

Abstract

This bachelor thesis deals with the attitude of the British opposition Labour Party towards Brexit. The thesis explores the development of this attitude since the 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum until the 2019 United Kingdom general election and focuses on the reasons for Labour Party's ambivalent stance towards this issue. The main subject of this thesis is the influence of the division of the Labour Party's electorate and the British one-round plurality electoral system on this attitude. The first part of the thesis deals with electoral systems and their influence on party systems and political parties. The second part examines the historical development of Labour Party's stance towards European integration. The goal of this part is to show that the Labour Party had always had an ambivalent and changing view on European integration and that its disunity on this issue is not a new phenomenon. The third part examines the development of Labour Party's position after the 2016 referendum and shows, how the view of the party changed, how the party tried to deal with this issue and what conflicts the party members experienced.

The last chapter deals with the reasons for actions of Labour Party MPs that voted contradictory to the official party line. The first part of this chapter deals with the correlation between opinions of MPs on the EU and the way their constituents voted on the issue of United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU. The second part of this chapter looks on the most important MPs that were in conflict with the party policy. The reasons for Labour Party's stance are many, but the last chapter shows that there is a strong correlation between opinions of MPs on the EU and the opinions of their constituents. In single-member district plurality election systems MPs are accountable not only to their party, but also to the specific voters in their constituency. It is then safe to assume that the divided electorate will have a stronger impact in plurality election systems than in proportional representation systems.

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