

David Cameron dan Brexit: Reassessment Actor-Specific Theory Satu Dekade Pasca-Referendum

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ABSTRACT

This article reassessed the relevance of actor-specific theory in explaining David Cameron's stance toward Brexit a decade after the 2016 Brexit referendum. Drawing upon the author's previous study on David Cameron's role in the Brexit referendum and recent scholarly debates on Brexit, this article evaluated whether the explanatory power of actor-specific theory remained valid in light of post-Brexit political developments and contemporary literature. Employing a qualitative reassessment approach, the study compared the findings of the earlier research with academic works published during the post-Brexit period. The analysis demonstrated that actor-specific theory continued to provide a useful framework for understanding Cameron's support for the Remain campaign through the dimensions of motivation, emotion, and problem representation. However, the findings also indicated that Brexit could not be fully explained through individual-level analysis alone. Factors such as internal divisions within the Conservative Party, the rise of Euroscepticism, electoral pressures from the UK Independence Party (UKIP), and the development of Leave and Remain political identities played significant roles in shaping the referendum outcome. This article argued that while actor-specific theory remained relevant for explaining Cameron's political preferences, its explanatory capacity was partial and required integration with structural, institutional, and identity-based approaches. The study contributed to Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) by reassessing individual-level explanations within the context of long-term political developments following Brexit.

INTRODUCTION

The Brexit referendum held on June 23, 2016, was one of the most influential political events in the history of UK–EU relations. The referendum results showed that 51.9% of voters supported the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, while 48.1% voted to remain a member. The decision ended more than four decades of the UK's membership in the European integration project and triggered significant changes in domestic politics, UK–EU relations, and the United Kingdom's position in international politics. A decade after the referendum, Brexit remains a contentious issue due to its continuing impacts on politics, economics, immigration, and international relations (Webber, 2023). Studies have shown that the political identities of Leave and Remain continue to influence the political behavior of British society, while the UK's relationship with the European Union remains subject to ongoing post-Brexit adjustment processes (Oliver, 2023; Webber, 2023).

Amid the Brexit process, David Cameron occupied a unique and paradoxical position. As the British Prime Minister from the Conservative Party, Cameron was an actor who played

an important role in initiating the Brexit referendum. The promise to hold a referendum on the UK's membership in the European Union became one of the Conservative Party's major political agendas ahead of the 2015 general election. After winning the election, Cameron fulfilled this commitment by renegotiating the UK's position within the European Union before ultimately announcing the implementation of the Brexit referendum (Deacon, 2016). However, when the referendum took place, Cameron became one of the leading figures in the Remain campaign and openly supported the continuation of the UK's membership in the European Union. This position was significant because, on previous occasions, Cameron had also demonstrated a critical stance toward the European Union and had adopted several policies perceived as aligning with the demands of Eurosceptics within the Conservative Party. This contradiction makes Cameron's position one of the key aspects in understanding the political dynamics of Brexit.

Interest in David Cameron's role in Brexit has generated various studies from diverse analytical perspectives. Several studies have attempted to explain Cameron's decision to hold the Brexit referendum by emphasizing pressure from Eurosceptics and the growing influence of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) (Lynch, 2010). Other research has demonstrated that Cameron's decision to hold a referendum was inseparable from his efforts to balance his position as Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party (Hull & Howorth, 2014). Meanwhile, other studies have focused primarily on voter behavior during the Brexit referendum by highlighting economic considerations, immigration concerns, and rational decision-making among British voters (Clarke et al., 2017; Gostyńska-Jakubowska, 2016). However, much of the existing research has concentrated on explaining why the Brexit referendum occurred or why the UK voted to leave the European Union, while relatively limited attention has been given to understanding why Cameron chose to campaign for maintaining the UK's membership in the European Union.

Addressing this research gap, the author's previous study Mochtar, (2018) analyzed David Cameron's position toward Brexit using actor-specific theory within the framework of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). The study examined why Cameron campaigned to maintain the UK's membership in the European Union during the 2016 Brexit referendum. By applying the dimensions of motivation, emotion, and problem representation, the study demonstrated that Cameron's support for Remain was influenced not only by practical political considerations but also by personal motivations, perceptions of Britain's role in international affairs, and his representation of Brexit as a threat to British national interests. Actor-specific theory was applied because it enables a deeper examination of how individual characteristics of political leaders shape foreign policy decision-making processes.

The development of post-Brexit literature over the past decade has demonstrated that explanations of Brexit have become increasingly complex. Hayton (2018) and Lees (2021) emphasized the importance of internal Conservative Party dynamics, increasing pressure from Eurosceptics, and transformations in the structure of UK domestic politics in explaining the Brexit referendum. Meanwhile, more recent studies have indicated that Brexit is not only related to economic considerations or membership in international organizations but also involves questions of UK political identity, perceptions of sovereignty, and the country's position in the international system (Oliver, 2023; Webber, 2023). Indeed, a decade after the referendum, Brexit has been viewed as a process that generated lasting political polarization

and revived debates regarding the ideal relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union (Webber, 2023).

These emerging explanations raise important questions regarding the extent to which actor-specific theory remains relevant for understanding David Cameron's position toward Brexit. While the author's previous research (Mochtar, 2018) placed individual-level factors as the primary analytical variable, developments in post-Brexit literature have increasingly emphasized structural factors, political identities, and institutional dynamics. Therefore, reassessing the explanatory capacity of actor-specific theory requires consideration of the academic and empirical developments that have emerged during the decade following the referendum. The central question is whether an individual-focused theoretical approach remains sufficient when confronted with a more complex, multidimensional understanding of Brexit developed within contemporary scholarship.

Based on this background, this article aimed to reassess the explanatory capacity of actor-specific theory regarding David Cameron's position during the Brexit referendum. This article sought to answer the following question: to what extent does actor-specific theory remain relevant for explaining David Cameron's stance on Brexit a decade after the 2016 referendum? This article argued that actor-specific theory remained valuable for explaining Cameron's political preferences and his support for maintaining the UK's membership in the European Union. However, developments in post-Brexit literature suggested that individual-level factors should be examined alongside structural conditions, political identities, and domestic political dynamics that became increasingly prominent after the referendum.

The decade-long period was selected because it provided sufficient temporal distance to evaluate the validity of previous research findings while enabling an examination of the long-term consequences of Brexit. This article contributed to the development of Foreign Policy Analysis by demonstrating that actor-specific theory remained relevant for explaining leaders' political preferences but should be positioned within interaction with structural factors and political identities that evolved in the post-Brexit period.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach to examine and explain David Cameron's attitude toward Brexit through the perspective of actor-specific theory. This approach was selected because it enabled a deeper understanding of a leader's political behavior within the decision-making process.

This article developed from the author's previous research on David Cameron's attitude toward Brexit, which was analyzed using actor-specific theory. Therefore, this study employed a reassessment research design by revisiting previous findings in light of developments in academic literature and emerging political dynamics during the decade following the Brexit referendum (Hollander, 1899). This approach was used to evaluate the extent to which individual-level explanations remained relevant for understanding David Cameron's position toward Brexit.

The data used in this study consisted of primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained from David Cameron's official speeches and statements related to the Brexit referendum, including the David Cameron's EU Referendum and Brexit Speech (2013), the Prime Minister's Speech on Europe (2015), the Prime Minister's Speech on the UK's Strength

and Security in the EU (2016), and other official statements delivered before and after the 2016 Brexit referendum. Secondary data were collected from books, journal articles, research reports, and academic publications addressing David Cameron, Brexit, Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), and post-Brexit British political developments.

Data collection was conducted through library research by gathering, reviewing, and comparing relevant sources related to the research focus. In addition to sources used in the previous study, this article incorporated academic literature published after the Brexit referendum to provide a broader understanding of developments in scholarly debates surrounding Brexit.

Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-interpretive approach. The first stage involved reconstructing the findings of previous research on David Cameron's attitude toward Brexit based on three dimensions of actor-specific theory: motivation, emotion, and problem representation. The second stage compared these findings with developments in post-Brexit academic literature to identify aspects that remained relevant and those requiring additional explanation. Through this process, the study reassessed the explanatory capacity of actor-specific theory in explaining David Cameron's attitude toward Brexit a decade after the 2016 referendum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Actor-Specific Theory and David Cameron's Attitude to Brexit

This section reconstructs the findings of the author's previous research entitled *The Role of David Cameron as British Prime Minister in the 2016 Brexit Referendum* (Mochtar, 2018). The study used actor-specific theory to explain why David Cameron supported the sustainability of Britain's membership of the European Union in the 2016 Brexit Referendum. Through an analysis of motivation, emotion, and problem representation, the study found that Cameron's support for the Remain campaign was influenced not only by political and economic considerations, but also by the psychological factors that shaped his view of Britain's relationship with the EU. These findings are the starting point for this article to reassess the literature and post-Brexit political dynamics over the past decade.

David Cameron's motivations for Britain's membership of the European Union

In the author's previous research (Mochtar, 2018), David Cameron's motivation was analyzed through two dimensions, namely internal motivation and external motivation.

According to actor-specific theory, motivation is understood as an internal and external drive that influences a leader's behavior in making political decisions. Hermann (1980) explained that internal motivation is related to personal goals, values, and image that a leader wants to build, while external motivation is related to the interests that are to be achieved in relation to other actors and the broader political environment.

Previous research has shown that David Cameron's support for the sustainability of Britain's membership of the European Union is not only based on economic and political considerations, but is also influenced by the personal motivations that have formed since the beginning of his life and political career. Through a psychobiographical approach, Cameron is described as a figure who seeks to build an image as a moderate leader who is acceptable to various groups. His school experiences, family environment, and political journey shape

Cameron's character as a figure who tends to find a middle ground between various conflicting political interests.

This motivation was seen when Cameron led the Conservative Party by bringing the ideas of compassionate conservatism and modern conservatism. In contrast to some Conservative Party figures who have adopted a firm embrace of euroscepticism, Cameron has sought to blend traditional conservative values with a more moderate and pragmatic approach. In an interview with *The Times*, Cameron even declared that he was "heir to Blair", a admission that sparked criticism from various groups within the Conservative Party that Tony Blair had been synonymous with more pro-European positions. The statement reflects Cameron's efforts to build a more moderate political image and reach voters beyond the traditional base of the Conservative Party (Ashcroft & Oakeshott, 2015). Cameron seeks to present a new face of the Conservative Party that is more modern, inclusive, and able to adapt to socio-political changes in Britain.

In addition to personal factors, Cameron's motivations are also influenced by Britain's strategic interests in the European Union. In his speeches ahead of the referendum, Cameron has consistently asserted that the EU provides great economic benefits to the UK. In his speech delivered on 22 February 2016, a few days after Cameron completed renegotiations with the EU and formally announced his support for the Remain campaign, Cameron stated:

"I have been Prime Minister for five and a half years. I have sat in 39 European Council meetings with my fellow European leaders. I have seen this relationship operating at close quarters; I see how much Britain can gain from its membership of the EU."

The statement suggests that Cameron's support for Britain's membership in the EU is not solely based on ideological considerations, but also on his first-hand experience in EU forums. The experience shaped his belief that the UK was gaining real benefits from its membership in the organisation.

From the economic aspect, Cameron views the single market as one of the main instruments that support the UK's economic growth. He argued that Britain benefited greatly from EU market access and the various trade agreements the EU has with other countries. In his speech on the relationship between the UK and the EU, Cameron asserted:

"Negotiating as part of an economy with 500 million people gives us more power as a country, not less."

For Cameron, membership in the European Union actually strengthens Britain's bargaining position in international economic negotiations. Therefore, Brexit is seen as a step that has the potential to reduce Britain's influence in the global economic system.

In addition to the economy, Cameron also placed security as a key interest that he wants to maintain through Britain's membership in the European Union. In his 2015 speech, he stated:

"The EU, like NATO and our membership of the UN Security Council, is a tool that a British Prime Minister uses to get things done in the world, and protect our country."

The quote shows that Cameron views the EU as a strategic instrument to protect Britain's national interests, particularly in the face of transnational security threats, terrorism and cross-border migration. Even as immigration issues become one of the main reasons Leave groups support Brexit, Cameron still argues that the best solution is to increase Britain's influence in the EU's decision-making process, not to leave the organisation.

Based on these findings, previous research concluded that David Cameron's motivation in supporting the Remain campaign was shaped by a combination of personal motivation and the country's strategic interests. On a personal level, Cameron seeks to maintain his image as a moderate leader who is able to bridge various political interests. On the external level, he views Britain's membership in the European Union as an important instrument for maintaining economic stability, strengthening national security, and maintaining Britain's influence in international politics. As such, Cameron's support for Remain is not solely a pragmatic political choice, but also reflects the leadership orientation that has evolved throughout his political journey.

The Emotional Dimension in Cameron's Attitude to Brexit

The author's previous research found that the emotions David Cameron showed during the Brexit Referendum campaign were dominated by a calm, optimistic and confident attitude.

Actor-specific theory states that emotions are one of the psychological aspects that affect a leader's behavior and decisions. Hudson (2005) explained that emotions serve as a guide in responding to a political situation, especially when a leader is in a stressful situation and is required to make important decisions in a limited time. Therefore, an analysis of a leader's emotions can help explain why a policy is chosen over another.

Previous research has found that the emotions David Cameron showed during the Brexit Referendum campaign were dominated by a calm, optimistic and confident attitude. This finding is interesting because the decision to hold a referendum came in a political situation that was not easy. Cameron faces pressure from euroskeptics in the Conservative Party, the rise of UKIP, as well as growing public demands for Britain to revisit its relationship with the European Union. However, Cameron did not show an emotional response that was defensive or panicked. Instead, he maintained a calm and confident attitude in the face of the pressure.

These characteristics are inseparable from Cameron's personal background and political journey. Previous research has shown that from a young age Cameron was known as a confident, sociable, and adaptable person to various social environments. His educational experiences at Eton College and Oxford University, as well as his political career in the Conservative Party, shaped his confidence as a leader. Even when faced with criticism from his party colleagues who consider him too moderate or politically opportunistic, Cameron is less likely to show excessive emotional reactions and stick to his own beliefs.

The author's previous research also found that Cameron had a pragmatic and rational leadership character. In dealing with various political issues, he tends to avoid an emotional approach and prefers to consider the practical consequences of every decision taken. This pragmatic attitude can be seen in his efforts to renegotiate Britain's position in the European Union before the referendum is held. Cameron did not immediately accept or reject the demands of euroskeptics, but first sought to obtain new concessions from the European Union that he believed could accommodate British interests.

In addition to being pragmatic, Cameron also showed strong optimism about Britain's ability to benefit from its membership in the European Union. This optimism can be seen from his belief that the EU can still be reformed and that Britain is still able to maintain its national interests without having to leave the organization. Even when facing various political and economic crises during his career, Cameron tended to show a calm and clear-thinking attitude. Previous research has noted that when witnessing the impact of the Black Wednesday crisis

in the early 1990s, Cameron showed no fear or panic, but remained optimistic and tried to see the problem rationally. The experience then formed a similar response pattern in dealing with the Brexit issue.

Environmental factors also strengthen Cameron's emotional attitude towards Brexit. Most of the political figures, leaders of friendly countries, business people and international organizations he interacted with supported the UK's position to remain within the European Union. The support further strengthens Cameron's belief that the choice to retain Britain's membership in the European Union is the right decision. As a result, Cameron appeared with a high level of confidence during the Remain campaign and believed that the British people would ultimately vote to remain with the European Union.

Thus, previous research concluded that David Cameron's emotions in the face of Brexit were not dominated by fear or anxiety, but rather by calmness, optimism and confidence. These emotional characteristics shaped the way Cameron understood the Brexit referendum and influenced his belief that Britain would benefit more if it remained a member of the European Union.

Problem Representation Cameron terhadap Brexit

In addition to motivation and emotions, the author's previous research (Mochtar, 2018) also analyzed David Cameron's attitude towards Brexit through the dimension of problem representation. In actor-specific theory, problem representation refers to the way a leader understands, defines, and frames a problem before making a decision. Hudson (2005) explained that the policies chosen by an actor are greatly influenced by how he represents an issue. In other words, political decisions are not only determined by the objective conditions faced, but also by the way the leader interprets those conditions.

Previous research has found that Cameron represents Brexit not as an opportunity to restore British sovereignty, as the Leave group has campaigned, but rather as a source of uncertainty that could potentially threaten Britain's national interests. In his speeches and statements ahead of the referendum, Cameron has consistently framed Britain's membership of the European Union as an instrument that provides economic, political and security benefits to the UK. Instead, Brexit is represented as a high-risk option with consequences that are difficult to predict.

Cameron's way of representing Brexit was evident in his speech ahead of the referendum when he stated:

"Leaving Europe would threaten our economic and our national security."

The statement shows that Cameron views Brexit as a threat to two fundamental aspects of the country, namely economic stability and national security. In contrast to the Leave group, which sees the EU as the source of Britain's domestic problems, Cameron sees Britain's presence within the EU as part of the solution to the challenges facing his country.

In the economic field, Cameron represented the European Union as a space that allows the UK to gain broad market access, increase investment, and strengthen national economic competitiveness. Therefore, the UK's exit from the European Union is seen as a move that has the potential to create economic uncertainty. In one of his speeches, Cameron asserted:

"If we left, the economic risk would be real."

The quote shows that Cameron views economic risk as a real and innegligible consequence. For him, the debate over Brexit is not just a question of political identity or sovereignty, but rather a question of the long-term future of the British economy.

In addition to the economic aspect, Cameron also represented the European Union as an important instrument in maintaining British national security. In his view, various contemporary threats such as international terrorism, transnational crime, and illegal migration cannot be effectively addressed by a single country individually. Therefore, cooperation with EU member states is seen as a strategic need. Cameron even stated that the EU is one of the tools that the British government can use to protect its national interests at the international level.

Previous research has also found that Cameron views Britain's position within the EU as a means of maintaining Britain's international influence. According to Cameron, membership in the European Union does not reduce Britain's position as a sovereign state, but rather increases its capacity to influence various international decisions. This perspective can be seen from his belief that the UK will have a stronger bargaining power when negotiating as part of a market with hundreds of millions of people than if it were independent outside the European Union (Lea, 2016).

Based on these findings, the author's previous research concluded that David Cameron's problematic representation of Brexit was built on the perception that the EU was an instrument that provided strategic benefits to the UK, while Brexit was an option that contained great uncertainty and risk. The way Cameron framed this issue then influenced his political stance to support the Remain campaign. As such, Cameron's support for the sustainability of Britain's membership of the European Union is influenced not only by his motivations and emotions, but also by the way he understands and represents Brexit as a political issue that the UK must face.

Reassessment Actor-Specific Theory Satu Dekade Pasca-Brexit

The Validity of Individual Factors in Explaining Cameron's Attitude

The development of the Brexit literature over the past decade shows that some of the authors' previous research findings still have relevance in explaining David Cameron's attitude towards Brexit. Although various post-Brexit studies have increasingly highlighted structural factors, political identity and institutional dynamics, individual factors still occupy an important position in understanding why Cameron chose to support the Remain campaign in the 2016 Brexit Referendum.

Previous research by the author (Mochtar, 2018) shows that Cameron views Britain's membership in the European Union as an instrument that can strengthen Britain's economic, security and international interests. The findings are supported by a number of studies published after Brexit. Varga (2023), for example, shows that in his various political speeches Cameron has consistently built a narrative about the importance of Britain's membership in the European Union as a means of maintaining Britain's influence at the international level. According to Varga (2023), Cameron does not view the EU as a threat to British sovereignty, but rather as a forum that allows the UK to play a greater role in global politics.

The findings reinforce the author's previous research on Cameron's representation problem. In previous research, Cameron was represented as a leader who views Brexit as a source of uncertainty that has the potential to reduce Britain's economic and political

influence. Cameron's way of framing Brexit as a risk to the national interest remains evident in various post-Brexit studies that show that the issue of Britain's international influence is one of the main concerns of Remain supporters.

Another aspect that is still relevant is Cameron's leadership character as a moderate and pragmatic figure. Previous research has found that Cameron's motivations are not only based on short-term political interests, but also on his desire to maintain a position as a leader who is able to bridge various political groups. This finding is in line with Saida's (2024) argument that Cameron's political strategy during the referendum process was more directed at trying to build compromise and consensus rather than conducting an open political confrontation. In this context, Cameron's failure to win the referendum does not necessarily show the weakness of individual-based analysis, but rather shows how a leader's personal character can influence his chosen political strategy.

In addition to motivation and problem representation, the emotional dimension found in previous research also still has relevance. The author's previous research portrays Cameron as a calm, optimistic and confident leader of Britain's ability to continue to benefit from its membership in the European Union. This attitude is reflected in his belief that the EU can still be reformed and that the UK's national interests can be fought for from within the organisation. Although the final referendum result did not live up to his expectations, various post-Brexit studies show that Cameron has consistently maintained that view even after he is no longer Prime Minister.

Thus, the development of the post-Brexit literature suggests that individual factors still have the ability to explain David Cameron's attitude towards Brexit. Cameron's motivation, leadership character and the way Cameron understands the UK-EU relationship remain key elements shaping his support for the Remain campaign. Therefore, the main findings of the author's previous research on Cameron's motivations, emotions, and problem representation are essentially still valid in explaining Cameron's political preferences for Brexit.

The Limitations of Actor-Specific Theory: Strengthening Structural Factors and Political Identity

Although the development of the post-Brexit literature suggests that individual factors still have relevance in explaining David Cameron's stance on Brexit, the research published after the referendum has also revealed a number of limitations of actor-specific theory-based explanations. While previous research by the author (Mochtar, 2018) places Cameron's motivations, emotions, and problem representation as the main factors that shaped his support for the Remain campaign, more up-to-date literature suggests that Brexit is a much more complex phenomenon and cannot be understood through the individual characteristics of a leader alone.

More recent criticism even suggests that Brexit is not only the result of the preferences of certain political actors or policy failures, but also reflects a more fundamental conflict regarding sovereignty, political identity and the future of European integration. Schimmelfennig (2024) calls Brexit a polity attack, which is a challenge to the basic principles of the European Union's political order that are rooted in the demands of nationalism and self-determination. In this perspective, the UK's decision to leave the European Union cannot be reduced to a particular individual choice, but rather is part of a broader political dynamic that is developing in British society and the political system.

Another limitation has to do with the strengthening of the structural explanation of Brexit. Hayton (2017) points out that the Brexit referendum cannot be separated from the internal conflicts of the Conservative Party that have been going on for decades. The debate over European integration has long been a source of division within the party and continued to grow long before Cameron became Prime Minister. In this perspective, Cameron's decision to hold a referendum was not solely the result of his personal preference, but also a response to political pressure emanating from within the party and the growing influence of euroskeptics.

This argument is strengthened by Lynch (2016) who highlights the role of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in changing the British political landscape in the run-up to the referendum. Rising support for UKIP created significant electoral pressure for the Conservative Party so that the issue of Britain's relationship with the EU was no longer avoidable. In such a situation, Cameron's room for movement becomes increasingly limited as he must consider the party's interests, the stability of the government, and the chances of electoral victory simultaneously. Thus, the decision to hold a referendum is more accurately understood as the result of the interaction between individual preferences and the political pressures that develop within the British domestic environment. These findings are in line with Martil's (2022) argument that Cameron and the Conservative elite initially sought to exploit eurosceptic pressure as a political instrument, but ultimately lost control of the dynamics they created themselves.

In addition to structural factors, the development of the literature also shows the importance of institutional factors in explaining Brexit. Lees (2020) argues that the Brexit referendum is a consequence of the failure of the British political elite to manage differing views on European integration. Brexit did not appear suddenly in 2016, but rather was an accumulation of various political debates that lasted for decades. This perspective suggests that an overly large focus on Cameron's characteristics has the potential to ignore the role of political institutions and the historical dynamics that shape the context of decision-making.

Another limitation that has not received much attention in the author's previous research is the factor of political identity. Koegler (2020) shows that support for Brexit is not only influenced by economic considerations or public policy, but also by public perceptions of national identity and state sovereignty. Brexit has become a symbol of the desire of some British people to reaffirm the boundaries of their national political community. In this context, the debate over the EU is no longer understood simply as a question of economic benefits, but also as a question of who has the right to decide the future of Britain.

This view is reinforced by Tilley and Hobolt (2023) who show that the political identity of Leave and Remain persists even years after the referendum took place. These findings show that Brexit has not only resulted in policy changes, but also shaped a new political identity that influences the political behaviour of British society in an ongoing manner. This identity factor is relatively unaccommodated in actor-specific theory because it focuses more on the individual decision-making process than the dynamics of collective identity in society.

Post-referendum Brexit evolved into a process that influenced parliaments, political parties, and state institutions so that it could no longer be explained solely through Cameron's individual preferences (Dudley & Gamble, 2023). In this context, the development of the post-Brexit literature suggests that actor-specific theory has limitations when used as the only

analytical tool to explain Brexit. This theory manages to explain why David Cameron chose to support the Remain campaign, but it is less able to explain why much of the political pressure that drove the referendum stemmed from party dynamics, changing voter preferences, and the growing political identity in favour of Brexit. Therefore, while individual factors remain important, a more comprehensive understanding of Brexit requires greater attention to the structural, institutional and political identity factors that develop beyond Cameron.

Relevansi Actor-Specific Theory Pasca-Brexit

Based on an evaluation of the development of the literature over the post-referendum decade, this article argues that actor-specific theory still has relevance in explaining David Cameron's attitude towards Brexit. While recent research has shown the importance of structural, institutional and identity factors, individual factors remain an element that cannot be ignored in understanding why Cameron has consistently supported the sustainability of Britain's membership in the European Union.

The findings of the author's previous research (Mochtar, 2018) show that Cameron's motivation, emotions, and problem representation shaped his preference for the Remain campaign. The explanation still has support from a number of cutting-edge studies that place Cameron as an important actor in the Brexit process. Varga (2023) shows that Cameron has consistently built a narrative about the benefits of Britain's membership in the European Union through his various political speeches. Meanwhile, Saida (2024) emphasized that Cameron's political strategy during the referendum was greatly influenced by his leadership character which tended to be moderate and compromised. These findings suggest that individual characteristics remain a role in shaping a leader's political choices.

Furthermore, post-Brexit political developments actually show that some of Cameron's problematic representations about Brexit risks are not entirely wrong. In his speeches ahead of the referendum, Cameron has repeatedly asserted that Britain's exit from the European Union has the potential to reduce Britain's international influence, create economic uncertainty, and pose new challenges to Britain's relations with Europe. A decade after the referendum, various studies show that the UK-EU relationship is still undergoing a process of adjustment and renegotiation in various policy areas (Oliver, 2023; Martill, 2026). In fact, according to Webber (2023), Brexit has revived debates about British identity, status, and international roles that have not been fully resolved until now.

However, the development of the literature also shows that the ability of actor-specific theories to explain Brexit has certain limits. Hayton (2017), Lynch (2016), and Lees (2020) show that the Brexit referendum is the result of an interaction of various political factors that have developed long before Cameron took office as Prime Minister. Similarly, Koegler (2020) and Tilley and Hobolt (2023) show that political identity and perceptions of sovereignty have a huge influence on the British people's choices in referendums. The findings show that the final outcome of Brexit cannot be explained solely by the individual preferences or characteristics of a leader.

Therefore, this article argues that the post-Brexit development of literature does not negate the relevance of actor-specific theory, but rather places it in a more proportionate position. If the author's previous research places individual factors as the main variable to explain David Cameron's attitude towards Brexit, then a decade of academic development

suggests that individual factors should be understood as one level of analysis that interacts with structural, institutional, and political identity factors. In other words, actor-specific theory remains effective in explaining why Cameron supported the Remain campaign, but it is not enough to explain the overall dynamics that resulted in the Leave camp's victory in the Brexit referendum.

This finding also strengthens the argument of Hudson and Vore (1995) that foreign policy behavior cannot be explained through just one level of analysis. In contrast, a more comprehensive understanding requires attention to the interactions between individuals, institutions, and the broader political environment. In the context of Brexit, David Cameron's personal characteristics remain important to understand, but they must be placed in the context of changing British domestic politics, the strengthening of euroscepticism, and the development of political identities that shape voter behaviour ahead of the referendum.

The findings show that actor-specific theory still has significant clarity in explaining David Cameron's attitude towards Brexit. Through an analysis of motivations, emotions, and problem representation, this theory is able to explain why Cameron consistently supports the Remain campaign and views Britain's membership in the European Union as an important instrument in Britain's national interest. In this context, post-Brexit literature developments tend to confirm that Cameron's political preferences were indeed influenced by his leadership character, political experience, and views on the UK-EU relationship.

Nevertheless, developments in the study of Brexit over the past decade also show that individual factors do not work in a space separate from the broader political context. Pressure from euroskeptics, internal dynamics of the Conservative Party, changing voter preferences, and the strengthening of the political identities of Leave and Remain have all shaped the decision-making environment faced by Cameron. Therefore, actor-specific theory is more appropriately understood as one of the analytical tools that is able to explain Cameron's political preferences and choices, but does not fully explain the complexity of the process that led to Brexit.

Thus, the relevance of actor-specific theory in Brexit studies lies in its ability to explain the individual dimensions of the political decision-making process, particularly in understanding David Cameron's attitude towards the Brexit referendum. At the same time, the development of the latest literature shows the importance of combining an individual-based approach with a perspective that takes into account structural, institutional, and political identity factors in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Brexit as a complex political event.

CONCLUSION

Nevertheless, developments in the literature over the past decade have also demonstrated that individual-level explanations alone are insufficient to fully explain the complexity of Brexit as a political event. The internal dynamics of the Conservative Party, the strengthening of Euroscepticism, electoral pressures from UKIP, and the formation of Leave and Remain political identities played important roles in shaping the process that led to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. Recent scholarship has further shown that Brexit reflected not only the preferences of specific political elites but also broader debates concerning national sovereignty, political identity, and the UK's position within the

European integration project. Therefore, this study concluded that actor-specific theory remained relevant for explaining David Cameron's political preferences and choices; however, its explanatory capacity was partial and required integration with approaches that considered structural, institutional, and political identity factors.

The main contribution of this article lies in its effort to reassess research within Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) by incorporating developments in the literature and empirical experiences that emerged during the decade following the Brexit referendum. Unlike previous research that focused primarily on explaining David Cameron's attitudes before and during the referendum, this article demonstrated that several findings regarding Cameron's motivation, emotion, and problem representation remained supported by recent studies. At the same time, this article highlighted the limitations of actor-specific theory when applied as the sole analytical framework for explaining Brexit. Accordingly, this article provided a more balanced understanding of the relationship between individual-level factors and structural conditions in foreign policy studies.

Based on these findings, future research could further develop analytical frameworks that integrate actor-specific theory with structure-based approaches to better understand political decision-making processes involving interactions among leaders, institutions, and broader political environments. Such an approach is relevant not only for examining Brexit but also for analyzing contemporary international political events that demonstrate the interconnectedness between individual leadership and domestic as well as international political dynamics.

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