

THREAT PERCEPTION AND FEAR AS A MEANS OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN BRITISH POLITICS: THE CASE OF UKIP

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Abstract

The rise of populist far-right parties in Western societies is the phenomenon of last 20 years. The conditions that created such a phenomenon has emerged after 9/11 terrorist attacks and has conspicuously been accelerating as a result of the migration waves originated from Asia and especially from the Middle East. The link between those phenomena stems from the ability of those far right parties to respond the demands of the voters who feel fear and perceive threat because of an increasing number of ‘the others’ (minorities, migrants, refugees...) in Western societies. By provoking threat perception and manufacturing fear, far right parties increase their impact on the mainstream political discourse and their power in the parliaments of Western countries.

This research tracks the possible answers of the question “How was creating threat perception and fear used as a means of political communication during Brexit campaigning process by UKIP?” By this question, the research focuses on the case of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which shaped its discourse by the elements of threat perception and fear and based its Brexit campaign on antagonism, hatred and xenophobia and Euroscepticism. The main reason for selecting UKIP is to explore the increasing influence of far right parties in Europe in terms of constructing the mainstream discourse of European politics. Moreover, far rights parties possess impact on a wider population than their grassroots and voters.

Key Words: Threat Perception, Fear, Political Communication, UKIP, British Politics

1. INTRODUCTION

Western democracies have been experiencing the rise of populist far-right politics in the eyes of Western voters in recent years (Breeze, 2019: 24). It is possible to trace back roots of this phenomenon to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, the phenomenon has been accelerated following the waves of migration from Asia and especially from the Middle East towards Europe and the USA. A significant reason for the trend of rising populist far-right can be the impact of threat perception and fear felt by masses due to rising numbers of ‘the others’ such as minorities, migrants and refugees seen on the streets of those countries. The situation has directed populist parties towards an emotion-oriented political communication strategy which instrumentalised popular anxiety and fear of masses and paved the way for the penetration of negative emotions to daily discourse in politics.

United Kingdom (UK) has been experiencing a similar populist trend in politics, despite its deep-rooted democratic tradition. Such a trend cannot be assessed without referencing the remarkable economic and social transformation over the country over the last fifty years.

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Throughout these years, the British values, attitudes and image has changed dramatically. British people born before 60s and 70s grew up in a social structure that was dominantly white, and had very little dialogue with migrants and individuals from other countries. Moreover, those older generation of British voters also experienced a disputatious atmosphere and high polarisation on the issues such as migration and the danger on national identity caused by migration. Those voters are also aware of the distinctive position of the UK *vis-à-vis* continental Europe as well as the historical place of British nation at the heart of the country. Lastly, such voters were used to live in a society shaped by authoritarian social rules that targeted subjects such as expression, speech, marriage and sex (Ford & Goodwin, 2014: 280).

The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) has been a significant example for the rising populist far-right in Western democracies. The Party was founded by a well-known Eurosceptic academician Alan Sked in 1993. The roots of the Party go back to the Anti-Federalist League – a small political party formed for invalidating the Maastricht Treaty (Merrick, 2017). UKIP did not appear out of nowhere by accident. The party is the political representation of deep divisions that have been present in British society for decades (Ford & Goodwin, 2014: 278).

The Party associated itself with the principles of patriotism, national democracy, political democracy, economic democracy, liberalism and traditionalism (UKIP, n.d.). It is possible to describe the ideology of UKIP with reference to the term of ‘nativism’ which was defined by Mudde (2016) as the combination of xenophobia and nationalism. This ideology is based on the idea that people from the native group (namely the nation) should be the inhabitants of a state and non-native individuals or views (in other words, aliens) pose a severe threat to the homogeneous structure of nation state. Nativism in Western Europe mainly targets migrants and refugees, contrary to Eastern Europe where indigenous minorities are targeted (Mudde, 2016: 296). From this point of view, UKIP is a typically nativist party with xenophobic tendencies and British supremacy-based nationalism against minorities and immigrants in the country.

This research endeavour to find the possible answers for the following question; “*How was creating threat perception and fear used as a means of political communication during Brexit campaigning process by UKIP?*” By this question, the research focuses on the case of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which designed a Brexit campaign based on Britons’ anxieties and fears. By using the rapid sociological change in the country, UKIP has triggered people's perceptions of threats on issues such as migration, terrorism, dependency on the EU and the restrictions on freedom of expression and succeeded in developing radical solution proposals targeting the fears of people who panicked due to these threats. Therefore, the main reason for selecting the case of UKIP is its power to shape the mainstream political discourse independently from its vote share.

Another important reason for choosing the case of UKIP example is to explore the growing influence of far-right parties in Europe in shaping everyday politics in the broader context. As European countries are influenced from macro-level processes such as globalisation and multiculturalism in societies in nearly similar ways, the demand-side of politics in Europe has also been shaped in parallel with those macro-level processes. Significant outcomes of those processes have been authoritarian and populist sentiments, xenophobia, political resentment, and nativism for the demand-side (Mudde, 2007: 230). UKIP operates in a political environment that has experienced similar processes to other Western countries, and responds to those processes nearly the same as other Western populist parties. Therefore, UKIP is a party that can represent other Western far-right populist parties in terms of political communication strategy and discourse construction style.

2. DATA AND THE METHOD

The data used in the research are based on the official “Interim Manifesto: Policies for the People” and the speech of Gerard Batten, the former leader of the party, who served from 2018 to 2019. The manifesto, which was released in September 2018, started with a short speech of Gerard Batten, who briefly introduced the fundamental paradigm of the party. The document continued with the official views of UKIP on 30 different topics ranging from Brexit and immigration policy to animal welfare and taxation. It is significant for systematically revealing the topics which were regarded as the most significant issues by the Party. Moreover, the discourse within the document was used in UKIP’s election campaign materials such as leaflets, banners, posters.

Politics and language are interlinked, since macro-level institutions possess discursive dimension and micro-level human behaviours are types of linguistic action (Chilton, 2004: 4). Emotion’s role is unignorable in the social contexts which are the sites of mutual negotiation and collective decision making as in politics. However, comprehending the linguistic actualisation and discursive function of emotions in mutual negotiations and collective decision making processes could rarely become a concern of discourse studies (Martinovsky, 2015: 138). Alba-Juez and Mackenzie (2019: 18) defined “emotion as a (dynamical) system of language ... whose main function is the expression of the speaker’s feelings, mood or affective experience.” Emotions play the same role within texts that are created for the expression of personal or organisational mood, affective experience and feelings. In political contexts, emotions are an important determinant of the attitudes of the voters and determine the form of the bond that the political parties establish with the voters. In this sense, emotions both contain a discourse and are affected by discourses.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be the most appropriate method to analyse the discourse embedded in emotions on the one hand and the emotions mobilized by the discourse on the other hand. CDA is a problem-oriented, interdisciplinary and eclectic research method which seeks to de-mystify power and ideologies by making systematic investigation of semiotic data (spoken, visual or written). (Wodak & Meyer, 2009: 3). A significant proportion of studies in CDA focuses on the underlying ideology that contributes to the resistance against or reproduction of inequality or dominance (van Dijk, 1995: 18). Therefore, the CDA provides appropriate techniques to identify how the perception of threat is created within the party discourse that triggers people's fears and to reveal the hidden ideology fuelled by the fears of the masses.

3. THREAT PERCEPTION AND FEAR IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Emotions are so powerful that they can shape electoral and political behaviours. The messages in political campaigns can stimulate those emotions (Nai, 2021: 225). Emotional discourses are very powerful, since they hinge on universally hated or valued phenomena (Jerit, 2004: 566). The function of emotions as an instrument of manipulation stems from their power to indoctrinate people with certain views and to restrict people’s ability to rationally perceive (Ozyumenko & Larina, 2020: 913).

The research is based on the argument that creating threat perceptions among voters and thus triggering the negative emotion of fear is an important political communication strategy and discourse construction method for populist far-right parties. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) threat is “a suggestion that something unpleasant or violent will happen, especially if a particular action or order is not followed.” Threat comprises the possibility to hinder the happening of an unpleasant or violent thing and necessitates a particular action to hinder it. When a threat is perceived, an immediate action is necessitated in order to get rid of

an unpleasant outcome. The continuity of the threat perception triggers the feeling of fear. Fear ends only when the threat is eliminated.

Fear, on the other hand, is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) as “an unpleasant emotion or thought that you have when you are frightened or worried by something dangerous, painful, or bad that is happening or might happen.” As Dymond et al. (2015: 561) underlined, “[f]ear is a remarkably adaptive behavioural response, allowing us to predict, react, and adjust to past, present, and future threats.” Fear is a passive emotion and cannot turn into an active driving force without the motivation to get rid of the threat caused by the threat perception. Threat perception underlines the possibility of prevention from the occurrence of risky future incident which is the cause of an existing fear. In other words, fear is the result of being unable to eliminate the threat yet. Rather than being alternative, therefore, fear and threat perception are complementary moods of human and they correspond to different phases within human mood.

The fact that the feeling of fear is an emotional state that people want to escape as soon as possible makes it a useful emotion for populist political parties. Populist far-right parties play the role of a security blanket which people need when they seek to escape from the unpleasant outcomes of a fearful incident that is about to happen. They are necessary for understanding how UKIP presents itself as the only party to annihilate the source of fears and to prevent the occurrence of the risks of future dangers which are listed in the Interim Manifesto.

Manufacturing 'threat perception' is important in that something that does not normally cause fear begins to cause fear after directing people's attention to the dangers of it. For instance, it is possible to claim the existence of a consensus for the negativeness and fearsomeness of terrorism. There is no consensus, however, regarding the negativeness and fearsomeness of the EU. On the contrary, it is accepted as a very beneficial international organisation by a significant proportion of people and actively supported by many political parties. Thusly, manufacture of threat perception is a useful instrument for populist political parties in that it transforms phenomena into something to be feared as can be seen in the case of the EU.

Instrumentalisation of emotions in political discourse and specifically the effects of fear on politics have been discussed by different scholars (Altheide, 2002; Ford, Goodwin & Cutts, 2012; de Vries & Hoffmann, 2016). Especially, the expression of “the politics of fear” has been highly referenced by many scholars (Altheide, 2006; Oates, 2006; Wodak, 2015; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2015). The emotion of fear is a significant instrument for the sustainability of power and dominance. In this sense, Subba (2021: 8-9) stated that “fear precedes politics” and formulated the concept of ‘fearolotical’ as fear plus political. Based on Hobbes’s views about the state of nature, Subba associated sovereignty with fearlessness. According to this viewpoint, fear played a significant role in the justification of state sovereignty over individuals. Furthermore, Altheide (2006) investigated fear with reference to mass media. He detected that the media content and popular culture have been filled up with the feeling of ‘fear’ stemming from the discourse about crime, terrorism and victimisation. At the end, he pointed out that the authorities consciously support the spread of ‘fear’ in order to stimulate people’s need for personal security and to control them through security propaganda. In a similar vein, Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2015) studied on how Israel created the “Israeli security theology” and the politics of fear which were used for legitimising Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, concealing violence targeting Palestinians and perpetuating the current power structure. The study conducted by Oates (2006) about the effects of 'threat of terrorism' on recent election campaigns in the Russia, the UK and the USA showed that fear factor is a significant determinant for leaders' ability to entrench their political positions. Different from those studies, on the other hand, de Vries and Hoffmann (2016) founded that fears based on globalisation triggered a

change in people's preferences from mainstream parties to populist parties by conducting a research on 28 EU member states. In other words, the fears of people in EU member states cause mainstream politics to lose power.

It is possible to find significant studies in the literature that emphasise the effects of people's threat perception on politics (Gadarian, 2010; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012; Wodak, 2021; Brandt & Bakker, 2022). Gadarian (2010) argued that especially after the September 11 attacks, the media's presentation of threatening information and reminder images led people to support the policies advocated by political leaders, and especially the US President. In this sense, concerns about terrorism push citizens to defend the hawkish foreign policy views presented in news containing threat perception. Wodak's (2021: 186-187) emphasis on conspiracy theories is significant as they produce a sort of threat perception constructed by unreal scenarios whose main actors are the perpetrators such as bankers, parties, lobbies and 'the others'. In their study of 11 European countries, Lucassen and Lubbers (2012) discovered that "the perceived ethnic cultural threats" are a key determinant of voters' support for far-right parties.

Brandt and Bakker (2022), on the other hand, disagreed with the prevailing view that any perceived threat increases support for far-right parties. They argued that different threat perceptions may lead people to different political preferences, for example to left-wing parties when a threat is perceived due to the lack of healthcare. Moreover, they pointed out that the studies in the literature mostly focus on the issues like terrorism as a source of perceived threat. They underlined that the scholars did not pay enough attention to issues such as climate change, lack of privacy, food shortages, racism or the police which are also a source of perceived threat.

One of the arguments on which the research is based is that fear and threat perception alone cannot explain people's emotion-based political preferences. As a contribution to those studies in the literature, therefore, this research combined two negative moods of human, namely threat perception and fear, in order to understand people's emotion-based political preferences which are the result of human tendency to get rid of future risks and dangers. Moreover, this research directs attention from the ruling parties to the populist parties in the opposition. Thus, negative human moods, namely threat perception and fear, become a part of political campaigns that reshape the mainstream discourse while in opposition, instead of being included in an equation that reinforces the power of the sovereigns.

4. THREAT PERCEPTION AND FEAR IN UKIP'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE

UKIP's Interim Manifesto began with the speech of Gerard Batten, who served as the party leader between 2018 and 2019. In this introduction part, Batten listed possible threats British people could possibly face with.

UKIP is always at its best when it's at its most radical. It is strongest when it is bold and leading the political agenda. We have done this on numerous occasions in the past. UKIP set the agenda on leaving the European Union, on introducing a limited and controlled immigration system, and opposing Islamic literalist and fundamentalist extremism. UKIP will set the agenda on going forward into a post-Brexit world. UKIP remains the only party willing to discuss the issues of real importance to most people. UKIP is the only real opposition.

UKIP will promote and defend our national and individual freedoms. We stand for freedom from the European Union and the right to live once again under our own traditional freedoms and liberties, together with the right once again to be proud of our great country. We are determined to protect our freedom of speech

and the right to speak our minds without fear of the politically correct thought-police knocking on our doors. (UKIP, 2018: 1)

The main focus within the speech of Gerard Batten is the capability and power of UKIP in terms of determining the political agenda of the country. Manifesting the capability and power to determine the political agenda in a country corresponds to the discourse that the Party possesses more capacity to lead the country than other political parties possess. It is also a message that shows that the Party is beyond the expectations of the British voters. Being beyond the expectations means that the Party has a lot to do if the Party wins the future elections.

In the official texts of UKIP, the EU is often associated with the situation of ‘being out of control’ while post-Brexit era is associated with the situation of ‘having the control’. ‘Being out of control’ triggers the perception of threat about the future of the country, since ‘being unable to control the present’ refers to ‘being unable to control the dangers in the future’. Thusly, an uncertain future is associated with the feeling of insecurity, and accordingly with fear. On the other hand, ‘having control’ is associated with certainty and security. Consequently, having control on the future of the country in post-Brexit period is a significant promise of UKIP which simultaneously increases the reliability of UKIP and minimises Britons’ threat perception.

Batten’s statements about standing for “the right to live once again under our own traditional freedoms and liberties” and standing for “the right once again to be proud of our great country” can be seen as a reference to the ‘magnificent history’ of the country. A strong emphasis on traditionality of British people’s historical gains such as freedoms and liberties and on historical greatness of the country aims at reviving the emotion of nostalgia regarding the period when the country was called “the empire on which the sun never sets”. As Potter (2021) pointed out, nostalgia is basically about people’s current feelings of unhappiness and disquiet. It is also about people’s threat perception about a future in which people may feel anxious and unhappy.

4.1. European Union as a Threat

UKIP is definitely the most Eurosceptic political party in the UK and the *raison d’être* for the party has been Eurosceptism since 1993 when it was founded (Tournier-Sol, 2015: 134). Therefore, depicting the European Union (EU) as a matter of fear for British people and as a threat to the independence of the UK was one of the key discourses within UKIP’s political communication strategy during the process of the Brexit.

In short, UKIP stands for: no more money to be paid to the EU, no more EU laws imposed upon us, no more jurisdiction over us by the European Court and no more open-border EU immigration.

Irrespective of whatever ‘Withdrawal Agreement’ HM Government agrees with the EU, UKIP will continue to fight for the UK’s total independence from the EU, and to fully restore the UK’s former status as an independent, self-governing, sovereign state.

Britain’s international standing will be enhanced by leaving the EU as it will be able to act independently...

Outside the European Union Britain will be a more prosperous nation. It will regain control of its trade policy, free business from unnecessary regulation, regain control of its agricultural industry and restore its fishing industry. (UKIP, 2018: 2)

In the quotes above, Britain's situation as an EU member is compared to an imaginary post-Brexit era, and the vision of a future adorned with purely positive images forms the basis of UKIP's political discourse. The main emphasis is on the dependence of the UK on the EU. Being dependent on the will of an actor outside the country triggers people's feelings of insecurity and lack of control. Instead of regarding themselves as active subjects capable of eliminating future risks, they feel themselves as passive and powerless objects. At this point, UKIP presents itself as the strongest candidate to regain control.

By emphasising the former status of the UK as a self-governing, sovereign, independent state; a hierarchy is also constructed between the historical UK and the current UK which is a member of the EU. The historical UK is portrayed as the superior *vis-à-vis* the current UK and the main reason of UK's current inferiority is explained as the dependence on the EU. Regarding the historical UK as 'the superior' corresponds to the construction of a discourse which positions the identity of British as the privileged identity. According to this discourse, from the moment the British started to act jointly with these other countries by becoming a member of the EU, they lost their historical superiority that had been forming their identities. The fear of not being able to return to those glorious days of the past again becomes a determinant of political choice for the British electorate.

While leaving the EU membership is described with reference to the metaphor of being outside, EU membership is implicitly associated with the metaphor of being inside. Being inside represents the lack of freedom of free movement that a person has outside. Being inside is equal to being surrounded by walls for people. When people are surrounded by walls, they cannot escape in case of danger. Those walls correspond to the rules, regulations and norms of the EU. This is similar to the situation in which people in a walled prison are under the control of rules and regulations of the state. Being outside, on the other hand, represents immensity and unrestraint. Compared to people who have to stay indoors, people outside can more easily take precautions against threats targeting their own lives. For the UK, thusly, staying in the EU corresponds to a passive helplessness, while being outside the EU provides the freedom to act against threats that cause fear.

4.2. Migrants as a Threat

As population flows increase as a result of changes in demographic structures of countries, regime breakdowns in totalitarian/authoritarian countries, economic integration around the globe and easier border crossing from underdeveloped countries to rich countries; the issue of immigration has emerged as one of the most contentious topics in the political agenda of wealthy democracies (Mughan & Paxton, 2006: 341). The failure of governments in the UK to respond British people's concern about the issue of immigration rates created a representation gap which has been filled by UKIP. Consequently, the interconnected Euroscepticism and anti-immigration fears have resulted in a dramatic rise in support for UKIP, the most prominent representative of anti-immigration and anti-EU position on the political spectrum (Evans & Mellon, 2019: 83-84).

On the other hand, UKIP dominated the regions which are composed of predominantly British-born population. This situation shows that the attitude to immigration is based on fear and discontent, but it may not always be based on a direct experience (Geddes, 2014: 289). Within this scope, construction of an anti-immigration discourse in order to stir up threat perception of people who have not experienced a direct interaction with migrants or refugees becomes an important political strategy for parties like UKIP which intimidate voters with future dangers of immigration.

Mass uncontrolled immigration has been extremely damaging to Britain. We have imported cheap labour by the million. This not only exploits migrants but

depresses the wages and living standards of those at the bottom end of the economic scale, and drives up property prices and rental costs. In 1997 the official British population figure was 58 million people. The figure in 2017 was 66 million. A recent report showed that the 6.6 million population growth between 2000-2016 was 80% due to migrants and births to migrants. Such a rate of increase is simply unsustainable in one of the most densely populated countries in the world.

UKIP believes that the age of uncontrolled mass-immigration must come to an end. We have open borders with the EU but successive British governments have also failed to control immigration from outside of the EU. UKIP will introduce a selective and limited Australian style points-based immigration system. Immigration for permanent settlement must be strictly limited.

Temporary immigration for workers on work permits and students will be both strictly controlled and time-limited. (UKIP, 2018: 4)

Most of the discussions on the topic of immigration aims at triggering people's threat perception about an uncertain and undesired transformation in daily public life of Britons. In such discussions, the main source of fear and threat perception is that the uncertain and undesired transformation is caused by the inclusion of newcomers to British social life. Those migrants carry the risk of changing Britons' daily habits and decrease Britons' shares from public rights. Moreover, such fear and threat perception is not limited to public sphere. People become more concerned about their private life, since migrants are presented as threats for work opportunities and living standards of Britons.

It is possible to detect a hierarchy between British citizens and migrants in the Interim Manifesto. While Britishness is positioned as the core identity of the country, migrants are regarded as the others that need to be carefully selected and strictly controlled. The dichotomy between native Britons and newcomers is asymmetrical. Discussions about immigration positions migrants as passive objects, therefore they have no control over their own destiny. Decisions are taken on behalf of them, but independently from them. They are newly arrived *vis-à-vis* natives. On the other hand, native Britons are active subjects. They constitute the side that is expected to have the control. They have power to determine the status of others (migrants, refugees, temporary workers, foreign students etc.).

The discourse within the text hinges on the dichotomy between 'having control' and 'being uncontrolled'. Power comprises control, in other words, power manifests itself by means of the control of one group over other groups (van Dijk, 1993: 254). From this point forth, 'being uncontrolled' signifies passiveness and incapability *vis-à-vis* incidents and accordingly causes the feeling of insecurity among British people. Having control, on the other hand, corresponds to an active capability to lead and direct the routes of incidents. As successive governments and especially the incumbent government are associated with incapability and passiveness on immigration issue, UKIP represents activeness and capability to lead the immigration process. Such activeness and capability is supported by using the words "selective", "limited", and "strictly". The promise of the Party becomes more concrete by presenting the Australian style points-based immigration system as a model for the UK.

4.3. Islamic Literalist and Fundamentalist Extremism as a Threat

The anti-migrant discourse analysed in the previous part is rooted within a wider conflict on the site of religion. Although the discourse of UKIP mostly emphasises British identity, the identity of Europeans also becomes an element of identity when it comes to non-Christians. In his speeches, Gerard Batten positioned Christianity to the hearth of unique character of

Europeanness. For him, thus, religion plays a vital role in terms of offering a site which can distinguish ‘us (in other words, Europeans)’ from ‘them (in other words, the non-European non-Christian migrants)’ (Saira, 2019: 15).

It is now accepted that one of the key factors that drove the cover up of this phenomenon was adherence by the authorities to political correctness and the fear of identifying the vast majority of the perpetrators as Muslims. (UKIP, 2018: 13)

The worst excesses of a literalist interpretation of Islamic doctrine has seen unprecedented acts of terrorism in Britain and across the world. This can only be countered with practical measures.

UKIP will legislate to ban the overseas funding of mosques and imams. A large proportion of UK mosques are funded from countries such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, who export their extremist ideology to the UK.

UKIP will end mass uncontrolled immigration, and under a security-based screening policy we restrict any limited migration from Islamic countries to those people we can be sure, as far as possible, do not follow a literalist and extremist interpretation of Islam.

Islamic extremism is actively fostered in HM Prisons at state expense. Islamic gangs hold sway in some prisons and non-Islamic prisoners are converting for their own protection. UKIP would introduce the separation of prisoners or prisons exclusively for Islamic prisoners who promote extremism or try to convert non-Islamic prisoners.

UKIP would repeal the legislation that gives legal recognition for Sharia law courts.

Islamic extremism is an on-going problem that will take generations to resolve, and effective policy ideas will have to be developed whoever is in power. (UKIP, 2018: 14).

Laclau (2005: 83) underlined that “populism requires the dichotomic division of society into two camps”. The axis in such a division can be based on the status of being a native or a migrant as discussed under the previous part. Or such an axis can be based on the origin, religion or sect of people. The quotes above create such a dichotomic division by positioning ‘literalist and extremist interpretation of Islam’ on the side of the ‘others’. Terrorism caused by ‘literalist and extremist interpretation of Islamic doctrine’ is the most severe source of fear throughout the political campaign of UKIP. Threat directly targets people’s life. Threat perception is internationally strengthened by giving reference to the world public opinion by the expression of “across the world”. Such an international reference enhances the justifiability of the claim about the existence of threat.

A long term threat is perceived because of the statement of “Islamic extremism is an on-going problem that will take generations to resolve.” A long term threat perception necessitates strict long term policies and continuity of the party that promises to carry out those policies. UKIP assures British voters that it is the most appropriate candidate for this mission because it premeditates substantial steps such as restricting migration from Islamic countries, repealing the legislation regarding legal recognition of Sharia law and separating non-Muslim prisoners from Muslim prisoners. Such a promise transforms people’s fear into reliance in terms of being protected from terrorist acts and decreases the perceived threat about that something unpleasant

will happen in the future. In other words, the guarantee that a particular action or order will be followed in the future is given in order to hinder possible risks of Islamic extremism.

Labelling Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan as the funders of mosques and imams in the UK adds an international dimension to threat perception about extremist terrorism. In other words, threat takes its source from the outside of the country. A threat originated from the outside necessitates an alliance between different segments of the society at home. Such discourse of “united society” creates a chance for populist parties like UKIP to take role in the unification of society.

4.4. Politically Correct Thought-Police Knocking on the Doors as a Threat

Political correctness is defined as “the deliberate avoidance of language use and behaviour which may be perceived to be either derogatory or excluding of a political minority” (Buchanan, 2018). However, the term has got a pejorative meaning by corresponding to “an obsessive avoidance of language or behaviour which might be perceived as offensive or discriminatory” (Chandler & Munday, 2011: 326). In other words, avoiding the risk of discriminating or offending someone might cause a paranoia that might result in excessive attention paid to language use or behaviour to other people. In the Interim Manifesto, therefore, UKIP declared discontent from such an excessive use of language or behaviour in politics to those people who have the potential to pose a threat to the country.

UKIP believes in allowing our people their traditional rights of freedom of conscience, liberty and speech. These rights have been eroded over recent decades by the burgeoning concepts of so-called ‘hate speech’, driven by the political doctrine of Cultural Marxism, which seeks to close down discussion and alternative views, so that only one extreme left-wing ‘politically correct’ viewpoint is allowed.

...

UKIP will repeal the Equality Act 2010 which gives special rights and privileges to certain groups with ‘protected characteristics’ and revert to pre-existing equality laws. For example, it allowed the BBC to advertise BAME (Black Asian Minority Ethnic) only internships and training schemes – thereby discriminating against white youngsters. Our people should be treated equally under the same laws. ... (UKIP, 2018: 16).

Political correctness was regarded as a severe threat for traditional rights such as freedom of speech, conscience and liberty in the Interim Manifesto. Describing those rights as “traditional” corresponds to an effort to associate those rights with the history of the UK. Therefore, the threat on those rights targets a historical gain that people formerly had got. The expression “Politically correct thought-police knocking on the doors” was an expression used by Gerard Batten in order to create an emotion of fear by evoking people’s concern when their doors are knocked by a police.

In the text, the doctrine of Cultural Marxism, which restricts alternative standpoints and hinders public debate, becomes the main responsible for the threat against those traditional rights. The concept of ‘hate-speech’ is described with the adjectives of ‘burgeoning’ and ‘so-called’. The adjective of ‘burgeoning’ points out the state of ‘being newly emerging’. Therefore, the adjective gives the message that the threat on free speech is newly emerging and there is still time to neutralise the threat. The adjective of ‘so-called’ intends to trivialise the word it signifies. Thus, the concept of ‘hate-speech’ becomes a product of a false phenomenon that does not refer to a real circumstance.

Equality Act 2010, which UKIP declared to repeal, is presented as the responsible legal legislation for causing inequality and discrimination in society. Thus, the fear of inequality and discrimination is spread by creating antagonist dichotomy in the society between white British people and certain protected groups defined as BAME (Black Asian Minority Ethnic). According to the text, 'being protected' has a disruptive effect on the social hierarchy. Therefore, a threat is felt by those who perceives a danger against their historical position in the hierarchy of society. It is the fear of losing historical gains granted by the British Empire *vis-à-vis* those protected groups that are not accepted as a part of such historicalness of the Empire.

5. CONCLUSION

The security demands of the Western voters, who have been experiencing perturbation and anxiety with the increasing waves of immigration towards Western countries, have led to the emergence of new trends in the last 20 years of Western politics. Political parties have succeeded to the extent that they can transform their rhetoric according to changing voter demands. The rise of populist far-right parties in the West in the last 20 years should also be evaluated within this framework. The main goal of this research has been determined as the comprehension of the political communication strategy and discourse construction style which paved the way for the rise of populist far-right politics in Western countries.

UKIP, which drew attention with its discourse and influence especially in the Brexit process, is an important case in terms of representing the rising populist far-right in the West in many subjects such as ideology, communication style, discourse and action. Similar to other far-right parties, UKIP has introduced a political communication strategy targeting the negative feelings of the society and has often included elements of threat and fear in the political discourse it has constructed. EU, migrants, Islamic literalist and fundamentalist extremists and politically correct thought-police were presented by UKIP as the major factors from which British people should perceive threat and feel fear.

As a contribution to the previous studies in the literature, the perception of threat and the emotion of fear were considered as complementary moods of people in this study. Threat perception triggers the feeling of fear. The perceived threat constitutes the concrete basis of people's fear. One of the most important political communication tactics of populist parties, and therefore of UKIP, is to create an image of an uncertain and dangerous future built on current events and situations. Both threat perception and fear target the tendency of the masses to escape from the uncertainty of the future. Those current events and situations, on the other hand, are largely presented on the basis of disinformation and/or imperfect data. Therefore, the perceived threat is the result of the political discourses expertly constructed by the populist far-right parties.

In UKIP's discourse, the EU was regarded as a threat that had undermined the independence of the UK and its ability to make decisions that prioritize the interests of the country. A country that cannot make decisions independently will not be able to take political steps to eliminate future risks. Fear caused by the sense of helplessness leads voters to the influence of political discourse that promises to take back control of the country. Migrants and Islamic fundamentalist extremists, on the other hand, represented a more concrete and directly observable threat perception for voters. It was the everyday life of Britons that is perceived to be under threat. People who came across newcomers with different lifestyles and habits coming to their neighbourhood perceived this situation as a threat to the life they had been living for years. The threat of newcomers, who were thought to be extremists, was directly related to human life. Such a threat perception directly restricts people's acts and behaviours in the public sphere. When people declared an objection to those threats or to policies that created those threats, they would face with the police that poses a threat for their free speech.

When people are faced with risks in the near future, they are directed to the political party that makes the most radical political proposals to prevent these risks and declares that they are ready to take action to implement these proposals. During the process of Brexit, UKIP triggered feelings of fear among British voters by means of the political discourse that drew attention to the threats caused by the EU and waves of immigration towards the UK. Thus, the main motivation for many British voters became to avoid the uncertain dangers of the future.

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