

République tunisienne
Ministère de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche scientifique
Université de Sfax
Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines



RU RECHERCHES UNIVERSITAIRES FLSHS

ISSN 2811-6585 (version en papier) / E-ISSN - 3125-9146

Academic Research

مجلة بحوث جامعية

Revue d'études littéraires, linguistiques et de sciences humaines

Numéro 22

(2026)

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Recherches Universitaires

Revue à comité de lecture publiée par la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines – Université de Sfax

Academic Research

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ISSN – 2811-6585 / E-ISSN - 3125-9146

Numéro 22 (2026)

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Remerciements

Les membres du comité de rédaction de la revue tiennent à remercier les évaluateurs académiques dont les noms suivent, qui ont contribué, par leurs compétences et leur expertise, à l'aboutissement de ce numéro.

Votre professionnalisme a été un élément essentiel à la réussite de ce numéro de la revue.

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Nigel Farage, Reform UK and post-Brexit Britain: Reshaping British Politics and ‘Fixing’ a Country ‘Damaged’ by Immigration

Fathi Bourmeche
(University of Sfax)

Abstract

This paper argues that Nigel Farage, leader of Reform UK would reshape British politics, claiming to ‘fix’ post-Brexit Britain ‘damaged’ by immigration. Farage pledged to gain back control of a broken country by relieving Britons of the legacy of the two major parties, namely Labour and the Conservatives, blaming them for ‘damaging’ Britain by allowing a huge number of immigrants, particularly in the aftermath of Brexit. Farage claimed that his party would replace the Conservatives, thus reshaping the political landscape. The corpus of the study consists of two speeches delivered at different periods of time. The first one is Farage’s maiden speech, delivered in the UK Parliament on 23 July 2024. The second speech was delivered on 28 March 2025 in Birmingham at a rally for their local election due on 2 May 2025. The speeches are analysed using Fairclough’s and Fairclough’s (2012) practical reasoning framework adopted in Political Discourse Analysis and juxtaposed to YouGov polls dealing with the same issues. Findings suggest that Farage has emerged as an influential politician who would reshape Britain’s political landscape for years to come, validating the main argument of the study.

Keywords: Brexit; Farage; immigration; parties; Reform UK

Introduction

Nigel Farage has been considered as one of the most controversial figures in British politics for decades. He was leader of the extreme right-wing party, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), from 2006 to 2009 and once again from 2010 to 2016. As UKIP leader, he gained popularity at the expense of the two major parties, namely the Conservatives and Labour, particularly at a time when Euroscepticism in Britain was at its peak. Such a situation enhanced, according to Wall (2020, 253), “the emerging political force represented” by Farage and UKIP. Indeed, during the campaign for the Brexit referendum in June 2016, Farage emerged as one of the most popular politicians among the Leave camp who, in Whitely et al.’s (2023, 6) view, “provided [British voters] with powerful cues to vote leave”. One of the key issues that Farage, and the Leave camp as a whole, emphasized during such a campaign was mass

immigration, particularly the influx of Eastern Europeans, promising to stop such an influx by leaving the EU. In the aftermath of Brexit, Farage claimed that Britain gained its independence from Brussels, thus ridding itself from an obsolete institution, namely the EU.

Bourmeche (2023a), for instance, argued that Farage appeared in the aftermath of Brexit as a populist politician who would potentially have a major impact on the British as well as the European political landscape. Indeed, Farage's popularity seemed to have increased, particularly after the foundation of the Brexit party in 2019, renamed Reform UK in 2021. He became Brexit leader on 22 March 2019, one week before Britain failed to withdraw from the EU, initially scheduled on 29 March of the same year under Theresa May's Conservative government. Farage wanted to make sure that Britain would leave the EU for good, though he was a member of the EU Parliament (MEP) from 1999 to 2020. Bourmeche's (2023a) argument was also confirmed by Whitely et al. (2023, 89), claiming that Farage "was a classic and experienced populist politician who was adept at leveraging his high profile".

Farage as well as the Brexit party gained more and more popularity during the Brexit negotiations, first under May and then under Boris Johnson. This popularity gained momentum on 22 May 2019 when the Brexit party overcame the Conservatives and Labour in the polls, with 34% of the votes. Among Leave voters, the party was more popular, jumping from 4% in March 2019 to 37% in May of the same year. It was also pointed out that the Brexit party was appealing to Conservative voters, 30% of whom switched to the party on the eve of the 2019 European elections (Whitely et al. 2023).

In this view, the paper seeks to carry out an in-depth investigation into Farage and Reform UK for a better understanding of their growing impact on British politics. The main objective is to learn about the changing nature of British politics in a post-Brexit era, particularly in terms of the two-party system. More recently, Farage and his party have gained more and more popularity among British voters as well as politicians, translated in the results of the last British general election, held on 4 July 2024. Reform UK secured four seats in the House of Commons, with one seat won by Richard Tice who had been a long-term donor and Conservative Member of Parliament

(MP) until 2019 when he sponsored the foundation of the Brexit party and became its leader for a while before Farage. The aim of the study is therefore to answer two research questions. The first one is “How has Farage managed to attract more and more British voters to Reform UK?” The second question is “What is the impact of Farage and his party on the British two-party system?” By answering these two questions, one would be able to gain a better understanding of their impact on British politics, presumably threatened by third parties and ushering in the end of the two-party system.

1. Theoretical Framework

The methodological instrument adopted in this study is Fairclough’s and Fairclough’s (2012) *practical reasoning* framework. *Practical reasoning* has been developed as a “response to practical problems which are addressed to us as agents who are acting in particular circumstances and aiming to achieve various goals” (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, 35). Such a frame is a conductive argument which involves “the weighing of pros and cons of various considerations that are thought to have a bearing on the claim, and the conclusion is drawn ‘on balance’” (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, 38). The structure of *practical reasoning* consists of five interconnected components:

- 1) Claim for Action (*A*)
- 2) Goal (*G*)
- 3) Values (*V*)
- 4) Circumstances (*C*)
- 5) Means-Goal (*M-G*)

Claim for Action (*A*) suggests that the agent should presumably do *A*. As for Goal (*G*), the agent’s goal is a future state of affairs (*G*) in which the agent’s actual concerns or value commitments are realized. The agent would be concerned with the realization of Value (*V*), or that he should be concerned with the realization of *V*. In this sense, *V* designates the agent’s actual concerns or the agent’s value commitments. Some of these commitments could be duties, promises, socially recognized (moral) values and norms. For Circumstances (*C*), the agent’s context of action is composed of two relevant facts: a) natural facts; b) social, institutional facts. As for

Means-Goal ($M-G$), action A is the means that will presumably take the agent from C to G in accordance with V .

Fairclough's and Fairclough's (2012) structure is relevant to the analysis of Farage's narrative in that *practical reasoning* would enable one to gain a better understanding of the main arguments used by such a controversial politician, particularly in post-Brexit Britain. The main purpose is to test the validity of such a frame on Farage's two speeches delivered at two different times and contexts. More details about these speeches will be provided below. Particular focus is on Farage's claims for action in the two speeches and the supporting arguments, including his goals and considerations. Attention is also paid to the implications of the whole plan for action on the British political scene, particularly in terms of the two-party system.

The corpus of the study consists of two speeches delivered in the aftermath of Brexit, both of which were downloaded from YouTube in video format. The first one, a 9-minute-48-second speech, is Farage's maiden speech delivered in the British Parliament on 23 June 2024 in London, as a Member of Parliament (MP) for Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, England. Such a speech is significant for Farage who made history by winning four seats in the House for his newly-created party. The second one is his intervention at a rally for local elections in Birmingham, England, on 28 March 2025, claimed to be the largest political conference since WWII. This speech is also significant because both Farage and Reform UK were doing well in opinion polls and gaining more and more affiliations to the party. The whole video was more than two hours, as it involved a number of speakers, including Reform UK candidates for local elections due in May 2025 and supporters. Farage's intervention was the longest one, lasting for 01:45 minutes, covering various issues and themes, including his claim to replace the Conservatives on the British political scene. It is noteworthy that there were no transcripts of the speeches available online; the analysis was based on repeated and careful watching and listening, with particular emphasis on Farage's claims and goals.

2. Review of the Existing Empirical Literature

A number of scholars were interested in the rise of Farage as an influential figure on the British political landscape, particularly in

terms of its relationship with the EU. For example, Goodwin and Caitlin (2015, 2), emphasized the fact that Farage, ever since his joining UKIP in the early 1990s, has “always believed that he was at his best when he was out on the campaign trail—pounding pavements, knocking on doors, speaking at meetings, and making his case” against the EU. Farage’s popularity increased during the Brexit referendum, boosted by his move to the Brexit party, with a significant impact on British politics. This statement was confirmed by Ali (2022, 11), arguing that the “nasty insularity and thoughtless single-mindedness of Farage’s politics” was obvious in his move from UKIP, “a party that he defined with his leadership and presence,” to the Brexit party; in Ali’s (2022, 77) view, Farage has been a “Brexit-obsessed politician” who has associated Britain’s withdrawal from the EU with its rebirth, regaining its sovereignty from Brussels. In other words, by leaving the EU, Britain would no longer be part of Europe, thus regaining its position as a world power.

Crick’s (2022) *One Party After Another: The Disruptive Life of Nigel Farage* focused on the emergence of Farage as a controversial and influential figure on the British political landscape. Crick (2022) pointed out that Farage has become one of the most significant politicians in British history in the sense that his power has overcome that of a number of leaders of the two major parties, namely the Conservatives and Labour. Such power, in Crick’s (2022) view has exceeded that of a few British prime ministers. However, Crick (2022) claimed that it would be very unlikely that Farage would win a seat in the House of Commons or become a government minister.

Bourmeche (2023a) was also interested in Farage’s emergence as an influential figure in British as well as European politics in the aftermath of Brexit. Bourmeche’s (2023a, 154) main argument was that Farage “emerged as a populist leader who was against the EU [...], calling the other EU member states to follow Britain and split from such an institution”; he also revealed that Farage’s “plan was to regenerate Europe in the shape of sovereign national entities with strong economic relations rather than political ones”. With his historic performance in the 2024 British general election, becoming an MP and leader of Reform UK in the House of Commons, Farage seemed to have gained more popularity, particularly with his promise to reform a broken Britain ‘damaged’ by Labour and the Conservatives.

Thus, the paper aims at contributing to the existing literature on the subject, throwing more light on the impact of Farage as a newly-elected MP as well as his party, Reform UK, on the British political scene in relation to the two-party system. Firstly, it seeks to refute Crick's (2022) idea that Farage would not be able to win a seat in the House despite his growing popularity. Secondly, it seeks to expand on Bourmeche's (2023a) argument that Farage would regenerate Europe by revealing that he would potentially replace the Conservatives, and possibly mark the end of the two-party system.

3. Findings

An examination of the corpus of this study revealed that Farage's narrative included a number of claims and goals closely associated with Fairclough's and Fairclough's (2012) *practical reasoning* framework. The table below offers more details about such a correlation through some examples of Farage's claims and goals. Such claims were basically meant to criticize the governments of the two major political parties, namely Labour and the Conservatives, for 'damaging' Britain. Farage argued that Britain has been broken due to the inefficient policies adopted by these two parties for a long time. He claimed that both parties failed to keep their promises articulated in most of their election manifestos, particularly in relation to handling immigration. As leader of Reform UK, one of his main goals is to handle all of these issues, 'fixing' a country 'damaged' by mass immigration. His first goal would be winning the majority of local elections; his second goal would be winning the next British general election. The implication is that Farage and Reform UK aimed to gain more and more British supporters and dominate the British political scene, potentially putting an end to the two-party system. Indeed, such claims and goals could be elaborated into two major interconnected themes. The first one is *Farage: A Leader of a Third Party Reshaping British Politics*. The second

theme is *Farage and Reform UK: 'Fixing' a Country 'Damaged' by Immigration*.

Table 1: Fairclough's and Fairclough's Practical Reasoning and Farage's arguments

Fairclough's practical reasoning	Farage's arguments
Claims	• Labour and the Conservatives 'damaged' Britain (Speech one and two) • The two major parties were silent about the most important issues (Speech one) • Heavy taxes on working-class people (Speech one and two) • Population explosion due to immigration (Speech one and two)
Goals	• 'Fix' broken Britain (Speech two) • 'Fix' local governments (Speech two) • Become the biggest party (Speech two) • Win the general election (Speech two) • Handle mass migration (Speech one and two) • Leave the ECHR (Speech one and two)

Source: Author's compilation

3.1 Farage: A Leader of a Third Party Reshaping British Politics

Farage made history on 4 July 2024 and became Reform UK MP for Clacton for the first time, as already mentioned, potentially hoping that Reform UK would be the biggest party, thus reshaping British politics. In his maiden speech, Farage pointed out that his party is outnumbered in the House, compared to the European Parliament where he had enjoyed a significant majority, in addition to incentives such as a driver and large sums of money.¹ Farage explained his party's majority in the European Parliament by arguing that so many people there supported Brexit then. Ironically, Farage suspected that a great number of British politicians adored the EU because of such incentives. In the same vein, he argued that the 2024 British parliament has been dominated by Remainers, namely the politicians who voted to remain in the EU in June 2016. He even described them as Rejoiners, given that they seemed to have regretted Brexit and wished they could re-join the EU.

However, in his second speech, Farage claimed that Reform UK has been growing in a significant way, emphasizing his intention to professionalize the party, compared to Labour and the Conservatives. Farage pointed out that Reform UK has been led by young, dedicated professionals, joined by new people on board. He felt proud of his reliance on Zia Yusuf, a very successful businessman, as Chairman of his party. Though they started with no formal branches, Farage revealed that Reform UK has 400 branches all over England. This made his party grow significantly, claiming that its membership jumped from 25.000 paid members in 2024 to 220.000 members in 2025, doubling the size of the Conservatives and nearing Labour's. Indeed, Farage claimed that Reform UK has been democratized, with a new constitution and an elected board,

¹ The 2024 British general election yielded a Labour landslide majority of 170 seats, winning 411 seats out of 650, compared to the Conservatives who secured 121 seats. It was a historic victory for Labour, regaining power after about fourteen years of Conservative rule. Such a majority was very close to Tony Blair's landslide victory in May 1997, defeating the Conservatives under John Major after 18 years in power. Labour then had 179 seats majority, winning a total number of 418 seats out of 659, compared to the Conservatives who won 165 seats, their lowest figure since 1906.

arguing that he kept all of the promises articulated in his 2024 manifesto.

As a response to the criticism over his ownership of two thirds of the party's shares, Farage argued that he then wanted to protect a small party from being infiltrated by bad people. But, as Reform UK has become mature, he declared that all of his shares would be offered to the people, emphasizing again that he is not a man of words. Equally important, Farage claimed that his party is based on values binding people across all the segments of the population in Britain, highlighting the fact that they have a wide range of voters, including old, middle-aged as well as young people, professionals and so on. He explained such a variety by arguing that his party believes in meritocracy. In other words, Farage and his party would not care about people's backgrounds, embracing anyone irrespective of the colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Farage claimed that Reform UK would like to live in a country that treats all the people in the same manner provided they embrace British values and way of life.

In Farage's view, successive British governments severely 'damaged' Britain in many respects, given the inefficient policies adopted by both Labour and the Conservatives. In his first speech, Farage expressed his happiness and pride in belonging to a very attractive place in England, Clacton-on-Sea in Essex, England, where a number of people would spend their holidays on its nice beaches and other lovely areas. However, he was concerned with people's feelings in such a constituency as well as other people across the country, as they no longer trust the government. Farage claimed that the level of poverty and deprivation was very high among working-class people. Although he admitted that there were some wealthy areas in his constituency, Farage argued that the area of Jaywick, for instance, included the most deprived people in the country.

Farage recalled that, during his 2024 electoral campaign, while knocking on doors in his constituency, he found people who lived in extreme poverty, failing to make ends meet. He was therefore critical of the benefits system, trapping these people into poverty, an argument reiterated in his second speech in which he emphasized that his decision to come back from retirement and lead Reform UK

was not because he needed a career; he was then leading a happy life with his grandchildren and travelling to the US, for instance, to meet friends and influential people there. However, his decision was driven by his genuine belief that Britain needed a party to stop the decline caused by Labour and the Conservatives. He claimed that these two parties turned Britain into a totally different country from the one they loved before. He therefore declared that Reform UK is full of optimism and potential to 'fix' everything and get Britain back on track.

Farage likened himself to one of the lucky generals that Napoleon wish to have for his successful wars. Farage claimed that the Conservatives were a failure, given their adoption of heavy taxes, burdening the shoulders of taxpayers. More importantly, Farage claimed that British people had experienced the greatest betrayal in their life under a massive democratic majority, presumably accusing Johnson's mishandling of Brexit and related issues following his landslide victory in 2019. Farage claimed that the Conservatives should never be forgiven for promising to reduce immigration and stop unskilled migration in the aftermath of Brexit. Labour, in turn, were even worse, in Farage's view, as none of their 25 cabinet members managed to establish a private business. He ridiculed Labour's Business Secretary, Jonathan Reynolds, in particular, for pretending to be a solicitor and proved later that he never qualified for such a job.

Farage claimed that Labour have no clue on how to govern Britain, accusing them of their inability to present accurate figures on growth. He argued that there was no genuine growth in Britain, claiming that the way it was measured under Labour was false. He suggested that they should look into GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita to measure growth. In Farage's view, Labour could not spread optimism in a country they were making poorer, likening their front benchers in the House to people attending a funeral. Moreover, Farage claimed that Labour's major threat came from a group called Gaza Independents, presumably weakening its position and strengthening Reform UK's as a serious opposition. Farage declared that he detested sectarian politics endorsed by such a group, labelled as leftist and Marxist, along with Corbyn, recalling that Labour was defeated in a by-election by a Gaza Independent

candidate in a constituency considered as a stronghold for Labour, i.e. a safe seat.²

In the same vein, Farage expressed his anger over the National Teachers' Union, one of the largest unions in Britain, for indoctrinating their children at school. In his view, the union was led by Marxists teaching children that Britain is a racist country, making them feel ashamed of their ancestors and history. Farage recalled that he met a 17-year-old gentleman, a candidate for the position of Head boy in his school, asking him for a video to endorse his candidacy. A few days later, to Farage's surprise, the teacher responsible for the elections disqualified the boy. Farage claimed that one of his goals under a Reform UK government would be to wage war against these teachers and the whole union, thus stopping their poisoning children's minds, particularly by propagating negative attitudes toward him as well as his party.

Equally important, Farage claimed that, unlike Labour and the Conservatives, Reform UK had the courage and love to be proud of British history and heritage, expressing their willingness to defend this at any cost. He therefore promised to strengthen Reform UK's position on the British political scene, wishing to clear the first hurdles, winning local elections as well as the mayoral ones due on 1 May 2025. Farage pointed out that in 2024 Reform UK contested 12% of the council elections; but in 2025 they would contest every single seat all over England. Significantly, a Reform UK candidate for one of the six mayoral contests was Aron Banks, a significant Conservative donor and supporter before joining Farage's party. Farage also announced that Sarah Pochin was a Reform UK candidate for the first by-election in the 2024 parliament, contesting Runcorn and Helsby, Labour's sixteenth safe seat in Britain. Ironically, Farage claimed that Pochin, a magistrate and a successful businesswoman, is a law-maker rather than a law-breaker, presumably ridiculing both Labour's and the Conservatives' MPs. Although he claimed that he could not predict the result of such an

² This is very likely with reference to George Galloway's victory in March 2024 in Rochdale, winning about 40% of the votes, claiming that his victory was for Gaza. Interestingly, Galloway was a former Labour MP, joining the Gaza Independents.

election, Farage argued that their victory would be an earthquake in British politics.

Similar to the central government, local governments, according to Farage, were broken, promising to 'fix' them as well. He claimed that there were 300.000 council staff earning more than £100.000 yearly despite their poor performance. More importantly, Farage argued that these councils had heavy debts, burdening taxpayers, particularly because of the ensuing high daily interest rates. For example, in Lincolnshire, Farage revealed that debts amounted to £460 million, with a daily interest rate reaching £52.000, paid by council taxpayers. What is more, Farage complained about the huge number of potholes in many counties, costing people large sums of money to repair the damaged tires of their cars and vans. He claimed that there were 65.000 potholes in Durham, making 27 per mile. Although he was aware that the central government was giving small budgets to these councils, Farage claimed that these local governments were severely 'damaged' by Labour and the Conservatives, wasting huge amounts of money on several unnecessary things, in his view. For example, he ridiculed the county of Lincolnshire for spending a £ 520,000 four-year contract on ergonomic chairs for their staff. A worse example was the £18.000 spent in Staffordshire on driving licenses for asylum seekers.

Farage's goal was that Reform UK would stop all of these practices, claiming to become the voice of the silenced, ignored and frequently insulted working people, historically associated with Labour for a long time across the country. One of his main claims was that a Reform UK government would cut taxes, promising to exempt people earning less than £20.000 a year from paying any income tax. He claimed that Reform UK would be on the side of workers, incentivizing them to have decent jobs instead of living on benefits, which would be immediately cut when they work for more than 16 hours a week under Labour and Conservative governments. Farage also promised to give back to pensioners the winter fuel allowances cut under Labour. Moreover, a Reform UK government would abolish the inheritance tax, as it was seen by Farage as offensive and disgraceful. According to Farage, it was disgusting to pay taxes during your life time and then after your death, your family would be taxed for you.

Indeed, Farage promised in his first speech, to bring business investments, creating decent jobs, training and skills for the people in his constituency and all over Britain. In the same vein, in his second speech, Farage's goal was to reindustrialize the country, arguing that a Reform UK government would encourage people to come to Britain and start their own businesses. Farage showed a great concern about the large number of rich people leaving the country because of the heavy taxes imposed on them under Labour and the Conservatives. Farage felt sad by seeing Lakshmi Mittal, a steel tycoon, considered as the seventh richest man, leave Britain. More importantly, Farage claimed that 10.000 businessmen left the country in 2024, adding that, according to the UBS Bank, 500.000 people would leave by 2028. This would be a disaster, according to Farage, as tax revenues in Britain would decrease sharply, making any help for those on benefits or lower income impossible. To avoid such a disaster, Farage would attract these people to stay and invest in the country, thus subsidizing British public services.

In the same vein, Farage expressed his dissatisfaction with the increasing number of civil servants, making £100.000 a year and working for 2 or 3 days from home. Farage pledged that a Reform UK government would reduce such a huge number, seen as a heavy burden on taxpayers, and stop the practice of working from home. Farage also claimed that when in power, they would scrap the net zero lunacy which had been destroying jobs in the country. For Farage, it was illogic to see Britain, one of the largest economies in the world, produce neither primary steel nor sufficient gas nor oil. He therefore promised to manufacture steel and produce the necessary fuel needed for all the businesses and people. Farage's intention was to clear all the hurdles meeting them, be they in Wales or Scotland or elsewhere in the country, in addition to any contest in by-elections in order to reach his main goal: winning the next general election. To meet such goals, including tax cuts and reindustrialization, Farage suggested that they should have a British form of DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency), similar to the one initiated by Elon Musk in the US.

3.2 Farage and Reform UK: ‘Fixing’ a Country ‘Damaged’ by Immigration

In his two speeches, Farage claimed that his party would ‘fix’ Britain, presumably ‘damaged’ by mass immigration. He accused both Labour and the Conservatives of mishandling such a controversial issue for a long time. In Farage’s view, increasing immigration under the two major parties has resulted in a population explosion and put pressure on many services in the country. In his maiden speech, he pointed out that the King had mentioned immigration twice and asylum once. More importantly, he was astonished that such an issue had not been considered as top priority for Labour during their 2024 general election campaign; Farage claimed that Keir Starmer,³ the current Labour Prime Minister, had mentioned neither legal nor illegal immigration in such a campaign. Given such silence, he contended that Reform UK MPs would be “massively outnumbered” in the House by expressing their worries about immigration.

Farage claimed that population explosion, in his view, basically due to high levels of immigration, had a tremendous impact on British people’s lives. He argued that net migration remained the same for half a century, ranging from 30.000 to 50.000 people a year from the 1940s to the 1990s. However, Farage claimed that Blair’s coming to power in 1997 boosted net migration through his open-door policy toward immigration.⁴ In the same vein, Farage claimed that such a policy pleased huge companies, particularly ‘giant multinationals’. Such companies, in his view, would benefit from the influx of immigrants, offering them cheap Labour at the expense of the British working class.

³ Starmer succeeded Jeremy Corbyn as leader of Labour in April 2020.

⁴ It is noteworthy that Blair made history by winning three successive elections (1997, 2001, 2005) before his resignation in 2007 to be succeeded by Gordon Brown who had been the Chancellor of the Exchequer, i.e. Minister of Finance. Ironically, Brown was considered as one of the poorest prime ministers in Britain for leaving Ten Downing Street without winning a general election; he failed to secure a fourth victory for Labour, which was partly due to his reaction during his 2010 general election campaign to a question raised by a life-long Labour supporter on Eastern European migration, known as ‘bigotgate’. For further details on this, see Bourmeche (2023b).

What is more, Farage expressed his astonishment, in the two speeches, about the massive increase in population growth due to immigration under the Conservatives as well, implying that the two major parties failed to deliver on mass immigration. He pointed out that, despite the Conservatives' pledge in four consecutive election manifestos (2010, 2015, 2017, 2019) to reduce net migration to tens of thousands, population increase reached 10 million before Labour's landslide victory in 2024. Farage argued that the Conservatives should never be forgiven for betraying the British people with such promises. He particularly accused the Conservatives of betraying people by convincing them that halting free mobility in the aftermath of Brexit would reduce net migration. Nevertheless, Farage claimed that net migration under a 14-year Conservative government reached 1 million people in 2023.

Farage stated that Britain currently receives one migrant a minute, claiming that, even during the course of his maiden speech, hundreds of migrants would come to the country. Although he did not deny that there were nice people among the large number of arrivals, Farage claimed that the government should build a new house every two minutes to meet the population explosion resulting from such an influx. Moreover, Farage argued that the current Labour government would not be able to solve the huge housing shortage in Britain even if they kept their promises and built the 1.5 million houses during their term. He revealed that rent rates have increased by 25% since 2021, claiming that such an increase was due to huge population growth. In Farage's view, such a growth had a major impact on people's quality of life, given the ensuing pressure on the National Health Service (NHS) and the whole British infrastructure.

More importantly, Farage claimed that "virtually nobody in [the House] even wants to talk about it," i.e. the population crisis in the country. In other words, Labour and the Conservatives, in particular, were silent about such an explosion in the British population, presumably due to high immigration levels; Farage and Reform UK MPs were the only politicians in the House concerned with such issues. He claimed that under a Reform UK government net migration would be much lower, allowing people who would be ready to embrace British values and traditions. In other words, they would handle immigration to make sure that legal immigrants would

be integrated into the mainstream society, presumably to avoid any tensions between minority groups and the majority group. Farage contended that he would welcome legal arrivals irrespective of their cultural, religious or social backgrounds. But he insisted that they should abide by British laws and rules. As for illegal immigrants, Farage claimed that a Reform UK government would never grant them refugee status or the right to remain in Britain, promising to deport all the illegal immigrants as well as criminals whatever their status.

Farage insisted that he would deprive all the criminals and the illegal immigrants of their right to family reunification. In addition, Farage pledged to handle unskilled immigration to give more opportunities for natives in the British labour market. He claimed that mass unskilled immigration under Labour and Conservative governments had major repercussions on housing and the health care system, increasing waiting lists among natives for housing and hospitals. He also claimed that these people were responsible for crowded streets in Britain, making it difficult for some supporters to join their gathering in Birmingham. He promised to end such migration in order to stabilize the British population, in his view, swelled under Labour and the Conservatives due to mass immigration. Importantly, Farage claimed that out of the 3 million non-Europeans allowed in legally by the Conservatives, 22% were working and contributing to the British economy. In other words, the majority of these people represented a burden to British taxpayers.

Farage was particularly concerned, in his two speeches, with illegal immigration through the English Channel, claiming that he had been more than an eyewitness there despite his being ridiculed by his opponents. He argued that he was then “described as being a sad, lonely, desperate figure, always seeking attention” (Speech one, also reiterated in speech two). Yet, he claimed that he had managed to film dinghies coming across the Channel, carrying an average of 16 immigrants each. He knew that such crossings would result in an influx of illegal immigrants, claiming that the British government no longer deport people who come to Britain in an illegal way. In other words, Farage accused both Labour and the Conservatives of their failure to handle illegal immigration through the Channel. In his second speech, Farage reiterated the same issue, arguing that he already warned against such an influx. He clearly stated that failure

to stop the influx would lead to an invasion, presumably with major repercussions on Britain.

In his maiden speech, Farage ridiculed the current Labour government for not having the courage of their former Home Secretary David Blunkett, for instance, who, in his view, was far to the right than the current shadow Home Secretary, presumably Chris Philp who was appointed by Kemi Badenoch, the Conservative leader in November 2024. Farage claimed that Blunkett was firm on illegal immigration, pointing out that, during his tenure as Home Secretary (2001-2004 under Blair's premiership), he would never allow any illegal immigrant to touch the British soil. Farage indicated that Labour deported 50.000 illegal immigrants from 2009 to 2010, i.e. their last year in power under Brown before the Conservatives formed their coalition government with Liberal Democrats (Lib Dems) in 2010.⁵

However, Farage claimed in his two speeches that this would never happen again under Labour or Conservative governments. Indeed, he argued that the Conservatives did not carry any deportations during their last 14 years in power. Moreover, he claimed that no deportations would take place under the current Labour government. The impossibility of stopping illegal immigration and carrying out such deportations was due, according to Farage, to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), blaming Labour for enshrining its convention into British law.⁶ Farage argued that the ECHR, founded in the aftermath of WWII, is now obsolete, as it no longer serves its main purposes.

⁵ The 2010 British general election yielded a hung parliament, as no party won the required majority to form a government (326 seats); the Conservatives won 306 seats, Labour 258, and Lib Dems 57. After a series of negotiations, the Conservatives found a compromise with Lib Dems and formed a coalition government under David Cameron, as Conservative Prime Minister and Nick Clegg, leader of Lib Dems as Deputy Prime Minister.

⁶ The ECHR was established in 1959 in order to enforce states' obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights (signed in November 1950 and put into effect in September 1953). Britain passed the Human Rights Act in 1998, (put into effect in 2000), setting the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to, and incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights into British law.

Farage believed that Britain would never be able to stop illegal immigration whatever the measures taken against criminal gangs responsible for the Channel crossings. He claimed that neither deporting some illegal immigrants to Rwanda nor smashing gangs in the same way they were doing with drug dealers would help with such an issue. In his view, the British governments have failed to put an end to the drug industry for a long time and would similarly fail to stop the gangs smuggling people cross the Channel. He argued that such gangs were thriving through this lucrative business, making a net gain reaching 3 million euros weakly. Therefore, it would not be possible to stop them no matter what the penalties or prison sentences imposed on them would be. In Farage's view, there would be one single solution to stop the influx of illegal immigration: deportations. But, this would not be possible while Britain is member of the ECHR, in his view. Farage suggested in his first speech to hold a referendum on Britain's membership to this institution. In his second speech, Farage reiterated the same ideas, arguing that a Reform UK government would leave the ECHR and stop the Human Rights Act introduced by Labour.

4. Discussion

Results of this study could be significant in relation to the existing literature on Farage and Reform UK. Farage appeared as a shrewd politician leading an increasingly popular third party in the House. Indeed, Farage's claims and goals revealed that his party would potentially reshape British politics a great deal. It seems that his narrative was appealing to a number of politicians and British people as a whole, as reflected in the increasing number of defections among the Conservatives. A recent defection was by Suella Braverman (January 2026), former Home Secretary under Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak. Braverman claimed that she felt "politically homeless for the best part of two years," particularly over Brexit and immigration (Seddon and Whannel 2026). Other defected Conservative MPs included the short-lived chancellor, Nadhim Zahawi, Danny Kruger and Nadine Dorries, both of whom were former Conservative ministers (Mata 2026). Indeed, increasing membership to Reform UK could potentially turn it into a strong competitor to Labour in the next British general election.

Interestingly, a number of YouGov polls revealed that both Farage and Reform UK were doing much better than the Conservatives. For example, a survey conducted on 10 July 2025 gave Reform UK a significant advantage over the Conservatives as the opposition party to Labour. It is noteworthy that the date coincided with another defection among the Conservatives to Reform UK, this time by Jake Berry, former chair of the Conservative party. Berry claimed that “the Tories ‘lost their way’ and have abandoned the British people” (Which of the following political parties do you think is the most effective opposition). The survey revealed that 30% of the voters believed that Reform UK has been the most effective opposition to Labour, followed by the Conservatives at 19% and Lib Dems at 10%. Another poll published one month later (August 2025) showed that Farage was also doing better than Kemi Badenoch, the Conservative leader. Asked “which of the following do you think would make the best prime minister?” (Starmer vs Farage), 28% of the voters favoured Farage, against 35% who favoured Starmer. But in comparison to Badenoch, Farage was favoured by 23% of the voters, against 21% for Badenoch.

Thus, the study refuted Crick’s (2022) argument that Farage would never be an MP despite the upsurge in his popularity and that of Reform UK. The study revealed that Farage and his party were gaining central stage on the British political landscape. This was particularly reinforced by their performance in a number of by-elections, in addition to local elections. Indeed, they made history once again by winning the majority of councils in May 2025, defeating both Labour and the Conservatives. In this sense, the study expanded on Ali’s (2022) equation of Farage’s Brexit obsession with regaining Britain’s sovereignty from Brussels. His narrative proved that Farage was more ambitious in that his main goal, as discussed in this study, moved beyond Britain’s independence from the EU, hoping to reshape the British political landscape and destroy the two-party system. Equally important, the study expanded on Bourmeche’s (2023a) idea that Farage would not regenerate Europe but also Britain, reindustrializing the country and stopping mass immigration responsible for population explosion and other related issues.

Theoretically, the study validated the usefulness of Fairclough’s and Fairclough’s (2012) *practical reasoning* framework in political

discourse. Farage's main arguments strongly correlated with the claims and goals suggested in such a frame. For example, his claim that both Labour and the Conservatives 'damaged' Britain, particularly in relation to mass immigration, seemed to have appealed to a significant number of voters, thus boosting Reform UK's popularity. A YouGov poll conducted on ten issues facing the country in order to see which party would be the best to handle such issues, Reform UK was seen as the best one to handle immigration, with 36% of the voters who favoured this party over the two major parties. Labour were second, with 12% of the votes, and the Conservatives were third, with 7% only (Which parties are best at handling the key issues?). The implication is that Farage's claim that both Labour and the Conservatives 'damaged' Britain had a major impact on the British political landscape in relation to the two-party system.

The other issues included the NHS, economy, taxation, defence and security, law and order, and Brexit. For example, Labour was on the lead, followed by Reform UK and the Conservatives on the NHS, with 22%, 12% and 11%, respectively. Significantly, Reform UK was the best party on law and order and Brexit, with 23-24% of the voters favouring it over Labour and the Conservatives. It should be pointed out that such a lead on these two issues, namely law and order and Brexit, reflected the impact of Farage's arguments on crimes and immigration, in particular, on people's preferences. Equally important, Lib Dems, known as the third party in Britain, were not seen as the best party on any of the aforementioned issues. Indeed, Lib Dems scored between 3 and 9% of the votes, compared to the Greens who scored between 3 and 6% of the votes. This implies again that Reform UK was taking centre stage on the British political scene.

In this sense, the study could be an asset to the existing literature on the rise of Farage and Reform UK, highlighting their impact on the British political scene, particularly in terms of the two-party system. However, it is limited in scope and perspectives, as its results could not be systematically generalisable. One possible avenue to broaden its scope and objectives would be to carry out a longitudinal research including a larger corpus over a longer period of time. For example, including more of Farage's speeches and possibly his party's manifesto for the next British general election would be more

insightful about their impact on British politics as a whole. One more possible avenue would be to carry out a comparative study between Reform UK and the Greens, as the latter has been gaining more and more popularity, implying its potential impact on the British political landscape as well.

Conclusion

The study argued that Farage and Reform UK would reshape British politics in the hope of ‘fixing’ a country ‘damaged’ by immigration. Farage claimed, throughout his two speeches, that Britain was ‘broken’ by the two major parties, namely Labour and the Conservatives. He blamed them for their inefficient policies to face the main issues affecting the British people, mainly the working classes. Such issues included heavy taxes, putting a large number of people in extreme poverty. More importantly, Farage accused these two parties of mishandling immigration, particularly illegal crossings through the English Channel. In his view, immigration was behind the population explosion and related issues, worsening the shortage of housing and affecting various services in the country.

Thus, the study implies that Farage’s arguments contributed to an upsurge in his popularity as well as his party’s. Firstly, his claim that Labour and the Conservatives ‘damaged’ Britain, particularly by mishandling immigration, increased both Farage’s and Reform UK’s favourability, as reflected in the polls. Secondly, his goal to ‘fix’ broken Britain, reindustrializing the country and improving people’s lives, seemed to have given Farage and his party a great advantage over Labour and the Conservatives. Thirdly, Farage’s main goal that Reform UK would be the biggest party in Britain boosted his chance to be a strong rival to Labour in the next general election. If he succeeds in defeating Labour in the coming general election, Farage and Reform UK would put an end to the two-party system in Britain.

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