

BBC Allegedly Used Leave Campaigners Ideology to Frame EU Referendum

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Abstract. *The news broadcasted on the BBC Great Debate places issues related to the referendum into two categories: our party (United Kingdom) and their party (European Union). According to Edelman's news frame theory, BBC, through the BBC Great Debate program, creates specific perspectives by using particular words that influence the way audiences understand reality. This study explores the impact of the BBC ideology on frames of the EU referendum broadcasted on the BBC Great Debate and the changes in the Brits' political attitudes. This research's paradigm is constructivism with a qualitative approach, and the analytical method used is Edelman's frame analysis model. Based on the findings, despite numerous criticisms expressed by leading UK academics regarding BBC's alignments with Leave campaigners in the first three months of the campaign, BBC continued to frame biased stories. The news packages broadcasted by the BBC were potentially designed to influence the Brits' political decision, turning their vote from remain to leave the EU. However, a specific survey on the voters should be conducted to profoundly examine whether the BBC Great Debate had significantly changed their political decisions.*

Keywords: *BBC, EU Referendum, Frame Analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

Based on Nielsen Media Research cited by The New York Times, the duration of watching television has increased significantly every year (Biagi, 2016). It is known that some people spend more extended time watching TV than communicating with others. These statistics support the results of research related to the psychological closeness of audiences to television programs. The increase in the average viewing duration each year allows TV stations to influence audiences significantly.

Little argues that the wider the audience access to television, the greater the opportunity for mass media to influence the audiences' opinion and perspective (Little, 2016). According

to Edelman, "what we know about the nature of the social world depends upon how we frame and interpret the cues we receive about the world (Eriyanto, 2012)." In other words, communicators construct reality and direct the audience's perspective by using specific words to influence how the public understands a fact or reality. The information conveyed by the mass media is the media frame for a reality. Mass media has an ideology that acts as the primary yardstick in framing a reality. According to Eriyanto (ibid), the behaviour and news produced by journalists are within mutually agreed-upon values. When viewed with Edelman's theory, the BBC, as a mass media, selects certain realities and constructs them through categorisations

to understand them more easily. BBC ideology serves as a guide in selecting and constructing a reality.

In the first quarter of 2016, leading academics from various institutions in the United Kingdom conducted 79 studies related to the EU referendum, 21 of which were directly related to the mass media's role. Ten out of those 21 studies criticised that the BBC news covers on the EU referendum favored the Leave campaign. Deacon et al. measures the independence of the BBC group, ITV group, and Sky Newsgroup with three variables: balance of direction, the balance of time, and balance of issues (Deacon, Downey, Stanyer, & Wring, 2017). As a result, the Leave campaign received a share of 60% of all journalistic works related to the EU referendum in the first quarter of 2016, while only 40% for the Remain campaign. When the scale is narrowed down to three main issues: economy, immigration, and the UK's position globally, the Leave campaign got a more significant portion, namely 80% (Jackson, Thorsen, & Wring, 2016).

The BBC Great Debate is a special program broadcasted live from Wembley Stadium on BBC One, BBC News, BBC Parliament, BBC World News, BBC iPlayer application, the BBC official page, and the BBC's social media. The program was aired two days before the referendum, 20/06/2016. The 120-minute program was divided into eight segments. The BBC begins each segment of the debate by showing a news package related to the issue. In the news package, BBC emphasised two categories: our side (UK) and their side (EU). When viewed with Edelman's news frame theory, BBC is assumed to create particular perspectives using certain words that affect how audiences understand reality through the Great Debate program.

Media Ideology

Silverblatt, Ferry, and Finan stated that ideology refers to the system of beliefs or ideas that help determine the thinking and behaviour of a culture (Silverblatt, Ferry, & Finan, 2015). Williams argued that ideology might involve a more general way of seeing the world, human nature, and relationships (Silverblatt, Ferry, & Finan, *ibid*). According to Eriyanto (2012), ideology could propose a political marker or meaning. He argued that how a person sees events with particular glasses and views is an ideology in a broad sense. Hartley in Eriyanto (*ibid*) views news narratives as supposing two sides displayed by the media. The media is always considered to present two-sided figures to be contrasted between the two. According to Hartley, the way to see the media's ideology is by analysing the politics of marking carried out by the media, such as which sides are highlighted and where the media place themselves.

Denzau & North defines ideology as the shared framework of mental models that groups of individuals possess that provide an interpretation of the environment and a prescription regarding how that environment should be structured (Lu, Chu, & Shen, 2016). There is an active role of ideologies on political communication, and the reality that media directed with this ideology affects the masses (Çakmak, 2018). Thus, the media ideology is a set of agreed values that becomes the benchmark for journalists of a producing-news media. Media ideologies do not always coincide with the values that society agrees with. The media's view of the world and the nature and relationships of people can construct public understanding and create false awareness.

Media Construction of Reality

Berger and Luckmann argue that mass media's social construction is on

the rapid and extensive circulation of information so that social construction takes place very quickly and should be equitable (Taufik & Suhaeri, 2020). They believe that the constructed reality also forms mass opinion causing the audience to tend to be a priori and cynical at the mass opinions. According to Couldry and Hepp, daily reality is a form of institutional communication practices that dominate the social world (Couldry & Hepp, 2018). Hence, daily reality comes from the dominant group's reality construction widely disseminated by the mass media, which generally dominates the social world.

Yan formulates two fundamental processes related to the construction of media towards social reality (Yan, 2020). First, selecting news through a gatekeeping process is based on its value. Second, defining and constructing the issues that have been selected. Based on those explanations, the social world is a result of a construction formed by humans. Mass media has a significant influence in constructing a widely disseminated reality to dominate the social world. Often, media-constructed reality becomes a reality consumed by the public daily. The media-constructed reality can have a significant impact on audiences. Those with low media literacy tend to be more exposed to constructed realities. In the end, according to Yodiansyah, they can be more easily misled by misinformation, fake news, or even hoaxes (Fardiah, Rinawati, Darmawan, Abdul, & Lucky, 2020). Thus, the media construction of reality can be studied by observing the entity of a media discourse and delivering that entity to the public.

Theories of Media Frame

News is a window to the world. Through the news, we can find out what is happening in other parts of the world (Tuchman & Tuchman, 1978). As is

the case with windows, not everything behind the frame can be seen. There is a limitation of view, and some things can only be seen clearly from a certain point of view. Kriyantono argues that the mass media frame influences public perception on who must take responsibility for each issue (Prastya & Dewi, 2020). Edelman defined framing as categorisation, directing particular perspectives by using certain words that also indicate how facts or reality are understood (Edelman, 1993).

According to Eriyanto (2012), "categorisation in Edelman's view is an abstraction and function of thought. Categories help humans understand the diverse and irregular reality into a meaningful reality." Eriyanto (ibid) argues that categorisation is a significant force in influencing public minds and awareness. According to him, this is because categorisation can be more touching, more competitive, and more in touch with the subconscious. The majority of audiences do not realise that a particular perspective and mindset have dictated the realm of mind and consciousness not to think in other dimensions. Edelman in Eriyanto (ibid) explained, "often the media's categorisations are wrong or deceive the public."

Edelman explains politics as a game of symbols that aims to influence public opinion. Audiences are invited to think with words and symbols designed to win public support. The media agenda reflects the political attitudes of the media that can direct views and shape public understanding of an issue. The questions raised by the sources also aim to direct public opinion in a specific direction. Thus, categorisation can be interpreted as a simplification of complex reality to be understood by emphasising one side or dimension and putting aside other sides or dimensions. Categorisation is a tool for how reality is understood and present

TABLE 1. Edelman’s News Frame Analysis Model

Frame	
It contains media-constructed reality about an issue based on comparing our and their parties and the alternative reality found (if any).	
Our Party	Their Party
It contains media statements or views indicating its position and/ affiliation regarding the issue.	It contains media descriptions about the opposite parties and/ those whom they think are responsible for the issue.
Alternative reality	
It contains categorisations that are technically part of one party but are excluded, thus creating a new reality about a category.	

Source: (Randy & Vera, 2020).

in the minds of the public. Alternative reality can change the meaning. Changes are not determined or caused by changes in reality or events. Instead, it displays the media’s abstraction of thoughts regarding how reality is to be understood.

METHOD

Eriyanto (2012) explains that when the news is constructed, not only events are described in a particular ideological map, but the audience is also placed on a particular ideological map. According to Hall in Eriyanto (ibid), “the work process of creating and producing news is not something neutral, but there is an ideological bias practised by journalists consciously or not.” Sobur believes that framing analysis is used to examine how media’s ideology constructs the facts (Satriani, 2018). Pan and Kosicki in Satriani (ibid) define framing analysis as an approach that is used to analyse news discourse, especially dealing with the creation and bargain of the public discourse related to public policy issues.

Yin explains, “unit analysis is a component that is fundamentally related to the problem of determining what is meant by a case in the research concerned (Yin, 2013).” According to Chambliss and Schutt, unit analysis is the things and the behaviours that researchers wanted to study and understand (Chambliss & Schutt, 2018). Regarding that, the paradigm of

this research is constructivism, with a qualitative approach. This study explores the ideology used by BBC in constructing the reality of the EU Referendum. To identify the ideology, the author purposefully examined all three news package samples broadcasted on the BBC Great Debate using Edelman’s news frame analysis model. All three samples were selected because they contributed significantly to figuring out the media ideology. Edelman model was chosen because its main objective is to examine the news frame and identify the media ideology or its political alignment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Sample 1

Title: United Kingdom’s Economy
 Date of publication: Monday, 20 June 2016
 Duration: 1 minute 30 seconds

According to the BBC editorial team, the value of UK exports was £ 223 billion to EU countries and £ 288 billion to non-EU countries (minute 00:10-00:27). In the meantime, the value of imports from the EU is £ 291 billion, which means the EU’s trade deficit is worth £ 68 billion (minute 00:28-00:38). Based on the news package, the trade deficit was caused by the absence of buying and selling tariffs between the UK and the EU (minute 00:40-00:50). Supporters of the Leave



FIGURE 1. UK's Trade Deficit

campaign will impose tariffs on the EU after Brexit.

The producers quoted the Leave campaigner, who stated that the single market requires all EU members to apply the goods and services' rules and standards regulated by the EU Court of Justice (minute 00:52-01:03). The producers also quoted the Remain campaigner, who stated that the single market is good for local companies and provides job security (minute 01:04-01:12). They again quoted the Leave campaigner, which considered the single market binding local companies required to follow EU regulations, including those

that are unnecessary according to Leave campaigner (minute 01:13-01:22).

From this news package, it is known that the BBC producers constructed public opinion regarding UK membership in the EU, which is considered not to provide economic benefits, but only losses in the trade sector. The UK government cannot impose export tariffs on EU countries. Local companies must follow the EU Court of Justice's rules and standards, whose board is not directly elected by UK citizens. As a result, many of the regulations and standards that applied were deemed unnecessary and / incompatible with UK economic

TABLE 2. Results of News 1 Analysis

Frame	
UK membership in the EU provides no economic benefit but a trade deficit.	
Our Party	Their Party
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. UK; b. Leave campaigners; c. The single market creates a trade deficit of £ 68 billion against the EU; d. Will apply trade tariffs with the EU after Brexit; e. Will apply trade tariffs with the EU after Brexit; f. The EU Court of Justice sets regulations on goods and services that local companies need to follow; g. The single market binds local companies to follow unnecessary regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. It EU; b. Remain campaigners; c. A single market for both companies and jobs.

conditions.

Based on the findings above, the BBC producers have emphasised the EU's shortcomings by not showing the benefits of UK membership status in the EU. Thus, the BBC had constructed a framework in support of the Leave campaign. In terms of time balance, the Leave campaign got a longer duration than the Remain campaign. There are four statements quoted from the Leave campaigner and one statement quoted from the Remain campaigner, so the issue ratio is 4:1.

Sample 2

Title: United Kingdom-European Union Immigration

Date of publication: Monday, 20 June 2016

Duration: 1 minute 40 seconds

According to BBC's infographic, in 2015, there were 508 million EU citizens who have the right to live and work in EU member countries (minute 00:03-00:06). In the data displayed, that year alone, there were 372 thousand people who migrated to the UK, 184 thousand of them were EU residents, and the rest 188 thousand came from other countries (minute 00:20-00:27). In the data shown,

up to the first quarter of 2016, 3 million EU residents live in the UK, and only 1.2 million UK residents live in the EU (minute 00:34-00:45). Based on the news package, since the UK is not a Schengen member, everyone who comes must show a passport, and UK immigration can reject those considered dangerous (minute 00:46-00:57). In 2015, as many as 2,165 EU passport holders were refused entry to the UK (minute 00:59-01:03).

The BBC stated that five countries had been accepted as candidates for new membership by the EU: Albania, Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey (minute 01:03-01:10). However, current EU members have veto power (minute 01:12-01:16). According to the Leave campaigner quoted by the BBC, UK membership in the EU made the country lose control over borders and immigration rates (minute 01:17-01:24). Meanwhile, according to the Remain campaigner cited by the BBC, EU migrant workers positively impact the UK economy (minute 01:25-01:29). This news package indicated that the BBC tried to construct public opinion regarding UK membership in the EU, which is considered not to favour immigration figures. It is rather confiscating government control over national borders. The number of EU

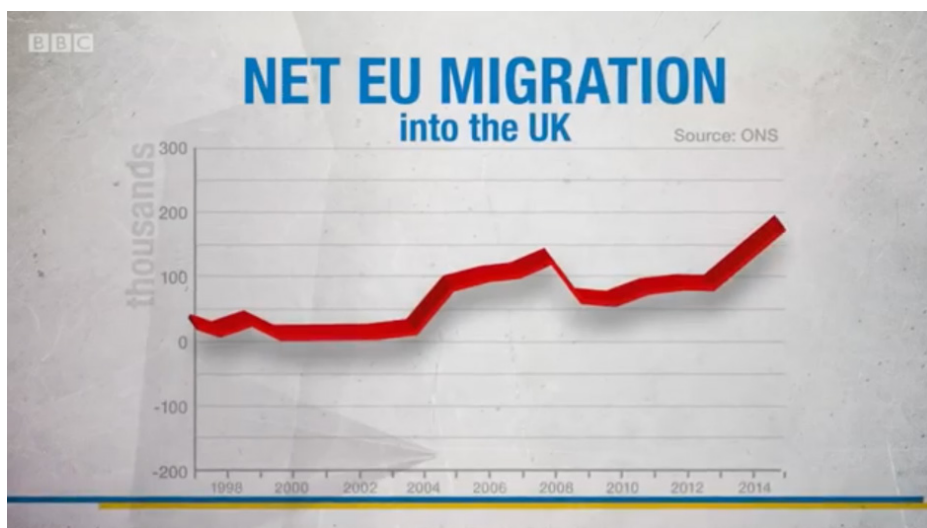


FIGURE 2: EU Migration into the UK

TABLE 3. Results of News 2 Analysis

Frame	
UK membership in the EU put us (Briton) out of control over national borders and immigration rates.	
Our Party	Their Party
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. UK; b. Leave campaigners; c. Freedom of movement increases immigration rates in the UK; d. The joining of several new member states to the EU during the 2000s increased immigration rates in the EU and UK; e. Five countries have been approved to become candidates for the new EU membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. EU; b. Remain campaigners; c. Workers from the EU are suitable for the UK economy.

residents living in the UK was 3 million people. It is bigger than the total UK population living in the EU, which was 1.2 million in 2016.

In this news package, the BBC emphasised the negative impact on UK membership in the EU. The producers also seem to pressure the public with fear that there will be five new EU members, which will increase immigration rates in the UK. Thus, the editorial team constructed public opinion to support the Leave campaign. The editorial team also gave less duration for statements supporting the Remain campaigner. Regarding the issues' balance, the BBC published three statements favouring the Leave campaign and one statement for the Remain campaign. Thus, the issue composition for the Leave and Remain

campaign is 3:1.

Sample 3

Title: United Kingdom's Position in the World

Date of publication: Monday, 20 June 2016

Duration: 1 minute 38 seconds

The BBC explained that the UK joined the European Economic Community in 1973 (minute 00:15-00:22). The UK stayed a member based on the 1975 referendum results, in which 67% of the population supported the membership (minute 00:23-00:32). According to the BBC editorial team, the EU was formed in 1993 as a political and economic union (minute 00:33-00:47). It introduced a one currency program that



FIGURE 3: Future of European Union

TABLE 4. Results of News 3 Analysis

Frame	
UK membership in the EU put us (Briton) out of control over national borders and immigration rates.	
Our Party	Their Party
a. UK;	a. EU;
b. Leave campaigners; The 1975 referendum results supported UK membership in the EEC, the European Economic Community;	b. Remain campaigners;
c. EEC is only an economic community; the EU today is an economic and political union;	c. The UK refused to adopt the one currency program;
d. Five candidate countries will join the EU; Senior EU leaders will create EU soldiers and intelligence agency;	d. EU members currently have a veto on new country membership;
e. The EU plans to form a superstate, where member countries will merge into one big country.	e. The UK can choose not to follow policies that are incompatible with national politics at a later date.

the UK did not adopt (minute 00:46-00:56). According to BBC, in 2004, many new countries joined the EU, which has now reached 28 countries (minute 00:57-01:02). There are currently five countries that can become new EU members if they meet the criteria (minute 01:02-01:06). However, current EU members have veto power to determine whether these countries can join the EU (minute 01:07-01:10).

The BBC editorial team reported that senior EU leaders discussed the EU army and intelligence agencies' formation (minute 01:11-01:17). According to Leave campaigner, the EU is currently aiming to establish a superstate (minute 01:18-01:24). Meanwhile, according to Remain campaigner, the UK government can choose not to participate in integration in the future (minute 01:25-01:28). Based on this news package, the BBC intended to construct public opinion regarding UK membership in the EU, which is considered no benefit to the UK's position in the world. In 1975 UK residents supported UK membership in the EEC because the EEC is an economic community. Meanwhile, the current EU policy objective includes politics.

In this news, the BBC is more concerned about the EU army and

intelligence agency formation issues. The editorial team also quoted a statement from the Leave campaigner regarding forming an EU superstate that would later merge member countries into one large country. Like the two previous news stories, the editorial team intended to direct public opinion to support the Leave campaign. The duration associated with material favourable to the Leave campaign is longer than the Remain campaign. The editorial team mentioned five issues that benefit the Leave campaigner and three issues that benefit the Remain campaigner, so the ratio of issues is 5:3.

DISCUSSION

In Jackson, Thorsen, and Wring (2016), the research conducted by Dr David Levy from the University of Oxford, Dr Billur Aslan from the University of London, and Diego Bironzo, the Director of PRIME Research UK, as well as Prof. David Deacon et al. from the Loughborough University communication and cultural research centre, found the alignment of the mainstream media, such as the BBC group, ITV group, and Sky News Group regarding the coverage of EU referendum. Based on the results, academics have criticised mainstream media for the bias

TABLE 5. News Frames Comparison

Elements	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3
Frame	UK membership in the EU provides no economic benefit but a trade deficit	UK membership in the EU put us (Briton) out of control over national borders and immigration rates.	The plan to form the EU superstate threatens the sovereignty of the UK government.
Our Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. UK; b. Leave campaigners; c. The single market creates a trade deficit of £ 68 billion against the EU; d. Will apply trade tariffs with the EU after Brexit; e. The EU Court of Justice sets regulations on goods and services that local companies need to follow; f. The single market binds local companies to follow unnecessary regulations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. UK; b. Leave campaigners; c. Freedom of movement increases immigration rates in the UK; d. The joining of several new member states to the EU during the 2000s increased immigration rates in the EU and UK; e. Five countries have been approved to become candidates for the new EU membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. UK; b. Leave campaigners; c. The 1975 referendum results supported UK membership in the EEC, the European Economic Community; c. EEC is only an economic community; the EU today is an economic and political union; d. Five candidate countries will join the EU; Senior EU leaders will create EU soldiers and intelligence agency; e. The EU plans to form a superstate, where member countries will merge into one big country.
Their Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. EU; b. Remain campaigners; c. A single market for both companies and jobs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. EU; b. Remain campaigners; c. Workers from the EU are suitable for the UK economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. EU; b. Remain campaigners; c. The UK refused to adopt the one currency program; d. EU members currently have a veto on new country membership; e. The UK can choose not to follow policies that are incompatible with national politics at a later date.

news stories they broadcasted during the first three months of the campaign period. Despite the criticisms from leading academicians three months before the broadcast, the BBC allegedly still produced and distributed bias news stories two days before voting.

The closeness of the BBC's leadership board, Sir David Cecil

Clementi, with one of the companies supporting the Leave campaign, Rio Tinto Group, could indicate the influence of eurosceptic in framing news related to the EU referendum. Eurosceptic is an ideology that opposes the European Union and encourages its country to withdraw from the European Union (Stojić, 2018). Based on news stories broadcasted on

the BBC Great Debate (20/06/2016), the BBC emphasised the reality regarding UK membership in the EU by dividing public opinion between our and their parties. The BBC positioned themselves on our party and indicated directing public opinion to vote for Leave, giving the Leave campaigners more duration on marking more issues than the Remain campaigners, with a ratio of 12 issues for the Leave and 5 for the Remain. Thus, the average issue ratio in percentage was 70.6% for the Leave campaigners and 29.4% for the Remain campaigners. This finding has shown that the BBC was highly biased and in favour of the Leave campaign.

Eriyanto (2012) argues that when the news is constructed, not only reality is described in a particular ideological map, but the audiences are also directed to understand things in particular ways. Hall in Eriyanto (2012) explains, “the work process of creating and producing news is not something neutral, but there is an ideological bias which is practised by journalists consciously or unconsciously.” Based on Hall’s argument, in the context of the news stories broadcasted the BBC Great Debate, BBC producers are assumed to side with the Leave Campaigners on narrating the news stories related to the referendum. The BBC has played a role as a conspiracy agent that hid and/or presented specific desired facts and knowingly tricked the audience for the Leave campaigners’ benefit.

According to Edelman in Eriyanto (ibid), categorisation has great power in influencing public minds and awareness. It is because categorisation can be more touching, flexible, and in touch with the subconscious. The majority of audiences do not realise that the realm of mind and consciousness has been dictated by a particular point of view or perspective and mindset so that they do not think in other dimensions (Eriyanto, 2012). Edelman

argues that often, the categorisations used by the media are wrong or deceive the public. Through the news packages broadcasted on the BBC Great Debate and the referendum’s outcome, it is proven that political decisions are affected by the system (Buchanan, 2019). In this case, the BBC played a role as a political agent that created a system to influence the public’s mind and awareness about their choice regarding the UK’s membership in the EU.

Quoting from the (BBC, n.d.) page, BBC World News is available in more than 200 countries and territories worldwide, with around 300 million households and 1.8 million hotel rooms. In the 2016/2017 period, the BBC claimed that the BBC’s total weekly viewership increased by 8% to 346 million audiences worldwide. The BBC’s Great Debate program, which aired on 20 June 2016, was broadcast live on the channel; BBC One, BBC News, BBC Parliament, BBC World News, the BBC iPlayer application, the official bbc.co.uk page, and the BBC’s official social media accounts. As reported by The Guardian (23/6/2018), the BBC Great Debate program was watched by 12,000 viewers at Wembley Stadium, 3.9 million viewers on BBC One, 1.5 million viewers on BBC News, 1.6 million viewers on BBC World News, and 5.7 million viewers on BBC iPlayer as well as social media (Sparrow & Phipps, 2016). Thus, the BBC Great Debate program was watched live by more than 12.7 million people through various channels.

As reported by Office for National Statistics, the total population in the Kingdom of Great Britain’s territory reached more than 66 million (66,040,229) people in June 2017, up nearly 400 thousand (392,000) people compared to the same period in 2016. It means that the BBC Great Debate program was watched by more than 1/5 of the UK’s total population. Based on

the polling report, there were 354 polls conducted by six institutions in the UK between January and June 2016. A total of 226 (63.84%) polls reported that most of the public voted for the UK to remain in the EU. Only 117 polls (33,05%) said that most of the Britons voted to leave the EU. Another 11 polls (3.11%) showed comparable results. The majority of politicians at the time believed that the referendum result would propose the country to remain a member of the EU.

The referendum's result showing that the majority of Britons chose to leave the EU shocked all parties. This study showed that the news stories on the BBC's Great Debate program favored the Leave campaigners and cornered the Remain campaigners. It also potentially had significant success in directing the UK's public opinion. The categorisations designed by the BBC have had touched the audience's subconscious and succeeded in changing their political choices.

Today, the referendum's impacts can still be seen daily. Scotland and Northern Ireland's politicians threatened to hold a referendum on their political relationships with the UK after Brexit. Several comedians and celebrities from Scotland and Northern Ireland, such as Larry Dean and Fern Brady, often identified themselves as EU citizens instead of British. Anti-immigrant anarchist actions are also increasingly reported on UK television, meaning that the EU referendum results that tend to be influenced by BBC frames had led to new conflicts and symptoms of more considerable changes in the UK's social life.

After almost five years since the announcement of the 2016 EU referendum results, the UK has officially exited the EU on 31 January 2021. However, the UK government failed to impose the trade tariffs. Starting 2021, British travellers need a visa to stay in the

EU countries longer than 90 days within 180 days period. Also, both British and European professionals will not be able to work freely across borders. Many unsettled deals are still under discussion. As predicted by many experts, Brexit does not seem to give many benefits as initially promised by Leave campaigners. As stated in his official resignation speech, former British prime minister David Cameron said he strongly believe that UK would be best to stand with the EU.

CONCLUSION

The BBC Great Debate program was watched live through various channels by more than 12.7 million people or more than 1/5 of the UK's population. Thus, the BBC's frames on the EU referendum had potentially impacted the British public's political decision. The proximity of the BBC's board of directors to companies supporting the Leave campaign could influence the producers' ideology in framing news about the EU referendum. This study validated Thaler's argument that political decisions are affected by the system. As we already discussed above that ideology is a system of beliefs. Mass media has its ideology. They also have the power and capabilities to inject their beliefs into the public.

Despite the numerous criticisms expressed by leading UK academics regarding the BBC Group's alignments with the Leave campaigners in the first three months of the campaign, BBC continued to frame biased stories. Through the news packages broadcasted on the BBC Great Debate, BBC designed a system to construct public opinion by positioning themselves as our party (us) and placing the EU and the Remain campaigners as their party (them). This study has also shown that the BBC had mainly directed public opinion favouring the Leave campaign. The editorial team

had proven to provide a longer duration for Leave campaigners to make statements or explain their argumentations. Meanwhile, the Remain campaigners could only make or explain five statements or arguments.

Based on these findings, it can be seen that the BBC has an ideology that tends to align with the Leave campaign. The news stories broadcasted by the BBC, especially on the BBC Great Debate, potentially designed to influence the Brits' political decision, turning their vote from remain to leave the EU. However, a specific survey on the voters should be conducted to profoundly examine whether or not the BBC Great Debate had significantly changed voters' political decisions. Despite all that, as public-funded media that reach more than 300 million audiences worldwide weekly, the BBC should frame realities more objectively. So that the reality conveyed is not only informative but also educative and somehow provides a more precise understanding for the public. To become a more credible news television, the BBC needs to be more neutral, not explicitly showing its siding with any groups or parties. BBC journalists are also expected to be more open to the public's and academics' criticisms instead of ignoring them and doing the exact opposite.

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