At the dawn of the twentieth century Ortega y Gasset noted the unprecedented ascendency of democratic values across the Western world. That world, including Britain, having now come full circle to a counter-revolt of the elites, may now be trending back to the future and a revolt of the masses reprise.

ANNEX

Table 1

Results of the European Parliament Elections in Britain 2014. Turnout: 34.19%

1	Party Name	Descriptions used on the ballot paper in the electoral regions of Great Britain	No. of votes	% of votes	No. of MEPs	+ / -
2	UK Independence Party (UKIP)	We Demand A Referendum Now	4.376.635	27.49 (+10.99)	24	+11
3	Labour Party/ Labour Party/Llafur		4.020.646	25.40 (+9.67)	20	+7
4	Conservative Party	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig/Welsh Conservatives For a real change in Europe	3.792.549	23.93 (-3.80)	19	-7
5	Green Party/Plaid Werdd Green Party	Stop Fracking Now	1.255.573	7.87 (-0.75)	3	+1
6	Scottish National Party	Make Scotland's Mark in Europe	389.503	2.46 (0.34)	2	0
7	Liberal Democrats	Liberal Democrats Scottish Liberal Democrats	1.087.633	6.87 (-6.87)	1	-10
8	Sinn Fein		159.813	- (-)	1	0
9	Democratic Unionist Party		131.163	- (-)	1	0
10	Plaid Cymru - The Party of Wales Plaid	Wales Plaid Cymru - Cymru'n Gyntaf/Plaid Cymru - Wales First	111.864	0.71 (-0.13)	1	0
11	Ulster Unionist Party		83.438	- (-)	1	0
12	An Independence from Europe	UK Independence Now	235.124	1.49 (0.00)	0	0
13	British National Party	British National Party Because we make Britain Better Fighting Unsustainable	179.694	1.14 (-5.10)	0	-2

		Housing Because We Care Re-elect Nick Griffin				
14	English Democrats	I'm English, NOT British, NOT European Putting England First!	126.024	0.80 (-1.05)	0	0
15	Social Democratic and Labour Party		81.594	- (-)	0	0
16	Traditional Unionist Voice (NI)		75.806	- (-)	0	0
17	Christian Peoples Alliance		50.222	0.32 (-1.33)	0	0
18	Alliance Party		44.432	- (-)	0	0
19	NO2EU	Yes to Workers' Rights Yes to Workers' Rights/Ie I Hawliau'r Gweithwyr	31.757	0.20 (-0.81)	0	0
20	4 Freedoms Party (UK EPP)	Europe's Leading City Europe's Leading Party	28.014	0.18 (0.00)	0	0
21	We Demand A Referendum Now	RE-ELECT NIKKI SINCLAIRE MEP	23.426	0.15 (0.00)	0	0
22	National Health Action Party	Patients not Profits	23.253	0.15 (0.00)	0	0
23	Animal Welfare Party	For People, Animals and the Environment	21.092	0.13 (0.00)	0	0
24	Britain First	Defending the Union 2014 Remember Lee Rigby	20.272	0.13 (0.00)	0	0
25	Yorkshire First	A voice for the region	19.017	0.12 (0.00)	0	0
26	Europeans Party	Modern United Europeans	10.712	0.07 (0.00)	0	0
27	NI21		10.553	- (-)	0	0
28	The Peace Party - Non-violence, Justice, Environment The Roman Party.AVE		10.130	0.06 (0.00)	0	0

29	Pirate Party UK	The Pirate Party UK	8.597	0.05 (0.00)	0	0
30	Harmony Party	Zero-immigration, Anti-EU, Pro-jobs Zero-immigration, More Jobs, Anti-Globalization	7.940	0.05 (0.00)	0	0
31	Communities United Party		6.951	0.04 (0.00)	0	0
32	The Socialist Party of Great Britain		6.838	0.04 (0.02)	0	0
33	Scottish Conservatives	Vote No to Independence				
34	National Liberal Party - True Liberalism	National Liberal Party - Self-determination for all!	6.736	0.04 (0.00)	0	0
35	Socialist Equality Party	Join the fight for social equality!	5.067	0.03 (0.00)	0	0
36	Liberty Great Britain	Faithful to tradition, revolutionary in outlook				
37	Socialist Labour Party/Plaid Lafur Sosialaidd		4.459	0.03 (-1.12)	0	0
38	The Roman Party		2.997	0.02 (-0.02)	0	0
39	YOURvoice	yourvoiceparty.org.uk	2.932	0.02 (0.00)	0	0
40	Liberty GB		2.494	0.02 (0.00)	0	0

Source: Compiled by the author from: Electoral Commission (July 2014) *The European Parliamentary elections and the local government elections in England and Northern Ireland May 2014 Report on the administration of the 22 May 2014 elections*; and BBC (2014) *UK European election results*http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/events/vote2014/eu-uk-results. Figures do not include Northern Ireland, which uses a separate electoral system to the rest of the UK.

Table 2

Summary of UKIP's Manifesto *What We Stand For* (2014)

KEY ISSUE	ISSUE UNPACKED
Return Power to the UK	Leave the EU and recover power over our national life
	Free trade, but not political union with our European neighbours
	Binding local and national referenda, at the public's request, on major issues
Protect Britain's Borders	Regain control over Britain's borders and over immigration – only possible by leaving the EU
	Immigrants must financially support themselves and their dependents for 5 years. This means private health insurance (except emergency medical care), private education and private housing.
	A points-based visa system and time-limited work permits
	Proof of private health insurance must be a precondition for immigrants and tourists to enter the UK.
Rebuild Prosperity	Save £55 million a day in membership fees by leaving the EU, and give British workers first crack at the 800,000 jobs we currently advertise to EU workers.
	No tax on the minimum wage
	Enrol unemployed welfare claimants onto community schemes or retraining workfare programmes.
	Scrap HS2 [a planned high-speed railway between London and the North of England, estimated to cost between £43 and £80 billion], all green taxes and wind turbine subsidies.
	Develop shale gas to reduce energy bills and free Britain from dependence on foreign oil and gas – direct the tax revenues into a British Sovereign Wealth Fund.
	Abolish the Inheritance Tax, which brings in under £4 billion – less than a third of what Britain spends on foreign aid.
	Make cuts to foreign aid that are real and rigorous.
Safeguard Against Crime	No cuts to front line policing
	Make sentences mean what they say
	No votes for prisoners – that's what losing your liberty means.
	Prevent foreign criminals entering the UK by re-introducing border controls.
	Scrap the European Arrest Warrant and replace it with a proper extradition system.
	Remove the UK from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.
Care And Support For	Open GP surgeries in the evening, for full-time workers, where there is demand.

All	
	Locally elected County Health Boards to inspect hospitals
	Prioritise social housing for people whose parents and grandparents were born locally.
	Create new grammar schools.
	Make welfare a safety net for the needy, not a bed for the lazy. Benefits are to be available only to those who have lived here for over 5 years.
Free Speech and Democracy	No to Political Correctness – it stifles free speech.
	The law of the land must apply to us all. We oppose any other system of law.
	Teach children positive messages and pride in their country.

Source: http://www.ukip.org/issues

Table 3

Local Elections in Britain in 2014: Seat Results Per Party

Party	**Seats won**	**Change**
Labour	2121	335 ↑
Conservatives	1365	168 ↓
Liberal-Democrats	427	262 ↓
UKIP	163	128 ↑
Independent	68	86 ↓
Other	110	18 ↑

Source: *The Telegraph*, 2014a

Table 4

The Conservative Manifesto for the European Elections (2014)

KEY ISSUE	**ISSUE UNPACKED**
Long-term economic plan	Make the EU more dynamic and flexible so as to help Britain's long-term economic plan. Britain benefits from having '500 million consumers on our doorstep'. Free trade agreements with North America and Asia which the EU is negotiating are 'promising more wealth and more work here in the UK' (pp. 8-9). Steps to be taken: reduce the deficit; keep mortgage rates low; cut income tax; freeze fuel duty; create more jobs by backing small business with *e.g.* lower jobs taxes; cap welfare; reduce immigration; deliver the best schools and skills for young people (pp. 27-8).
In-out referendum	The EU has 'changed dramatically' since the membership referendum of 1975 when the EU was mostly about the Common Market. The Conservative Party will renegotiate Britain's membership terms and then give people a referendum.
Reform the EU	Lower EU spending; reform CAP and the Structural Funds; expand the Single Market by breaking down remaining barriers and by ensuring that new sectors are opened up to British firms; reduce excessive red tape on businesses by simplifying or withdrawing EU

	rules wherever possible; deal with the damaging effects of the Working Time Directive; help finalise free trade deals with the US, Japan, India *etc.;* help create a Digital Single Market; and target unscrupulous behaviour in the financial services industry, while safeguarding the City (pp. 31-2).
Immigration	Return to free movement of workers; end immigrants' welfare payments for relatives abroad; change free movement rules for new member states, *viz.* require a certain income or economic output per head before allowing full free movement; allow-in the best and brightest students from abroad, but remove licences from bogus colleges; prevent extremists from coming into Britain (pp. 38-9).
Justice	Britain's laws must be drawn up by the British Parliament and devolved legislatures; British courts and police forces to decide how to deal with crime. Will not join in EU police or criminal and justice legislation without appropriate Parliamentary scrutiny; no EU criminal justice code, though practical co-operation might be necessary (pp. 41-2); if opting in to the European Arrest Warrant, make sure it does not apply to minor crimes, that lengthy pre-trial detention can be avoided; and that individuals are not extradited for doing things that are not illegal in the UK; keep the UK out of harmonising standards measures on criminal law, asylum, immigration, and border control; say 'no' to a European Public Prosecutor's Office (pp. 45-6).
Energy	Ensure completion of an EU single energy market; work with European partners to develop Europe's shale gas resources; support international deal on climate change; support and reform the EU Emissions Trading Scheme; ensure that the proposed 2030 renewable energy target is non-binding on individual EU countries; ensure that carbon-cutting technologies compete on a level playing field; ensure that each country has the right to choose their energy mix (pp. 52-3).
Farmers, Fishing Communities and Natural Environment	Reform CAP so as to get better value for money; secure further export opportunities for British farmers both in the EU and globally; cut red tape to reduce the costs to all businesses by at least £1 billion by 2019; ensure the ban on discarding perfectly edible fish, and that fishery reforms are implemented fully; combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; support food labelling, while avoiding burdensome rules for small companies; improve animal welfare standards; invest a further £2.3 billion in UK flood defences; invest £10 million in an innovative-technology market fund to test expansion of superfast broadband (pp. 62-3).
Security	Support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the international rule of law; ensure rights of Gibraltarians are fully respected; ensure defence policy remains firmly under British national control; open markets that benefit British defence industries; help EU's efforts to tackle poverty in the world; work with G8 to clamp down on tax avoidance and promote company transparency; increase opportunities for the poorest countries to trade with the EU; help create a greener environment, including cutting carbon emissions across Europe.

Table 5

Summary of the First Clegg-Farage Debate, 26 March 2014

Question	**Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal-Democratic Party leader since 2007 and deputy prime minister in the coalition government since 2010.**	**Nigel Farage, leader of the UKIP, MEP for South-East England in the EP since 1999 and co-chair the Europe of Freedom and Democracy group.**
Why won't politicians trust the British public by giving us a referendum on the EU now?	The Conservative – Liberal Democrat Coalition have passed into law a "legal guarantee" that the next time the rules change related to Europe there will be a referendum.	We should trust the British public that they should be able to make up their own minds. The public is wondering why don't politicians trust them to vote in a referendum.
What is the benefit of mass migration from Eastern Europe?	Create "exit checks" at borders so people cannot just come here to claim benefits, but if Britain were to "simply pull up our drawbridge" jobs for British people would be jeopardised.	We have the complete free flow of people. Two million people have already left Bulgaria and Romania.
Question is it right to have child benefit paid for children not living in this country?	People who come here to work pay more into the British economy than they take out.	Rules on letting in migrant workers from other countries are "not fair" on the British public.
If free movement of EU citizens was restricted, would there be skill shortages in the UK? If we came out of the EU this would affect the job prospects of young people?	Jobs would go if we withdrew from the European Union as companies would not create them to be filled by people in the UK.	Britain has to tell people from India and New Zealand who have the skills Britain needs that they cannot come to the UK because Britain has to leave space for people from Europe. It is good that the UK did not follow the Liberal Democrat's advice on the Euro. The Liberal Democrats claimed that if Britain does not join the Euro all investment in the city of London would disappear. Britain would have been "in one hell of a mess" had it joined the Euro.

How would we compete with China and America if we are not part of the EU?	Britain gets “more clout” by competing through the world's largest economy, which is the EU.	EU membership means Britain is banned from making agreements with countries like America and India.
What do you say to the future victims of criminals who we cannot deport because of the Human Rights Act?	Britain “must cross borders” to make us safe.	Britain should revert to liberty and freedom and forget about human rights. Britain has extradition treaties with 92 countries across the world. The European arrest warrant is unnecessary.
Why does Britain comply with so many EU laws when other countries seem not to?	Britain is better off in Europe - richer, stronger, safer.	The best people to govern Britain is the British people. Let's be friendly with Europe, let's trade with Europe, but let's not be governed by their institutions.

Source: *The Telegraph*, 2014c.