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MANIPULATING THE BREXIT ISSUE IN THE ENGLISH-WRITTEN MASS-MEDIA

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The mass media exposure of its readership to the burning problems of nowadays, internationally or a country-confined, has always been questioned for a degree of manipulation involved. For the British people, the Brexit vote and its largely overlooked complications have been the most urgent national problem for which there is no immediate solution in the foreseeable future. The British press coverage of Brexit is a crucial agent in shaping the public and an individual's stand to the Brexit issues. The research problem being dealt with in this paper is a multitude of journalistic views on Brexit and a scope and effect of counter-manipulative Brexit-related publications in the British press. The purpose of this research is to get a profile of *The Guardian* political columnists writing on the problems of Brexit as well as to analyse a couple of relevant counter-manipulative publications. We made use of the following methods: data collection methods – observation, survey, textual and content analysis, classification; qualitative and quantitative analysis; theoretical construction method.

The results obtained show that the British mass media have been at their best to provide their audiences every possible angle, or nuance, of the formidable Brexit structure. In respect of Brexit vote, there is a clear watershed between the two formative clusters of the British press. While the ‘prestige press’ (also known under the terms ‘broadsheet’ or ‘quality’ newspapers) – *the Independent, Times, Guardian, Financial Times, Mirror* and *Telegraph* – have been following the course of restrained analytical approach to tackling Brexit issues without antagonizing Leavers and Remainers, giving both sides their due in their argumentation, daily ‘popular’ and ‘working class’ newspapers in the UK – *The Sun, Daily Mail, the Mirror* and *Express* (categorized as tabloids) – systemically reproduce an openly hostile stand to the Remain platform of voters, openly and unrelentingly criticizing the EU as an international institution jeopardizing British sovereignty. It was ascertained that all the versatile techniques aimed at manipulating Brexit in press and other media, social networks included, have been effectively counteracted and exposed in academic research and investigative journalism. Conclusion. In this paper it has been ascertained that the readers of both categories – average readers who are not engaged professionally or otherwise in politics

Key words: media, manipulating, the Brexit.

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МАНІПУЛЮВАННЯ ПРОБЛЕМАТИКОЮ БРЕКЗИТУ В АНГЛОМОВНИХ ЗМІ

Розглянуто провідні форми висвітлення у британських ЗМІ найгострішої проблеми Об'єднаного Королівства – виходу країни з Європейського Союзу, процесу, який отримав назву Brexit (“Британський вихід”). Різномісність висвітлення Брекзиту виявляється у формах вираженого журналістського та академічного аналізу причин та обставин цього суспільно-політичного явища, демонстративно заангажованого однобічного підходу з використанням зневажливо-образливого дискурсу і тону, що значною мірою характерно для британських таблоїдів, журналістського розслідування утаємничених засобів втручання у доленосний референдум країни у 2016 р., газетних та журнальних колонок, спрямованих виключно на Брекзит та закріплених за відомими оглядачами, блогів, сенсаційно-конспірологічних матеріалів, яким бракує доказової бази, інтерв'ю, публічних виступів, доповідей на конференціях. До результатів дослідження належить виокремлення зазначених форм та визначення особливостей і наявності або відсутності ознак маніпулятивності в окремих публікаціях, вибраних для аналізу; встановлення культурно та історично маркованої стратифікації друкованих видань британських ЗМІ; виокремлення вагомого шару антиманіпулятивних публікацій та внеску окремих журналістів-розслідувачів у справу забезпечення демократичного суспільного вибору; аналіз серії публікацій в авторських брекзит-колонках газети *Guardian*; окреслення формату публікацій окремих видань, зокрема суттєвої ролі заголовків на першій сторінці друкованих видань (за матеріалами огляду академічного дискурсу).

Ключові слова: медіа, маніпуляція, Брекзит.

In the British press of the last few years the Brexit issues have come to the forefront of news lines and investigative journalism. The “Leave the EU” campaign had had its inception long before the 23 June, 2016 referendum, when, to give one example, in 1975 the nation held a referendum on the question: “Do you think the UK should stay in the European Community (Common Market)?”, with the 67 percent “Yes” vote.

Like any event of political and public life, the campaign has got an extensive coverage in different-quality newspapers and periodicals. An observant reader and researcher can hardly blame the English-written and spoken media for a one-sided coverage of the dramatic Brexit saga. The reading and viewing audiences have virtually been ‘bombarded’ with an avalanche of Brexit-related information like retrospective aspects, present-day situation, likely ramifications, deal or no deal Brexit issues, Facebook covert interference into the voters’ decision-making, a fierce Parliament versus Prime-Minister clinch, to name only a few issues.

How could a major political event in a free democracy country, like a nationwide referendum in the United Kingdom, be manipulated at all? Aren't there well-proven, effective safeguards to prevent any manipulative intrusion into an individual's free vote? Can an individual be entirely independent from the mass media exposure of a certain problem affecting her / his stand to this problem? What are established, unambiguous markers of the manipulative ‘tailoring’ of facts and views in a mass media text? These are the questions that have been dealt with in such classical works on mass media and journalism as ...

In searching for the reasons of the polarity of views on Brexit among the Britishers, one cannot disregard the role of mass media as a largely decisive agent in shaping a voter's decision, nor underrate the tenacity of an individual, or a particular social group, to a particular newspaper or a magazine, the necessity of exploring the mechanisms of the media impact on their audiences. In this respect, a comparative overview of how the major British quality newspapers and tabloids describe and analyse Brexit turns out to be in demand for a mass media researcher while being of interest also for a concerned reader striving to get as unbiased and undistorted information as possible.

Topicality of the problem examined in this paper is justified by a history-making challenge being faced by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the aftermath of the "Leave the EU referendum" held in 2016. Nearly three years after the Leave voters won, though with a narrow margin of one per cent, the British people have learned an unprecedented amount of unpleasant, scathing truth about the true agents of Brexit, in persons and instruments affecting their decision-making. The flood of the Brexit-related information delivered to the public by press and other kinds of mass media accounts for a pressing need to sort out this information into creditable and fake, unbiased and manipulative, investigative and hype.

Setting the problem. In our paper, we have set the two fold task: to provide a plethora of journalistic views and some academic research on Brexit and, second, outline the findings of the British investigative journalism exposing the manipulation behind the campaign.

The latest research of the problem of manipulative featuring of Brexit is abundant and multifarious being represented by several distinct categories like collected papers edited by renowned scholars and academicians in the field. A good and fitting example of this form of the research results presentation can be seen in "*EU Referendum Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign. Early reflections from leading UK academics*". Edited by: Daniel Jackson, Einar Thorsen and Dominic Wring [9].

Another category of delivering the research done on Brexit is a separate paper or thesis done by an individual scholar or a group of scholars. This category is represented by a multitude of research papers: "*Fake News: A Definition*" by Axel Gelfert (published in 2018); "*Brexit: Causes & Consequences*" by Matthew J. Goodwin (published in 2017); "*Brexit: The Economics of International Disintegration*" by Thomas Sampson (published in 2017).

Objective of the given research. For all the difference of views on the nature and structure of the verbal manipulation, one can hardly doubt its basic purport of hiding a true aim of the message conveyed as contrasted to the proclaimed one. A very intricate problem arises in this respect. Namely how to expose, to lay bare this hidden aim? We define the articles which can be ascertained as free from manipulative techniques as *counter-manipulative media texts*.

The research results based on argumentation and analysis.

1. The mass media impact and manipulation: theoretical issues. The sophistication and polarity of the scholarly views on the subject of mass media impact and manipulation can be observed in the following two quotations. The first highlights the uppermost importance of mass media on decision-making of both voters and those in power:

"The mass media has a substantial influence on political outcomes. In modern elections, the interactions between candidates and voters are indirect in the sense that the mass media plays an informative role between them and, thus, provides essential information for their decision-making. For instance, most voters use the news as an information source for voting instead of directly acquiring relevant information. Likewise, candidates decide the content of their electoral campaigns after taking account of polls" [3].

The second quotation maintains an essentially different point of view, namely that no decisive, or ultimate, influence should be attributed to the manipulative strategies and techniques. What accounts first and foremost is what sort of values, views, priorities an individual or a social group have already appropriated. Manipulation can only be effected when it relies on those views.

...there is a strong strand in academic and non-academic commentary suggesting such influence – where it can be detected at all – is small and, therefore, relatively inconsequential politically (Bennett and

Iyengar, 2008, 2010), when set against much broader societal, economic and political factors. From a 'minimalist influence thesis' (MIT) perspective, which goes back many decades (Klapper, 1968), the media does not change the opinions of the public, but 'only' (Gitlin, 1978: 216) or 'simply' (Miller and Krosnick, 1996: 79) reinforces pre-existing ones [10].

How can these contradictory approaches to the role of mass media impact be reconciled?

2. Brexit coverage in the “quality” press. This category of British newspapers embraces five “broadsheets”, namely *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Today*. Each of these has its own marked distinctions in its editorial policies, its set of regulations to conform to the standards of free democratic journalism while advocating a chosen political stance, or leaning, in the political spectrum of the country.

In the host of these *The Guardian* holds an eminent place. Its political allegiance is Left-leaning, with a readership largely split between the voters of Labour and Liberal Democrats. Brexit, with all its unforeseen turns and twists, is on the top list of the paper's news items agenda. *The Guardian* has been covering Brexit issues for years in daily and weekly columns run by prominent journalists. The well-known Brexit-covering columnists in the paper are Rafael Behr, Jon Henley, Gary Younge, Simon Jenkins, Owen Jones, John Harris, to name just a few.

Among *The Guardian*'s numerous journalists writing on Brexit Jon Henley's contributions run into hundreds of articles, news items, reports. Jon Henley, *The Guardian*'s Europe correspondent, is duly credited with having diversified the Brexit coverage with reader-response forms addressing the EU citizens' opinions as well, setting up Brexit podcasts. His stance to Brexit, largely, we may assume, held to *The Guardian* as well, can be seen from his prolific articles some of which we are going to examine. In his article of 11 May 2019 “*Reporting on Brexit from Europe: ‘I’ll be mighty glad when it’s over’*” “the columnist resorts to such a legitimate persuasion narrative device as sharing the circumstances of his life and career. This ‘bias’ from the topic ensures making what the writer is going to say look more human, less abstract, more evidenced and appealing. For Jon Henley, an Englishman, who speaks fluent French and makes his living working for decades on continental Europe it is only natural to feel even more preoccupied with Brexit than his compatriots do. It is a painful issue for many EU citizens having some links with the UK, or the British living in one of the EU member-countries to realize that Brexit strives for getting political and economic independence at the expense of curbing multifarious relations with the European Union.

Jon Henley admits that working as *The Guardian*'s Europe correspondent stationed in Paris or elsewhere affords him a wider vision of Brexit as a campaign and political agenda which can be branded for its short-sightedness and self-harm. The columnist does not shun from telling sharp and highly critical, painful things about the shortcomings of Brexit, his country's naïve and unrealistic expectations that it could get a bargain at the expense of the EU's interests:

Throughout the entire process, it appears from here, the Brits have been negotiating essentially with themselves, rather than with the EU²⁷. And when they have tried they have proved inconsistent, incoherent, entitled and wholly incapable of compromise either with themselves or their neighbours [10].

The columnist's basic message worded in the tenor of a strong disapproval is his country's showing to Europeans “a Britain that they did not know existed”:

But what has gobsmacked continentals is not so much the Brexit decision itself: a country should of course, if it wants to, be able to leave the EU.

It's the way politicians (and large parts of the media) have handled it: their failure to come clean to voters about the fact that the Brexit they were promised does not exist; that any Brexit at all will come at a hefty price, certainly in the short and medium term; and that Britain, in the 21st century, simply does not occupy the same place in the world as it did in the 19th, or even much of the 20th. [10].

In a copious number of his other articles on Brexit Jon Henley is not so outspoken in respect of his own opinions of Brexit. He is justly merited for having established the readers' feedback over “the latest news from Brexitland”. In his 18 Jan 2019 publication in *The Guardian* “‘Aren't you going insane?': readers' questions from beyond Brexitland” the columnist “answers Brexit queries from confused readers

around the world”. The journalist gives concise and clear answers on the numerous questions. In one of the answers he censures the major political parties, Labour and Conservatism, for claiming one-sided advantages in Brexit deal: “*Labour could get a better deal than May if it dropped (some of) her red lines, but it has been as guilty as the Conservatives of pretending that Britain can leave the EU while retaining all the advantages of membership*” [11].

3. Investigative journalism findings on Brexit manipulation. While a tremendous amount of publications totaling to thousands of news reports, articles, feature articles, reviews can be roughly broken into two varieties – the first being a speculative analytical exploration of a particular issue in the so-called quality newspapers and the second being formed by publications offering a straightforward presentation of a particular event or its gradual development over the time, the British (and American) mass media can duly be credited with having evolved investigative journalism, which may be qualified as a variety of its own.

By its very naming, investigative journalism is targeted against manipulation of any kind. An all-embracing task of an investigative journalist is to expose the lies, distortions, hidden techniques, purposes and targets of the agents of untruth. The top proof of the validity of a counter-manipulative investigation is a set of credible, clear, obvious evidence exposing the deliberate withholding of truth.

Again, there are some publications which, for all their anti-manipulation pathos and appeal, do not meet a high standard of investigative journalism. That is to say some articles pledging themselves to be exposure-targeted go beyond the civility norms while essentially lacking the ‘hard’ undisputable evidence. A rather curious instance of the evidence-lacking and highly opinionated article claiming in its title to expose manipulation in the EU referendum is Alan Morrison’s “*DYSBREXIA SYNDROME – Manipulation & Mayhem in the EU Referendum*”. It was published on The Liberty Beacon website March 11, 2017. The Media Bias / Fact Check resource gives the website a low rating qualifying it as “a far right biased conspiracy/pseudoscience website” [6]. Posited to be counter-manipulative, the article ridiculously lacks proof and evidence in respect of the claims made. Firstly, A. Morrison claims the Referendum to be “one huge psychological operation”. The author vests this “Psyop” on the CIA .Secondly, for this psyop he makes his own speculative list of “a number of objectives which were all fulfilled to the letter”:

The powers wanted to make people feel fearful and insecure. Check. They wanted to upset people deeply. Check. They wanted to make people feel as if they are grieving. Check. They wanted to offend people widely. Check. They wanted to make people angry, resentful and discontented. Check. They wanted to create a division of people. Check. They wanted to create a false sense of euphoria in the “victors”. Check. They wanted to create even more chaos than they have already been successfully creating in recent years through their serial wars and false-flag operations. Check [12].

On the whole, Morrison’s article raises a noble issue of eradicating the hate discourse on Brexit, yet, paradoxically, the writer resorts to the similar speech in the quotation given and other passages (“*Being European has nothing whatsoever to do with being part of the dark-suited, behemoth-like, narrow corrupt institution of the EU*”). Far and wide, the article transgresses the standards of unbiased journalism by slashing the European Union with a number of apparently undeserved insults. Though the writer sort of praises himself for having coined a neologism “*disbrexia*”, yet by no account can the EU be likened to the totalitarian superstate of Oceania in George Orwell’s dystopia “*1984*”.

An indelible contribution into the theory of manipulation in mass media has been made by Teun van Dijk, a mass media researcher and linguist. He included into scientific use and circulation a number of terms, notions, ideas, interpretive formulae which are of great aid both for the scholar and the mass media recipient. Some of these are triangulating a social, cognitive and discursive approach, illegitimate manipulation and legitimate persuasion, *victims* of manipulation, *abuse* of power and *domination* as hidden motives of manipulation.

We specified these points of Dijk’s theory in [13]. Of crucial importance in his theory is a principal watershed between illegitimate manipulation and legitimate persuasion. The latter is a very fine and lofty tool of fair journalism, meaning a competent and justified use of all the persuasive techniques involving stylistic features, personalized account of the theme on the part of the author, elements of the publicist

style, addressing the readers, pleading a fair course of action to adversaries. In his groundbreaking article “Discourse and manipulation” the scholar writes:

Without the negative associations, manipulation could be a form of (legitimate) persuasion (see, e.g., Dillard and Pfau, 2002; O’Keefe, 2002). The crucial difference in this case is that in persuasion the interlocutors are free to believe or act as they please, depending on whether or not they accept the arguments of the persuader, whereas in manipulation recipients are typically assigned a more passive role: they are victims of manipulation. This negative consequence of manipulative discourse typically occurs when the recipients are unable to understand the real intentions or to see the full consequences of the beliefs or actions advocated by the manipulator [18].

A good instance of legitimate persuasion can be seen in Carole Cadwalladr’s direct plea to the perpetrators of the Brexit referendum ‘intruders’ whom she identifies with Cambridge Analytica, Facebook and their leadership. In her TED talk she directly addresses the top functionaries of these companies with a call to stop such democracy-ruining practices.

The Brexit campaign and referendum have repeatedly been accused of employing manipulative technologies. There is a host of investigative journalism papers laying bare the motives, methods, tools of manipulating a voter’s decision-making. A deliberate and undemocratic withholding of the true situation in respect of Brexit and its likely negative consequences for the UK has been spectacularly exposed, and crushingly criticized, in a series of publications by Carole Cadwalladr, a British journalist for the *Guardian* and *Observer*. For her outstanding work of an investigative journalist she was awarded a prestigious Pulitzer prize in 2019.

Her investigative work and reporting stand in a striking contrast to the kind of a highly biased and opinionated journalism rather typically represented by Alan Morrison’s article. Carole Cadwalladr got international repute and praise for her undaunting investigation of a sophisticated interference of Cambridge Analytica, the data analytics firm, into the Britain’s “Leave the UK Referendum”. Her sensational findings and subsequent reports in press and online (TED talk) pointed directly to the Facebook social network which illicitly gathered information about its users making it possible to select a vulnerable group of those potential Referendum voters who were as yet uncertain what side to vote for. As a feedback from Facebook they were sent messages to sway their decision-making in favour of the Leave vote. In her TED talk she explained this interference as follows: Cambridge Analytica “had profiled people politically in order to understand their individual fears, to better target them with Facebook ads, and it did this by illicitly harvesting the profiles of 87 million people from Facebook” [7].

Carole Cadwalladr blames Facebook for a behind-the-scene maneuvering with its subscribers’ personal data:

“... this entire referendum took place in darkness, because it took place on Facebook. And what happens on Facebook stays on Facebook, because only you see your news feed, and then it vanishes, so it’s impossible to research anything. So we have no idea who saw what ads or what impact they had, or what data was used to target these people. Or even who placed the ads, or how much money was spent, or even what nationality they were” [7].

Cadwalladr’s publications and presentations can be regarded as a paragon, a pattern of counter-manipulative journalism. Her articles on the Brexit topic fully conform to what we qualified earlier as a counter-manipulative media text [13]. The fact that *Observer* and *The Guardian* broke the story that became the Cambridge Analytica scandal confirms their reputation as the trusted channels of unbiased independent journalism. Both newspapers feature a regular account of the Brexit agenda written by their columnists. The *Guardian* has on its staff a number of columnists who run a regular account of Brexit happenings or write features. Two years ago, in April 2017, Paul Flynn wrote an article “*What Brexit should have taught us about voter manipulation*” in which he referred to Cadwalladr’s investigation and outlined the threat of manipulative interference into voting by means of using botnets. Based on a Parliamentary report on the crash of the voter registration website, which may seem an ordinary technical fault, the journalist joins the committee’s suspicion of a botnet attack launched on the site.

In contrast to this apparently isolated fact of a highly probable use of botnets, the columnist unravels “a much more troubling narrative” of the real threat posed by the technical efficiency of botnet

programmes: “Evidence from Oxford Internet Institute suggest that a third of all Twitter traffic prior to the EU referendum was actually botsTogether, this evidence makes it clear that democracy is struggling to stand tall in a disturbing era where lobbyists can weaponise fake news for the highest bidder” [5].

Paul Flynn’s article opens with the phrase “The EU referendum was won by the side with the means to distribute the most plausible lies through social media” and it ends with practically the same one: “The EU referendum was a battle of dishonesty. It was won by the side with the means to distribute the most plausible lies”. It is a proper instance of framing as one of numerous tools to ensure a legitimate persuasion effect.

The gamut of journalists writing regularly on Brexit is large and wide. For all the inherent objectivity expected to be adhered to in their publications, they cannot but expose their own stand to Brexit, their personal preference of either Leavers’ or Remainers’ platform, their assessment of the retrospective and present-day issues of Brexit. We will treat some articles of this kind in the next section.

4. The ways of seeing and treating Brexit in analytical feature articles. The British mass media have produced a vast amount of articles and essays on all possible sides, features, aspects and vectors of Brexit. One gets easily challenged with a task of exorbitant complexity when trying to find a way out in the maze of Brexit-related publications. The mass media texts on Brexit present a wealth of explanations, assessment and interpretations which, in their totality, give a panorama of views, a kaleidoscope of visions and attitudes.

Guided by our purpose to sample different kinds of journalism dealing with Brexit, we cannot but give full credit to the variety of feature articles on the subject, a subgenre of mass media texts which affords a journalist a high degree of authorial freedom, which belongs to opinionated, speculative form of writing. This form, like many others, must have its grateful readership.

By necessity, we shall confine ourselves to specifying the major points of only a few articles of this variety which run into thousands of titles.

A truly spectacular instance of analytical journalism is found in “*Brexit and Myths of Englishness*” which is written by James Meek, a British novelist and journalist [14]. The article is published on the site “London Review of Books”, it is taken from the October 2018 issue of the journal. James Meek outlines the two Englishness-related folk-myth, “*the myth of St George and the myth of Robin Hood, the myth of St George is simpler. Robin Hood is a process; St George is an event.*” The St George myth is simpler because he performs only one-act feat, he kills a dragon. “*The slaying of the dragon is quick, easy to remember, and easy to celebrate*”. Unlike St George’s victory, “*Robin Hood-like achievements such as a national health service, progressive taxation and universal education*” are characterized in the essay as slow, complicated and boring. James Meek concludes: “*The vote on whether Britain should leave the European Union was sold to the electorate and bought by many as a St George moment*” [14].

These myths help the author to draw a parallel between St George myth and the Leave vote landslide victory, obtained with a very narrow margin. Meek makes a point of Nigel Farage’s dubious victory not only by comparing it to the ‘slaying a dragon’ mythology but also resorting to hard facts: “*Nor did it matter that the Leave campaign’s successful strategy to sway undecided voters was based on fear, hatred and lies, backed by an enormous (for Britain) and uncertainly sourced donation of £8.4 million from the insurance salesman Arron Banks, who stood at Farage’s shoulder when he addressed the cameras on referendum night. Lies were precision-targeted to voters through a £2.7 million deal with Facebook*”. The writer and journalist Meek exposes a number of slandering ads which helped boost a spirit of indignation against the European Union which, assumedly, was about to deprive Britain of its sovereignty, freedom and the like.

James Meek openly censures “*the Brexiteers’ demonisation of the EU*”, enforcing his censure by a figure if concession and a rhetoric question: “*Even if leaving the EU were a nobler and more important act than it is, even if Leave would have won without the lies, the fact that Brexit was*

contrived with the help of falsehoods corrupts it. Can a good end be a good end if those pursuing it fake another's wickedness to help them get there?" [14].

The article "*The worst thing about Brexit is that it will never end*" written by Alex Dean nearly year ago, in June 2018, exemplifies one more instance of honest and independent writing on the insurmountable problem of Brexit. The author does not shun from expressing his highly pessimistic expectations of the likely outcomes of Brexit in the near future. He brandishes the self-mesmerizing consolation, on the part of some Westminster functionaries, of everything getting eventually settled down to the mutual satisfaction of the sides involved as naïve. "*I have sympathy with their line of thinking but the truth is that leaving the European Union is a constitutional task so immense, so intricate, that it may never fully draw to a close. ...It could drag on indefinitely, eating up decades of British political life. This is the consequence of negotiation with a global superpower*" [16].

Referring to Switzerland as an example of the state found in the process of permanent negotiations with EU, Alex Dean makes a pessimistic prognosis for his country in the matter of Brexit: "*And there's the rub. The years will roll on and still Britain will be sending teams of trade negotiators to Brussels. Still the tabloids will be demanding that governments stand up to Europe. The bitter rows between Remainers and Leavers will continue to rage, and our politics will begin to feel very tired indeed*" [16].

5. "Where Brexit and climate-change scepticism converge". This is the heading for the Mar 22nd 2016 article published in *Buttonwood's notebook*, a finance column in *The Economist*. The allegations implied look really sensational, however the online search does not offer any amount of further publications on the implied convergence in the years after 2016.

Surprising as this convergence may seem, yet the climate changesupporters were quick to notice the links between the climate change denial campaign and Brexit. They coined a portmanteau word "Clexit" (climate+exit) to name a campaign for denouncing and withdrawing from the international 2015 Paris climate treaty.

Once our paper aims at presenting and analyzing the coverage of multifarious instantiations of Brexit, we cannot overlook this particular aspect, as it manifests some covert and manipulative operations of both campaigns. Dana Nuccitelli, one of the most staunch 'adversaries' of climate change deniers, an expert and journalist writing in defense of Consensus 97 (a claimed 97 per cent consensus among the scientists worldwide who acknowledge global warming and see industrial activity, CO₂ emissions as a major aspect of this warming.) throws some light on this linkage in his 8 Aug 2016 article "*Rejection of experts spreads from Brexit to climate change with 'Clexit'*":

Brexit support and climate denial have many similarities. Many Brexit Leave campaign leaders also deny the dangers of human-caused climate change. Older generations were more likely to vote for the UK to leave the EU and are more likely to oppose taking action on climate change; younger generations disagree, and will be forced to live with the consequences of those decisions. On both issues there's also a dangerous strain of anti-intellectualism, in which campaigners mock experts and dismiss their evidence and conclusions [16].

In his typical evidence-giving manner (which we exemplified at length in our previous paper, see [11]). Nuccitelli exposes some of the fake, manipulative tactics of "Clexiters". Contrary to what is written in Clexit's summary statement, Nuccitelli disclaims the absence of threat of sea level rise for small oceanic nations (Tuvalu) giving the figures of the higher rate of that rise than the global average per year; developing countries would have to bear incomparably larger costs, involved in combatting pollution causes, if they went on burning "low-cost" fossil fuels; the journalist exposes as unscientific the Clexit group's statement that carbon dioxide is not a pollutant. He reminds Clexiters the US Supreme Court's ruling and EPA's conclusion that carbon dioxide is a pollutant and must be regulated as such.

Central to this article is drawing a parallel between Brexiters and Clexiters in their distrust, and even negation, of the scientific findings and expert views: "... as top Leave campaigner Michael Gove said:

people in this country (the UK) have had enough of experts Gove also pushed to remove climate change from school curriculums, before backing down” [16].

The parallels between Brexit and Clexit are also dealt with in a number of other publications. Bob Ward in *“Is there a link between climate change ‘sceptics’ and Brexit supporters?”* writes on the striking similarity of the tactics used by *the Vote Leave campaign to deny the economic dangers of Brexit and the lobbyists who refute the risks of climate change* [17]. A contribution into unfolding the said linkage between Brexit and Clexit has been made by the investigative site *Desmog UK*. One of its publications (a week before the 23 June 2016 EU referendum), *“Revealed: the climate science deniers behind the Brexit campaign”*, written by Kyla Mandel, explores the web of connections between Britain’s climate deniers and the campaign to leave the EU. Bringing to the readers’ focus the fact that “the nucleus of the Brexit debate” and “the UK’s community of climate science deniers” “share many of the same members and donors”, even “working under the same roof”, she names those politicians who have formed Brexit debate and agenda, while being for a long time “part of the country’s climate sceptic fringe”

The journalist Mandel explains what lies behind the said connections: “The overlap between those who want to leave the EU and those who deny the science on climate change runs deep. It stems from a common neoliberal ideology that fears top-down state interventions and regulations which are perceived as threatening values of individual freedom, economic (market) freedom, or the sovereignty of national governments” [18].

6. Manipulative front-page headlines on the subject of Brexit in tabloids. In its 9 February 2019 issue the online <https://www.independent.co.uk/news> presents an essay written by Jessica Buxbaum for the book *‘Do They Mean Us?’*. The online publication is titled *“How our right-wing press entrenched Brexit divisions”*. This is not so much a review as a selection of extended fragments from the book, the selection which gives an accurate account of the book’s highlights. The book fits into the category of counter-manipulative publications for exposing a ‘pack of lies’ on Brexit shamelessly presented to its readership by the tabloids *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror*. The sub-heading to the article runs as follows: *While the European media has been mostly objective in its reporting, the highly partisan nature of British Brexit coverage is deepening our political divide, argues Jessica Buxbaum in a new book, ‘Do They Mean Us?’* [19].

At the beginning of the book the author outlines the differences and similarities between the European and British press, a principal difference being a prevalence of tabloids over broadsheets in the UK whereas in many continental European countries is in the top three widely-read newspapers. “The same is not true for the UK where the three most read newspapers – *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror* – are all tabloids. Britain’s fixation with tabloids stems from the country’s regard for social stratification. Class is engrained into the cultural framework of British society and Britons take discernible pride in their class identity, not just in their work but also in the news they absorb”. As for the similarity, “both the European and UK media are overwhelmingly partisan compared to their United States counterparts”. “Right-wing ideology dominates British news, outnumbering leftist thinking from the *Daily Mirror*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. Thereby, sensationalist tabloids hold considerable political clout and sway over public opinion” [19].

Further, the writer gives a retrospective overview of a gradual change of the right-wing British press from an enthusiastic coverage of Britain’s joining the EEC to Euroscepticism getting transformed into a hostile anti-European rhetoric of the tabloid periodicals.

In the UK, newspapers dictate the news agenda and the BBC appeared to echo the hostile press rather than acting as a media leader.

The Brexit campaign’s main message was “take back control” and this sentiment was mirrored in the British media. Explosive language dominated news before and after the Brexit vote.

A King's College London study found that campaign coverage was "acrimonious and divisive". Common words used in pro-Brexit reporting included "fury", "attack", "slam", "scaremongering" and "Project Fear" [19].

The samples of the photos of the tabloid front pages, with short comments on the most ridiculous headlines on them, appears to be the most spectacular feature of the book. The open hostility and belligerent tone in respect of Remain voters are the features that these headlines have in common. For example, *Daily Mail's* issue of January 31 2018 gave the following headline-like entry:

Is there anything more unsavoury in politics than unelected peers queuing up to sneer at 17.4 m Brexit voters? Where were they when the EU was wrecking British sovereignty? No wonder the Lords was yesterday described as a gilded crimson echo-chamber for Remain?

The book's comment on this headline: "*This headline (?) takes aim at the Lords over their repeated amendments to the EU Withdrawal Bill.*" One can clearly see a highly strung intolerance narrative packed into this bellicose invective against the Remain vote or against any attempts to make Brexit deal less hard.

CONCLUSIONS. In this paper we have outlined and exemplified a variety of the ways, opinions and stances which journalists and media outlets adhere to in covering Brexit and Brexit-related problems. The actual range of opinions, and forms of Brexit coverage, is by far the larger and more intricate than the six instances we have analyzed.

A very important conclusion we have come to is that a research of Brexit manipulative discourse and narratives is largely facilitated by the numerous anti-, or counter-manipulative venues, be it a site, a newspaper and a column therein, a forum, a scholarly publication, a blog. Brexit campaign and related agenda are treated it seems with all possible thoroughness and fairness of representation to satisfy a range of the readership expectations – from in-depth speculative feature articles to concise factual reporting of the Brexit-related news to easy-to-grasp-at-a-glance, highly biased tabloid headlines to investigative journalism. Thus the British mass media observe a principle of fair representation of the plethora of views on Brexit.

Though the British newspapers are known to be related to a certain political 'camp' or stance, *The Guardian* can be seen as a hallmark of truly free, independent press. In relation to the coverage of Brexit, its independence reveals itself in a host of the newspaper columnists. What these columnists have in common is concerning the coverage of Brexit is that they do not lend themselves to abusive, slanderous rhetoric of those pro-Brexit-supporters and advocates who falsify facts, concepts, causes and likely outcomes of Brexit.

A significant vector of the Brexit-targeted publications falls on investigative journalism. The findings and revelations of Carole Cadwalladr, and others, are not merely sensational. Their great value can be seen in education the public on what massive manipulative impact voters are subjected to in the course of their decision-taking.

To make a final conclusion in respect of the research undertaken here, it must be said that a close following of the Brexit coverage in the British media outlets shows the British political scene and panorama at large. The given research deserves to be continued in the issues dealt with as well as in some new ones like aspectwise coverage of Brexit, its retrospective aspects, forms of manipulation and legitimate persuasion means in Brexit-covering mass media texts.

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