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**TRANSFORMATION OF THE PARTY SYSTEM OF
GREAT BRITAIN IN 2015-2022**

SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION

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Research context

The UK party system is one of the oldest in the world. The foundation of modern British bipartisanship was laid at the end of the 17th century, when the country's political elite was divided into Whigs - supporters of the adoption of the "Exclusion Bill", which deprived the Duke of York (the future King James II) of the right to inherit the English throne due to his adherence to Catholicism and Tories - his supporters. These political groups became the predecessors of those formed in the first half of the 19th century. Liberal and Conservative parties. They dominated the country until the 1920s, when Britain began another major stage of political transformation. As a result of this process, the current party system was formed, in which the leading parties are the Conservatives and Labor. A number of social and economic factors led to such large-scale changes in its configuration.

The growth of the labor movement and the popularity of socialist ideas in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the world reflected in the politics of Great Britain. In 1900, the Labor Party appeared on the political landscape of the country. Just two decades later, it became the country's second political force, displacing the Liberal Party, which, after almost 60 years at the forefront of British politics, began to rapidly lose influence amid internal divisions and its inability to change in accordance with the demands of the times and voters. An important factor in this process was the adoption of the "people's budget" by Lloyd George, who served as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1908-1915, and subsequently as leader of the party (1926-1931). Thus, by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century. The country's political system, although it remained two-party, has undergone a significant transformation - in the Conservative-Liberal pair, the Liberals were replaced by Labor.

In connection with the crisis caused by the First World War, the British party system also underwent, albeit short-term, significant changes. The spread of fascist ideas in Europe in the 1930s had a significant impact on the country's politics in the interwar period. In 1932, Baronet Oswald Mosley founded the British Union of Fascists (BUF), which in its early days attracted a significant number of British

people to its ranks, and, most significantly, representatives of the elite ¹. However, due to its marginality and the population's awareness of the criminal nature of this movement, the party quickly lost support. However, the very phenomenon of the emergence of the BSF is interesting for us as an example of the role a minor party can play in the country's party system. The current situation required a decisive response from Westminster: a ban on marches and demonstrations in uniform of an overtly political nature, expansion of police powers, and then and the internment of its leader O. Mosley ².

The British party system underwent a significant transformation in the last third of the twentieth century. Against the backdrop of problems in economic development and the emergence of the United Kingdom as the "sick man of Europe", the popularity of third and minor parties began to steadily increase among voters ³. Nationalist forces became significantly stronger and more active. The reaction to the "Conservative Revolution" and the reforms of Margaret Thatcher's governments was the emergence of the Social Democratic Alliance, and then the Liberal Democrats (Lib Dems). In this regard, a discussion has developed in the scientific literature about the transformation of the two-party system into a "system of two and a half parties" ⁴.

It is obvious that the most important factor influencing the configuration of political forces in the country, the role and place of existing parties in the national system, the emergence of new or disappearance of old actors has always been economic and political crises. At the same time, they also served as a powerful incentive for the modernization of traditional elements of the system - ideological guidelines were revised, the organizational structures of parties were improved, their strategy and tactics changed, and new elites were co-opted.

¹ Olechnowicz A. Liberal anti-fascism in the 1930s: The case of Sir Ernest Barker // *Albion*. 2004. Vol. 36. No. 4. P. 643.

²Rubin B. The rise and fall of British fascism: Sir Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists // *Intersections: A Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies*. 2020. Vol . 11. No. 2. P. 377.

³Nazaruk T.V. Transformation of the role of third and minor parties in the party-political system of Britain in 2010-2022. // *Modern Europe*. 2022. No. 5. P. 196.

⁴Gromyko Al. A. Modernization of the UK party system. M. 2007. pp. 2-3.

In the period considered in this thesis, the reason for the next changes in the country's party system was primarily Brexit. Great Britain became the first country of the European Union to withdraw from this integration project following the results of a referendum held in the country in June 2016. This event not only reflected the changes that have occurred in recent years in the views of both political elites and ordinary British people. It also played an important role in the transformation of the party system, which is the most important element of the country's political life.

This paper attempts to determine what impact the most acute and prolonged political crisis in the last hundred years, caused by the process of the country's exit from the EU, had on the party system in Great Britain. Brexit, without a doubt, has become a serious challenge and test of strength, both for the leading political forces of the country, and for third and minor parties. It is also important to note that it unfolded against the backdrop of unfinished processes of constitutional and political transformation in the country, and a growing trend of degradation of the power elites. Under these conditions, the question of the stability of the traditional two-party system, its ability to withstand the challenges of the time, acquired particular relevance and significance.

The study pays great attention to the analysis of the role of third and minor parties, including regional ones, in the British system. The crisis caused by the process of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European integration project objectively gave them new opportunities and tools to achieve their political goals, both at the national and regional levels.

On July 4, 2024, the next general parliamentary elections were held in Britain. This scientific work can become the basis for future research on the topic of transformation of the country's party system in the new electoral cycle.

The scientific novelty of this study lies in the comprehensive and comprehensive analysis of Brexit as a key factor, as well as other factors (coronavirus pandemic, economic crisis, growth of nationalism in the historical regions of the country) that influenced the current state of the UK party system, thus complementing and expanding existing scientific research that addresses certain

aspects of the topic under consideration. Of particular importance, in this regard, is the analysis of the development of the party subsystem in Wales, since this issue has been little studied in domestic historiography. An important element of the work is also the argumentation of the thesis that the traditional two-party system of Great Britain has demonstrated its stability, despite the acute and prolonged crisis caused by Brexit.

The object of the study is the UK party system.

Subject: the main directions of transformation of this system in 2015–2022.

The chronological scope of the study is limited to the period in which conservative prime ministers were in power - from D. Cameron to R. Sunak. The lower limit is associated with the coming to power of a government that held a referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the EU. The upper date is because even after the formal completion of the Brexit procedure, Conservative governments faced its consequences, complemented by other factors that had a significant impact on the transformation of the party system.

Aims and objectives

The purpose of the work is to identify the causes, key aspects and content of the transformation of the modern party system in Great Britain during the specified period of time, including finding out what impact Brexit and its consequences had on it.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to solve the following **tasks**:

- Find out the historical context of the formation of the modern party system in Great Britain, starting from 1945.
- Identify the crises that affected the development of the party system in Britain during the period of time under review, and assess the consequences of their influence on it.
- To identify the main directions and specifics of the development of the Conservative Party and the Labor Party in terms of ideology, parliamentary and electoral tactics in 2015 - 2022, to study the main directions of

modernization of their organizational structures and governing bodies, to assess their role in the country's party system.

- To trace the evolution of the role of third and minor parties in the UK party system during the specified period of time.
- Reveal changes in the configuration of the British party system after each general and regional parliamentary election.
- Identify periods of greatest instability in the British party system and determine their characteristics.
- Determine the reasons and scale of transformation of the British party system during the period under review.

Research strategy

The structure of this work is based on a chronological-problematic approach. The chapters of the dissertation research are structured according to a chronological principle, and the paragraphs - according to the problem. Thus, each chapter logically continues the previous one, which allows for a systematic, comprehensive analysis of the topic. This research structure also makes it possible to show how the elements of the system were transformed in historical retrospect and find out what factors influenced this transformation at each stage. The first chapter is devoted to the study of the specifics of the development of the UK party system from 1945 to 2015. This made it possible to identify the reasons and prerequisites for the features that the party system acquired during the period under review. The second and third chapters analyze processes directly related to the period from 2015 to 2022.

Expected scientific results:

1. Assess the impact of Brexit and other factors (coronavirus pandemic, economic problems, growth of nationalism) on the configuration of the British party system during the period of time under review.
2. To identify the specifics of the development of the main political forces of the country - the Conservative and Labor parties in 2015-2022.
3. To trace how the opportunities and degree of influence of third and minor parties on the policies of the main political forces in Britain changed during

the period under review.

4. Determine the role and place of party leaders in the process of transformation of the UK party system.

Research question: “How did Brexit and other destabilizing factors influence the essence and directions of transformation of the UK party system during the period of time under review?”

Provisions submitted for the defense of the dissertation:

1. During the period under review, Brexit became the most serious challenge to the British party system. A fierce political struggle has unfolded around plans to implement the Britain's withdrawal from the European integration project. The internal party unity of the leading parties in the country, as well as the integrity of the United Kingdom itself, was under threat, since the political situation in the regions destabilized against its background and the problem of the growth of separatism, primarily in Scotland, became even more urgent.
2. At the same time, at the national level, the transformation of the UK party system during the period under review was that, despite the acute crisis caused by Brexit as the main factor in this process and other smaller factors (primarily economic and social), the country’s party system turned out to be quite stable. However, this stability was ensured by the violation of British political traditions by the leaders of the Conservative Party, primarily B. Johnson, who, in order to retain power, circumvented legislative norms and eliminated political competitors within the ranks of his party. The strengthening of the two-party system was also ensured by the decline in the popularity of the Liberal Democratic Party, which allowed the Labor Party, despite the internal party crisis, to act as a balancer of the system.
3. At the regional level, the transformation of party subsystems in Britain was that, against the backdrop of increasing centrifugal tendencies in the country in connection with Brexit, regional parties began to play an even more important role in shaping the political agenda in the country and the regions themselves. The SNP became the third largest faction in the House of

Commons, taking the place of the Lib Dems, while maintaining its leading position in Scotland. The configuration of regional subsystems has also become more complex. The situation in Wales deserves special attention: in connection with Brexit and its consequences, fragmentation of the political landscape in the region has begun. A large pro-independence faction has formed within the ranks of Welsh Labor, and a new movement has also emerged in Wales - "Yes Cymru". Both political projects became competitors of Plaid Cymru, which for a hundred years was virtually the only major party in Wales expressing the interests of the nationalist electorate.

4. The United Kingdom Independence Party played a special role in the UK party system during the Brexit period. It clearly showed that it is extremely difficult for a minor party, especially a single-issue party, to become a significant element in the country's party system in the conditions of holding elections under a majoritarian system of a relative majority. This is important to take into account when assessing the role and prospects created in the post-Brexit period by the new political forces - the Reform UK party and the Independent Group for Change.

Theoretical and methodological justification and research methods

Methodology research is based on the principle of historicism. The historical-comparative method made it possible to find similarities and differences between the phenomena under study depending on spatiotemporal characteristics - this is especially important for comparing the results of parties in elections of different levels held in Britain during the period considered in the work. The historical-genetic method made it possible to identify cause-and-effect relationships in the transformation of the party system, to analyze events and the decision-making process, taking into account their specifics at each historical stage. The historical-descriptive method allowed us to look at the transformation of the party system as something integral and interconnected and at the same time better understand its individual elements. Thanks to the use of these methods, the transformation of the British party system in the considered chronological framework was shown not in

isolation from the historical context, but precisely on the basis of it, which made it possible to point out the deep historical roots of the specific development of the system at the present stage.

To more fully disclose the topic, the study also used system analysis, since the party system is a set of interconnected and interacting objects, integral, and not separate and isolated entities.

Content analysis was used to qualitatively study voluminous primary historical sources (party election programs, transcripts of debates in the House of Commons, public speeches by leaders and representatives of political parties).

In addition to the methods of historical research, the work uses the method of quantitative measurements, in particular, the analysis of sociological data, which allows, based on quantitative indicators (electoral statistics and sociological survey data), to identify the level of public support for political parties and their leaders.

Literature review

The historiography of the study is divided into several groups.

First of all, it is necessary to note the works devoted to general issues of transformation of the party system in Great Britain. In the monograph “Modernization of the British Party System” Al. A. Gromyko conducted a comprehensive analysis of the development of the country’s party system at the end of the 20th – beginning of the 21st centuries, the results of which are widely used in the first part of this study ¹. In the collective monograph “Great Britain. Age of Reform” Al. A. Gromyko examined the problem of the democratic deficit in the country’s party system, the actual transition to a “two-half” party system, embodied in the coalition government formed following the 2010 elections (the first in the post-war period), and the growing internal party split in the camp of the Conservatives and Labor. The author also determined the impact of modernization of public administration and constitutional reform on the country's party system ². It is worth paying attention to the review article by E.V. Ananyeva, Al. A. Gromyko,

¹Gromyko Al.A. Modernization of the UK party system. M. 2007. 344 p .

²United Kingdom. The era of reform. / ed. Al. A. Gromyko. M. 2007. 538 p.

E.A. Susloparova “Modern Great Britain on the pages of the works of Russian scientists.” In it, the authors analyze the problems posed in the studies of domestic English scholars devoted to the period of British history from 1991 to 2021, including the study of the development of the party-political system of the United Kingdom, the concept of the “third way”, problems of devolution, constitutional reforms, Euroscepticism, Brexit ¹.

In foreign historiography from this group, it is first of all worth noting the fundamental work of M. Duverger “Political Parties”, which, although the author devoted not only and not so much to the party system of Britain, but, firstly, he characterizes the party system as such and in -secondly, it still dwells on the most important aspects of the formation and development of the British party-political system, which gives us a starting point for research ².

It is also worth noting the work of Professor at the University of Sussex D. Sanders, who analyzed changes in the party system in Britain, in particular, explored the issues of inter-party contradictions and intra-party splits in Britain. The author points out that the adoption of high-profile and controversial decisions by party leaders contributed to inter-party contradictions and intra-party splits in the country. He cites as an example the decision of E. Miliband to change the rules for electing the leader of the Labor Party, which greatly increased the number of party supporters able to take part in the vote, which led to the loss of the image of the party with a clear electoral base. According to D. Sanders, D. Cameron's promise to hold a referendum on Britain's membership in the EU weakened the position of the pro-European conservatives who formed the basis of the party ³. The author also believes that over the past 40 years the two-party system in Westminster has become a system of "unbalanced multi-partyism". Its main elements, in his opinion, are the Conservatives, Labor, Liberal Democrats, the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru. D. Sanders believes that the reason for this process is the decline in party

¹Ananyeva E. V., Gromyko A. A., Susloparova E. A. Modern Great Britain on the pages of the works of Russian scientists // *Contours of global transformations: politics, economics, law*. 2021. Vol. 14. No. 6. pp. 184-212.

²Duverger M. *Political parties* / trans. from French M. 2000. 538 With .

³Sanders D. The UK's Changing Party System: the Prospects for a Party Realignment at Westminster // *Journal of the British Academy*. 2016. No. 5. P. 91–124.

identity and the growing disappointment of the population with Labor and the Conservatives. As a result of ego, the share of people who clearly associate themselves with a party decreased from 45% in 1964 to 15% in 2015, and citizens who do not associate themselves with any party at all, on the contrary, increased from 5% to 20% ¹. D. Sanders also believes that the population is increasingly speaking out on specific issues without taking sides with any party, and considers this a trend towards centrism. However, he doubts that the parties have enough resources, in particular the political will, to undergo such fundamental changes ².

We also note the work of Professor J. Sutcliffe of the University of Windsor (Canada), dedicated to the causes and consequences of the phenomenon of Euroscepticism for the political system of Britain using the example of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), published in 2012. The author believes that the UIP used the ideas of Euroscepticism rather to maintain its image “protest” party and for the sake of retaining the corresponding electorate. However, this did not allow the party to enter the list of the main political forces in Britain. At the same time, he believes that, despite the fact that the party remained on the periphery of the political system, the course it pursued, one way or another, influenced the political agenda as a whole. As for the influence on the party system, the author points out that the UKIP took away part of the electorate from the Conservative Party, weakening its position ³.

The influence of devolution on the country's party and political system was studied by D. MacKinnon. Particularly worth noting is his article on the impact of devolution on the internal political situation in the country, in which the author analyzes its progress in different regions - Scotland and Wales. He in particular assesses the specifics of Westminster's policies in the process of devolution of powers to the authorities of the historical provinces of the United Kingdom ⁴. At the

¹Sanders D. The UK's Changing Party System...P. 107.

²Ibid. P. 91–124.

³Sutcliffe J. The roots and consequences of Euroscepticism : an evaluation of the United Kingdom Independence Party // University of Windsor. [Electronic resource]. URL : <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=poliscipub> (date of access: 03/15/2021).

⁴McKinnon D. Devolution, state restructuring and policy divergence in the UK // The Geographical Journal. 2015. Vol. 181. No. 1. P. 47–56.

same time, the author, in our opinion, does not fully illuminate the role of political parties in this issue.

The second group of historiography on the topic of this study consists of works devoted to the issue of strengthening the role of third and minor parties in Britain. The phenomenon of a short but rapid growth in the popularity of the UKIP is subject to analysis as part of the study of the evolution of the party system in Britain and the assessment of the influence of this party on the policies of leading political forces.

This topic is revealed in their study by professors at the University of Manchester J. Evans and J. Mellon, who believe that it was the rise of the UKIP that made D. Cameron promise voters to hold a referendum on Britain's membership in the EU. The researchers also identify the reasons for the rise in popularity of the UKIP and conclude that this was greatly facilitated by the Labor government's decision in 2004 to open the UK's borders to the 10 countries with which the EU had an association agreement. According to the authors, it was the European issue that became an important factor in inter-party competition and election struggle. In this context, growing public support for the UKIP led to the very possibility of holding a referendum. Despite this success, which peaked in the 2015 elections when the UKIP managed to get a member into the House of Commons for the first time, the party collapsed in the 2017 elections. Experts associate it with the Conservatives' attempts to implement a "hard" Brexit (although there was a split in the party on this issue), which allowed them to attract many UKIP supporters to their side. In turn, this contributed to the eventual return of the British party system to traditional two-partyism, although it did not preclude further debate about its erosion in Britain ¹.

Among the studies devoted to the development and role of UKIP, we also note the work of R. Ford and M. Goodwin ². The authors analyzed party's electoral base.

¹Evans G., Mellon J. Immigration, Euroscepticism, and the rise and fall of UKIP // Party Politics. 2019. Vol. 25. No. 1. P. 76-87.

²Ford R., Goodwin M. Revolt on the right: Explaining support for the radical right in Britain. Routledge. 2014. 318 P.

The Liberal Democrat Party attracts the interest of researchers primarily as part of the analysis of the results of the 2010 parliamentary elections, which resulted in the formation of a coalition government. This issue is widely analyzed in a monograph edited by researchers from the University of Hull (England) S. Lee and M. Beach ¹. The chronology of the study, although limited to 2011 and does not cover the entire period of the coalition government, the authors analyze in detail the reasons and specifics of its formation.

British researchers D. Cutts and E. Russell analyzed the consequences of forming a coalition with the Conservative Party for the Liberal Democrat Party in 2010. The authors argue that the decision to create a coalition greatly undermined the position of the Lib Dems and the electorate's trust in the party ². In this study we prove the validity of this point of view.

It is important to note that the evolution of the role of the UKIP and the Liberal Democrats has been quite well studied, while, for example, there is practically no research devoted to the analysis of the phenomenon of the Brexit Party (currently Reform UK) and "The Independent Group for Change". However, in this regard, it is necessary to note the article by E.V. Ananyeva "The Right Forces of Britain", in which the author examines the alignment of political forces in Great Britain at the present stage, evaluates the role of the Conservative Party and small right-wing parties in the country, and analyzes the specifics of their relationship after the 2016 referendum on the United Kingdom's membership in the EU ³.

The role of regional parties in the British party system receives great attention in both foreign and domestic historiography. I.V. Krivushin conducted a comprehensive analysis of the growth in popularity of the SNP after the referendum

¹Lee S. Beech M. The Cameron-Clegg Government: Coalition Politics in an Age of Austerity. L. 2011. 291 P.

² Cutts D., Russell A. From coalition to catastrophe: the electoral meltdown of the Liberal Democrats. // Parliamentary Affairs. 2015. Vol. 68 No. 1. P. 70-87.

³Ananyeva E.V. Right-wing forces in Britain // Current problems of Europe. 2023. No. 4. pp. 105-129.

on Scottish independence in 2014. ¹E.V. Ananyeva pays great attention to assessing the role of the SNP ².

It should be noted that Welsh issues are explored to a lesser extent in Russian historiography. However, we note the research of A.A. Nechaeva, in which the author examines the development of devolution in the region, its social and economic aspects, as well as the formation of Welsh identity ³. The role of political parties in these processes is analyzed to a lesser extent. This gap is addressed in this study. Also supplemented are the studies of S.V. Pronkin ⁴ and O.V. Okhoshin ⁵, who analyze some aspects of the Welsh party system. Among the works of foreign scientists, we note the articles of J. Bradbury ⁶ and C. McAngus ⁷.

The third group of scientific works contains an analysis of the results of the general parliamentary elections held during the period under review.

In the collective monograph “Dilemmas of Britain. Searching for Development Paths” the authors examine in detail the reasons for the relative success of the Conservatives in the 2010 elections and the process of forming a coalition government ⁸. Famous researcher N.K. Kapitonova, who has devoted many works to the analysis of certain aspects of the domestic and foreign policy of Great Britain, in recent years has paid special attention to the analysis of changes in the party system of Britain. She believes that the 2015 election results were a “political

¹ Krivushin I.V. Paradoxes of Scottish politics: Referendum 2014 // New and recent history. 2015. No. 6. pp. 129-143.

²Ananyeva E.V. Humza Yusaf is the new leader of the Scottish National Party // Analytical notes of the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences. [Electronic resource]. URL : http://www.zapiski-ieran.ru/images/analitika/2023/an_303.pdf (date of access: 04/05/2024).

³Nechaeva A. A. Nationalism in Wales at the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries, as a factor in preserving Welsh identity // Bulletin of the Udmurt University. Series: History and Philology. 2019. No. 1. P. 146–155; Nechaeva A. A. National Party of Wales and the transformation of Welshness : a mechanism for preserving national identity in the 20th century. // Bulletin of Tomsk State University. 2020. No. 455. pp. 109–116.

⁴Pronkin S.V. Wales: a long path to devolution // Bulletin of Moscow University. Series 21. Management (state and society). 2016. No. 4. pp. 155-168; Pronkin S.V. Devolution of Wales: administrative aspect // Bulletin of Moscow University. Series 21. Management (state and society). 2021. No.2. pp. 38-52.

⁵ Okhoshin O.V. Consequences of Brexit for Wales // Scientific and Analytical Bulletin of the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences. 2021. no. 6. S. 104-111.

⁶Bradbury J. Welsh devolution and the union: Reform debates after Brexit // The Political Quarterly. 2021. Vol. 92. No. 1. P.125-131.

⁷ McAngus C. Office and Policy at the Expense of Votes: Plaid Cymru and the One Wales Government // Regional & Federal Studies. 2013. Vol . 24. No. 2. P . 209 - 227.

⁸Britain's dilemmas: searching for development paths. / ed. Al.A. Gromyko (chief editor), E.V. Ananyeva. M. 2014. 481 p.

earthquake” for the UK, as the traditionally stable two-party system turned out to be much stronger than it seemed after the 2010 elections ¹.

The 2015 elections are of particular interest, since it was as a result of their results that the Conservatives were forced to begin the practical implementation of the idea of holding a referendum on the feasibility of UK membership in the EU.

A comprehensive analysis of the general parliamentary elections of 2015 and 2017 was carried out by researchers from the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences ². Also, these elections are discussed in detail in the monographs of P. Cowley and D. Kavanagh ³. O. Heath and M. Goodwin assessed the results of the 2017 general parliamentary elections, paying particular attention to the analysis of the election campaigns of the main parties in the UK, voter turnout and the reasons for the failure of the Conservative Party. They are trying to answer the question of how Brexit affected the election results, what significance the failure of the UKIP had for the party-political system. The authors conclude that despite the fact that a tough position on the implementation of Brexit allowed the Conservatives to take away some votes from the UKIP in the localities, this was offset by the loss of votes in areas where the majority voted “for” leaving the EU in the 2016 referendum ⁴.

Brexit factor played an even greater role in the results of the 2017 elections than for the Conservatives. They also believe that, despite the fact that neither party managed to secure an absolute majority in the House of Commons, the feature of this election was a return to dominance of the two main parties (Conservatives and

¹Kapitonova N.K. Results of the general elections in Great Britain. [Electronic resource]. URL : <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/itogi-vseobshchikh-vyborov-v-velikobritanii/> (date of access: 04/10/2022).

²The course, results and consequences of the 2015 general parliamentary elections in Great Britain / ed. E.V. Ananyeva. Institute of Europe RAS. 2015. No. 319. 148 S.; Great Britain on the eve of the general parliamentary elections in 2015 / ed. E.V. Ananyeva. Institute of Europe RAS. 2014. No. 309. 142 S.; Ananyeva E.V. Divided Britain // Modern Europe. 2017. No. 5. pp. 5-15.; Ananyeva E.V. “Strange elections” in Great Britain // Modern Europe. 2019. No. 6. WITH . 76–84.

³Cowley P., Kavanagh D. The British general election of 2015. L. 2016. 520 P.; Cowley P., Kavanagh D. The British general election of 2017. L. 2018. 604 P.; Cowley P., Kavanagh D. The British general election of 2015. L. 2016. 520 P.; Cowley P., Kavanagh D. The British general election of 2017. London. 2018. 604 P.

⁴Heath O., Goodwin M. The 2017 general election, Brexit and the return to two-party politics: An aggregate-level analysis of the result // The Political Quarterly. 2017. Vol. 88. No. 3. P. 345-358.

Labor together received 82.4% of the popular vote)¹. Like many other researchers, O. Heath and M. Goodwin point to increased inter-party contradictions in the general parliamentary elections of 2017. They note the populism of J. Corbyn and his attempts to increase the Labor electorate in this way².

Assessing the impact of Brexit on the population's increased interest in participating in the country's political life, the authors note that the 2017 elections attracted voters to an extent not seen in the last twenty years. The turnout of citizens was 69%, which is the highest figure since 1997. Voter activity increased especially in those regions where they voted against Brexit in the referendum³. This evidence suggests that perhaps in areas where support for leaving the EU was low, there was counter-mobilization against May's strong intention to leave the EU, which could be perceived as a willingness to implement a hard Brexit.

Researchers J. Garland and K. Terry, summing up the results of the 2017 parliamentary elections, point out the shortcomings of the majoritarian system of relative majority, explaining this by the fact that this is not the first time that a “hung Parliament” situation has arisen in the United Kingdom. They also believe, contrary to what some experts believe, that the two-party system has become obsolete⁴. The authors also highlight new electoral trends and point out that the split among voters has become not only and not so much ideological and has become more about socio-economic issues. After the 2017 parliamentary elections, the division of the electorate into supporters and opponents of Brexit became obvious. If in 2015 Eurosceptics and Eurooptimists could vote for one party, then in 2017 44% cast their votes for different parties, that is, many changed their political preferences⁵.

An important group in the general body of historiography consists of scientific works that address problems ideological transformation of British parties

¹Heath O., Goodwin M. The 2017 general election, Brexit and the return to two-party politics: An aggregate-level analysis of the result // The Political Quarterly. 2017. Vol. 88. No. 3. P. 345-358.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Garland J., Terry C. The 2017 General Election: Volatile voting, random results //Electoral Reform Society. [Electronic resource]. URL : <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/latest-news-and-research/publications/the-2017-general-election-report/> (date accessed: 03/20/2022)

⁵ Ibid .

and changes in their organizational structure. For example, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor at the National Research University Higher School of Economics I.G. Kovalev examines in one of his articles the question of how crises affect the development of party configurations and the change of their ideological guidelines. As an example, the election of D. Cameron as head of the Tories is given, the ideas introduced by the new leader as part of the modernization of the party are analyzed, special attention is paid to the new ideological program of “progressive conservatism”, in which the idea of a “big society” occupied a central place. Such changes demonstrated, according to the author, the desire of conservatives to go beyond their traditional dogmas ¹. This topic is also discussed by E.V. Ananyeva in the article “From “New Labor” to “Progressive Conservatism” ².

Researcher Ya.A. Grabar, in an article enlightening the ideological component of the policy of “progressive conservatism” of D. Cameron, gives a very complete explanation of the ideology of the “big society”. The author believes that this idea had a chance of gaining great support in the UK, despite the skepticism of many experts ³.

Issues of modernization of the Conservative Party are also covered in the works of P. Kerr and R. Hayton. Researchers agree that the modernization started by D. Cameron turned out to be insignificant both ideologically and politically. In their opinion, it failed largely due to the crisis of 2007-2010, as well as the results of the 2010 elections, since D. Cameron had to switch to resolving more pressing issues on the economic agenda and building relationships with coalition partners. R. Hayton assesses the position of the Conservatives in the coalition government and comes to the conclusion that although they managed to defend their interests and firmly maintain a leading role, the party's key problems remained unresolved ⁴.

¹Kovalev I.G. Party modernization in the country of traditions // Current problems of Europe. 2018. no. 2. P.62-84.

²Ananyeva E.V. “From “New Labourism” to “Progressive Conservatism”. Reports of the Institute of IE RAS. No. 293. M. 2013. 139 p.

³Grabar Y.A. The ideology of the “big society”: the old new conservatism of David Cameron // World Economy and International Relations. 2017. T. 61. No. 2. S. 33-43.

⁴Kerr P., Hayton R. Whatever happened to Conservative Party modernization ? // British Politics. 2015. Vol. 10. No. 2. P. 114-130.

Modernization and the role of the Labor Party in the country's system are also analyzed in a number of studies. J. Atkins analyzed the evolution of the party's ideology, in particular, comparing the course of Labor leader E. Miliband from 2010 to 2015 with the policies of his predecessors. The researcher noted that under him, the ideological guidelines, on the one hand, were generally consistent with “old Laborism,” but on the other hand, included a rejection of the state-centric approach¹. K. Massey, in turn, compares the ideological guidelines of the party during the leadership of the Laborites J. Corbyn and K. Starmer, analyzing their personnel decisions. The author comes to the conclusion that the latter held more moderate views compared to the ultra-left J. Corbyn². E. Goes also analyzed the ideology of Labor under K. Starmer and pointed out that the main feature of his strategy was the de-ideologization of politics in order to attract a wide range of voters to his side³. Leading researcher at IMEMO RAS N.V. Rabotyazhev also focused on the ideological transformation of the party and changing the rules for electing its leader⁴. The reforms carried out in the party during the period under review are also widely covered in the works of E.V. Ananyeva⁵ and P. Whitley⁶.

To summarize, we can conclude that some issues, for example, the importance of the electoral factor, some aspects of the role of third and minor parties in the UK (especially the UKIP), and the problem of increasing inter-party contradictions have been well studied.

However, there are issues that, in our opinion, have not been studied fully enough. Experts disagree on the likelihood of maintaining the two-party system in Britain. The historiographical review above contains arguments from both supporters that the two-party system has not yet outlived its usefulness, and those who believe that the modern party system in Great Britain is already far from being

¹Atkins J. Narrating one nation: The ideology and rhetoric of the Miliband Labor Party // *Politics*. 2015. Vol. 35. No. 1. P. 19-31.

²Massey C. A New Era? Keir Starmer's Labor Leadership // *Political Insight*. 2020. Vol. 11. No. 4. P. 4-7.

³Goes E. The labor party under Keir Starmer : 'Thanks, but no “isms” please!' // *The Political Quarterly*. 2021. Vol. 92. No. 2. P. 176-183.

⁴Rabotyazhev, N.V. The Labor Party of Great Britain: forward, to the past? // *Journal of political philosophy and sociology of politics “ Polity .” Analysis. Chronicle. Forecast*". 2016. T.4. No. 83. pp. 108-127.

⁵Ananyeva E.V. British Labor Party: Principles or power? // *Modern Europe*. 2016. No. 2. S. 92-96.

⁶Whiteley P. The Labor Party in Crisis. L. 2018. 245 P.

considered a stable two-party system and, moreover, third and minor parties have chances of undermining it completely. Our study plans to cover this topic in detail. In this context, the work will pay special attention not only to inter-party struggle, but also to the analysis of intra-party splits, taking into account the ongoing discussion in British parties today, including on the issue of implementing Brexit, which the vast majority of researchers consider the cause of the deepest internal political crisis since the beginning of the 20th century.

Issues of internal party modernization of the Tories in terms of ideology are mainly limited to the analysis of D. Cameron's reforms, since in modern studies, due to the fact that Brexit dominated the agenda, more attention is paid to the analysis of external factors, and therefore this issue requires more detailed study.

The study will also complement existing works on the role of third and minor parties, including regional ones. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of the transformation of the Welsh party system, as well as the role of the Liberal Democrats outside the context of the formation and work of the coalition government in 2010, which is the subject of most publications about the Lib Dems.

An important part of the study is the analysis of the current (2020-2022) state of the party system in Britain. Considering that during this period, important events for our topic took place in the political life of the country, in particular, the high-profile resignations of prime ministers and leaders of leading parties, and there was also an increase in tension in the regions of the country in the post- Brexit environment. Given the backdrop of the economic crisis that has erupted in Britain, these issues are of particular interest and will be discussed in detail in the study.

The empirical base of the study consists of several groups of primary sources.

The first of them is official party documents: program documents and manifestos of political parties ¹, speeches and statements of party leaders ², materials of annual party congresses ³, inter-party agreements ⁴. This group of sources is of key importance for this study. Party documents reflect the official course of the parties, give an idea of the evolution of the parties' approaches to solving certain issues, provide an opportunity to trace the transformation of the party's ideology and policies, ways and methods of influencing the electorate, compare the promises of the parties with the real results of their work, and identify inter-party contradictions. Party manifestos, which are updated for each parliamentary election, reflect the reaction of participants in the political process to changes in the socio-political and

¹The Conservative Party Manifesto 2015. Strong Leadership. A Clear Economic Plan. A Brighter, more Secure Future. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.theresavilliers.co.uk/sites/www.theresavilliers.co.uk/files/conservativemanifesto2015.pdf> (accessed: 29.03.2021); The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2017. Forward Together. Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and a Prosperous Future. [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/wmatrix/ukmanifestos2017/localpdf/Conservatives.pdf> (accessed: 12.15.2020); The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2019. Get Brexit Done: Unleash Britain's Potential. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://assets-global.website-files.com/5da42e2cae7ebd3f8bde353c/5dda924905da587992a064ba-Conservative%202019%20Manifesto.pdf> (accessed: 03/29/2021); The Labor Party Manifesto 2015. Britain Can Be Better. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20150522164954/http://www.labour.org.uk/page/-/BritainCanBeBetter-TheLabourPartyManifesto2015.pdf> (accessed: 29.03.2021); The Labor Party Manifesto 2017. For The Many Not the Few. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20170610174732/http://www.labour.org.uk/page/-/Images/manifesto-2017/labour-manifesto-2017.pdf> (accessed: 29.03.2021); The Labor Party Manifesto 2019. It's Time for Real Change. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Real-Change-Labor-Manifesto-2019.pdf> (accessed: 29.03.2021); Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2015. Stronger Economy. Fairer Society. Opportunity for Everyone. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.markpack.org.uk/files/2015/04/Liberal-Democrat-2015-general-election-manifesto-federal-party-version.pdf> (accessed: 30.03.2021); Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2017. Changing Britain's Future. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.markpack.org.uk/files/2017/05/Liberal-Democrat-2017-general-election-manifesto.pdf> (accessed: 30.03.2021); Liberal Democrat 2019 Manifesto. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.libdems.org.uk/liberal-democrats-2019-manifesto> (accessed: 29.03.2021); UKIP Manifesto 2015. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/UKIPdev/pages/1103/attachments/original/1429295050/UKIPManifesto2015.pdf> (accessed: 03.03.2021); UKIP manifesto summary: Key points at-a-glance. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-2017-40042669> (accessed: 03.03.2021).

²Boris Johnson's first speech as Prime Minister: 07/24/2019. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/boris-johnsons-first-speech-as-prime-minister-24-july-2019> (accessed: 9.09.2022); Ed Davey sets sights on political and electoral reform in IPPR speech. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.libdems.org.uk/press-release?tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=1797&cHash=2dcff099c9b1505bc6d8a04e0383f233 (accessed: 9.09.2022)

³Keir Starmer's full speech to 2022 Labor conference. The Spectator. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/read-keir-starmer-s-full-speech-to-2022-labor-conference/> (accessed: 15.09.2023)

⁴Conservative-DUP agreement. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/621794/Confidence_and_Supply_Agreement_between_the_Conservative_Party_and_the_DUP.pdf (accessed: 10.08.2022).

socio-economic life of the country. When using information from the listed sources, it is necessary to take into account that parties use statements and manifestos rather to influence the population in order to increase their ratings and win parliamentary elections, which, without a doubt, affects their content. Therefore, their analysis should be approached critically.

The second group of primary sources is various parliamentary documents, including transcripts of debates in the House of Commons¹, results of voting in parliament². They provide an opportunity to fully immerse oneself in the specifics of the political process, compare the opinions of deputies on various current issues, determine the position of parties, and identify the presence or absence of splits in them. Data obtained from parliamentary resources is particularly useful in reflecting the impact of Brexit on the country's party system. Their special value lies in their great information content and accuracy, which primarily concerns voting results. They show the real balance of political forces in the country, the analysis of which is of paramount importance for our research, and also allow us to identify intra-party contradictions.

¹Brexit Negotiations. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-12-11/debates/965E3010-41F6-4353-A2CC-2F5A6C31495F/BrexitNegotiations> (accessed: 9.09.2022), The delivery of Brexit. [Electronic resource]. URL : <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-02-06/debates/66BD2BFF-44F4-49F1-B812-EB272FC6CB3A/TheDeliveryOfBrexit>; Brexit Discussions . [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-09-13/debates/1B7FBE62-6203-4B99-AFBF-D43F4077CF04/BrexitDiscussions> (accessed: 15.10.2022); Brexit Deal: Referendum. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-12-11/debates/E3B1D9A4-5B9B-4337-8486-C4BE9A46F2BB/BrexitDealReferendum> (accessed: 05.03.2021); Watch live: British Parliament debates Brexit . [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uk-zqpPIMrM> (accessed: 05.03.2021); No Confidence in Her Majesty's Government Volume 652: debated on Wednesday 16 January 2019. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-01-16/debates/D130C27B-C328-48F8-B596-03F05BF2EF8A/NoConfidenceInHerMajesty%E2%80%99SGovernment> (accessed: 05.03.2021); Brexit Negotiations and No Deal Contingency Planning. [Electronic resource]. URL : <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-09-04/debates/3F1F8363-0A4B-4DB6-B8C0-CC8D64DBF150/BrexitNegotiationsAndNoDealContingencyPlanning> (accessed: 02/06.2024).

²European Union (Withdrawal) Bill: Committee of the whole House Amdt 7. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://votes.parliament.uk/Votes/Commons/Division/335#noes> (accessed: 10.04.2022); European Union (Withdrawal) Act main Motion (Prime Minister). [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://votes.parliament.uk/Votes/Commons/Division/562> (accessed: 15.08.2023); Section 13(1)(b) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act main motion. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://votes.parliament.uk/Votes/Commons/Division/623#noes> (accessed: 9.09.2022); United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://votes.parliament.uk/Votes/Commons/Division/664#ayes> (date appeal : 08/15/2023); Health Protection (Entry to venues etc) SI No 1416. UK Parliament . [Electronic resource]. URL : <https://votes.parliament.uk/Votes/Commons/Division/1182#ayes> (accessed: 15.01.2023).

The third group is government documents - policy documents on the implementation of Brexit¹, "white papers"². The program of the coalition government of conservatives and liberal democrats, formed following the parliamentary elections of 2010, requires special attention. ³The importance of this source lies in the fact that this is the first such document in half a century in which the two parties recorded a common program of government work. It also reflects changes in the country's party system from a perspective that provides an opportunity to look at how two previously opposing forces came to consensus on different issues on the political agenda. An equally important document is the White Paper on Britain's exit from the EU ⁴. There T. May explains on what principles Britain's cooperation with the EU should be based after the country leaves the integration association. This source allows you to gain a deeper understanding of the Prime Minister's policy directions.

Fourth group: electoral statistics ⁵, which show the evolution of the party and political preferences of UK voters and record their dynamics. Among these sources,

¹The Future Relationship with the EU. The UK's Approach to Negotiations. [Electronic resource]. URL : https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/868874/The_Future_Relationship_with_the_EU.pdf (accessed: 10.03.2022).

²The United Kingdom's exit from and new partnership with the European Union White paper. [Electronic resource]. URL : https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/589191/The_United_Kingdoms_exit_from_and_partnership_with_the_EU_Web.pdf (accessed: 02.04.2021).

³The Coalition: our program for government. [Electronic resource]. URL : https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/83820/coalition_program_for_government.pdf (accessed: 10.03.2021).

⁴The United Kingdom's exit from and new partnership with the European Union White paper. [Electronic resource]. URL : https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/589191/The_United_Kingdoms_exit_from_and_partnership_with_the_EU_Web.pdf (accessed: 01.04.2021).

⁵ 2007 Assembly Election Results. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://senedd.wales/media/nxnn2sz4/07-069-english.pdf> (accessed: 28.11.2023); Apostolova V., Audickas L., Baker C., Bate A., Cracknell R., Dempsey N., Hawkins O., McInnes R., Rutherford T., Uberoi E.. General Election 2017: full results and analysis. Research Briefing. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7979/> (accessed: 20.08.2023); EU referendum results by region: Wales // Statista. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/elections-and-referendums/past-elections-and-referendums/eu-referendum/results-and- turnout-eu-referendum/eu-referendum-results-region-wales> (accessed: 20.08.2023); Number of seats won in Welsh Parliament (Senedd Cymru) elections from 1999 to 2021, by party // Statista. [Electronic resource]. URL : <https://www.statista.com/statistics/283894/welsh-parliament-election-results/> (accessed: 20.08.2023); 2007 Assembly Election Results . [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://senedd.wales/media/nxnn2sz4/07-069-english.pdf> (date appeals : 11/28/2023) ; Pilling S. Senedd Cymru /Welsh Parliament elections 2021 // House of Commons Library. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9282/CBP-9282.pdf> (accessed: 10.08.2023); General Election 2015: full results and analysis. [Electronic resource]. URL : <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7186/> (accessed: 20.08.2023).

the document published on the website of the British Parliament, which provides statistics on elections in Great Britain from 1918 to 2019, stands out, as it provides detailed, comprehensive information about the results of elections held during the period considered in the work ¹.

A special and specific group of primary sources are **the memoirs** of leaders and representatives of political parties ². They provide important information about the authors' discussions with colleagues and opponents, revealing many details and nuances that cannot be found in other sources of information. At the same time, memoirs as a subjective source of personal origin, containing a large number of value judgments, and in some cases lies, require a special critical approach and multiple double-checking of the information provided. In this sense, the memoirs of former British Prime Minister T. Blair deserve special attention. He writes a lot about the difficult relationship with his successor G. Brown and, for example, according to the famous Russian specialist on Britain N.K. Kapitonova, “he is disingenuous when he again and again emphasizes his intention to leave after two terms. One could believe this if we did not know with what difficulty he resigned ³. ” Comparing the memoirs of the leaders of the Conservative and Labor parties will increase the degree of objectivity in assessing events.

A separate fifth group of sources for this work are public opinion polls ⁴. The information they provide shows the attitude of voters towards British parties and

¹Cracknell R., Uberoi E., Burton M. UK Election Statistics: 1918-2019 – A century of elections // House of Commons Library. [Electronic resource]. URL : <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7529/> (accessed: 20.08.2023).

²Blair T. A journey. L. 2010. 718 p.; Brown G. My life, Our Times. L. 2017. 512 p.; Cameron D. For the Record. L. 2019. 837 p.; Francois M. Spartan Victory: The inside story of the Battle for Brexit . S. 2021. 470 p.; May T. The Abuse of Power: Confronting Injustice in Public Life. 2023. L. 352 p.; Price A. Wales-the First and Final Colony. T. 2018. 226 p .

³N.K. Kapitonov. “Traveling” with Tony Blair through the pages of his memoirs // New and recent history. 2011. No. 5. P. 185-207.

⁴The Times Survey Results // YouGov . [Electronic resource]. URL : https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/reln10bpe1/TheTimes_VI_220907_W.pdf (accessed: 05.12.2022); Yes Cymru Survey Results // YouGov . [Electronic resource]. URL:

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/yescymru/mailings/1578/attachments/original/YesCymru_WelshIndyPolling_200827_indy.pdf?1599067616 (accessed: 15.05.2023); In hindsight, do you think Britain was right or wrong to vote to leave the European Union? // Statista. [Electronic resource]. URL : <https://www.statista.com/statistics/987347/brexit-opinion-poll/> (accessed: 20.08.2023); Savanta ComRes Wales Voting Intention –29 April 2021 // Savanta . [Electronic resource]. URL: https://savanta.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Final_38028217-Wales-Poll-20210429_Private.pdf (accessed: 20.08.2023); Wales says no to Scottish independence: our exclusive YouGov poll // WalesOnline . [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/wales-says-no-scottish-independence-7007185> (accessed: 04.08.2024); Future of England Survey Results // YouGov . [Electronic resource].

their policies, and reflects the opinion of the population on certain current issues on the agenda.

Sixth group: media materials ¹. They provide press releases, statements and speeches by party leaders and activists that reflect intra- and inter-party controversies, as well as changes in party policies. These materials allow you to use the most current data in your work, provide an additional opportunity to analyze more positions and opinions directly in the process of ongoing events, and track the dynamics of public sentiment.

Summary of the main findings and conclusions of the study

The conducted research allows us to formulate a number of conclusions and conclusions.

Modern British bipartisanship has deep, centuries-old historical roots, but its key foundations remain unchanged today. At the same time, the British party system was constantly transformed, acquiring new features. It began to develop especially dynamically after 1945. Primarily due to problems in the economy, which worsened in the 1960-1970s, the Conservative and Labor parties were in constant search for mechanisms to resolve them, as well as new ways to attract the electorate.

Since the last quarter of the twentieth century. The most important issue determining the formation of internal political discourse in the country was European integration. Britain's integration into the EU was initially very painful and long. The country joined the association (which existed as the EEC until 1992) only

URL:

https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/ux4c6rw4bx/FOE_Wales_June18_Results_w.pdf (accessed: 04.08.2024); Plaid Cymru Survey Results // YouGov . [Electronic resource]. URL: https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/4lav01m6zl/PlaidCymruResults_190910_Independence_W.pdf (accessed: 15.05.2023).

¹EU referendum: Full transcript of David Cameron's last-ditch plea for Britain to Remain. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/eu-referendum-brex-it-latest-live-david-cameron-full-speech-remain-leave-a7093426.html> (accessed: 04.01.2024); Keir Starmer's full speech to 2022 Labor conference. The Spectator. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/read-keir-starmer-s-full-speech-to-2022-labour-conference/> (accessed: 16.06.2024); Jeremy Corbyn's Labor conference speech in full. Business Insider. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.businessinsider.com/full-text-of-jeremy-corbyns-labour-conference-speech-2017-9> (accessed: 06.16.2023); Jeremy Corbyn blames terrorist attacks such as Manchester bombing on UK foreign policy. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/jeremy-corbyn-manchester-attack-terrorism-uk-foreign-policy-wars-speech-a7756266.html> (accessed: 15.08.2023); David Cameron calls for UK exemption from EU's 'ever-closer' union // The Guardian. [Electronic resource]. URL : <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/jan/23/david-cameron-uk-exemption-eu> (accessed: 08.01.2023).

in 1973, finally overcoming all external and internal barriers. However, during the prime ministership of M. Thatcher, it became clear that there were serious contradictions, both economic and political, between the rules of operation of the EEC and the interests of Britain. This was especially true of the threat of Britain losing part of its sovereignty, which intensified the confrontation between the Eurosceptic and Eurooptimist factions in the Tories, which escalated further under John Major, when the question of signing the Maastricht Treaty arose. As a result, the Tories managed to sign an agreement on terms favorable to themselves. This was a victory for Britain in defending its national interests, which once again indicated its special position in Europe.

Theoretically, this should have ensured the country's effective and long-term membership in the association, since it seemed to meet the interests of all participants in the process. However, the political development of Britain in the 21st century showed that this compromise did not resolve all existing contradictions, but only temporarily smoothed them out, which became obvious with the emergence of new challenges: migration and economic crises. This led to a new growth of Euroscepticism in Britain, an increase in the popularity of right-wing forces in the country, and, most importantly, to the emergence of the United Kingdom Independence Party, which gave new impetus to the question of the need for the country to leave the EU and provoked the transition of some eurosceptic Tories into its ranks. Ultimately, this led to a national referendum on the country's membership in the EU in 2016, in which the majority of citizens voted in favor of the United Kingdom leaving the integration association.

Since 2015, the key role in the transformation of the party system has belonged to the oldest political force in Great Britain - the Conservatives. The adjustment of ideological guidelines and the use of new modern methods in agitation and propaganda work allowed the Tories in 2015, after a long pause, to finally gain an absolute majority of seats in the House of Commons. Even though in 2015–2022 the party was led by four different leaders, the Conservatives retained power, win three general parliamentary elections, and complete the Brexit process. However,

the remaining contradictions in the ranks of the Tories during this period began to actually form a new political reality. The delay in the process of approving the Withdrawal Agreement from the EU, high-profile resignations of prime ministers and members of the Government have actually become the norm. In addition, B. Johnson, whose undoubted merit is the completion of the painful process of the break between Great Britain and the EU, has become a striking example of the modern degradation of the ruling elites of Western Europe. Moreover, he managed to overcome the political crisis not thanks to internal party consolidation, but rather to a maneuver to circumvent the provisions of the Law on the fixed term of office of Parliament and expel from the party a number of deputies who disagreed with his policies. It is worth noting that this trend of growing anti-democratic tendencies in the Conservative Party continued after B. Johnson's resignation. This was especially evident in the tightening of the rules for electing the party leader: R. Sunak was actually “crowned”, since the new rules made it almost impossible to nominate more than one candidate.

The opposite situation developed in the Labor Party, in which the rules for electing the leader became increasingly democratic, which played an important role in both the victory of J. Corbyn and the victory of K. Starmer. In general, during the period under review, the main opponents of the Tories, despite the lack of a clear and unified position on the main issues of the political agenda and defeats in the general parliamentary elections, also retained their place in the two-party system of Great Britain. In addition, their attempts in the post- Brexit period to develop new value guidelines and strategies for responding to current challenges are in many ways logical and timely. In this context, it is interesting to note the party leadership's appeal to some of the ideological foundations of “New Labour” and the concept of T. Blair's “third way”, given the party's emphasis on rejecting overly “left-wing” ideas.

As in all periods of crisis in Britain, during the Brexit period and immediately after it, the role of third and minor parties was clearly and particularly manifested. As forces of opposition pressure, temporary allies or important players at the

regional level, they have demonstrated their ability to exert, albeit not always obvious, quite significant influence on the adoption of important political decisions by leading parties. In this sense, for example, the dynamics of the development of the role of the UKIP is interesting, which in 2015, against the backdrop of the debate around the referendum and Brexit, was at the peak of its popularity, both from an electoral and information point of view. Despite the fact that the party's success was short-lived, since the majoritarian electoral system leaves no chance for minor parties, it showed the versatility and dynamism of the British party system, contrary to the existing opinion about its static nature.

At the same time, it is necessary to note the significant changes that occurred in 2015–2022 in this segment of the UK party system. First of all, we are talking about the Liberal Democrats, which appeared on the political landscape of the country in 1988 as a reaction of the party system to the public demand for the emergence of a new political organization, alternative to traditional forces, that would reflect less radical, more universal ideas. However, despite the fact that the party was quite firmly entrenched in this niche, after 2015 the Lib Dems lost its role as the largest third political force in the British Parliament. The first negative factor for her was her participation in 2010–2015 as a junior partner in the coalition government of D. Cameron. During this period, the Liberal Democrats were unable to implement virtually any significant and long-term point of their program, which was perceived extremely negatively by its supporters. The Lib Dems's negative attitude towards the country's exit from the EU, which contradicted the results of the 2016 plebiscite, only worsened the situation. As a result, the regional SNP became the third largest faction in the House of Commons of the British Parliament. The new leader of the Liberal Democrats, E. Davey, was forced to take measures to correct the negative trend for the party in order to return it to the status of some significant political force in Great Britain.

An important event was the appearance on the modern British political scene of the Reform the United Kingdom party, founded by the former leader of the UKIP N. Farage. If the UKIP put forward rather radical right-wing ideas and could only

count on a minor part of the electorate, including Eurosceptic Conservative supporters, then this new political force, whose program is much more moderate, can be considered a very promising competitor to the Tories.

In 2015–2022 regional political organizations began to play an important role among third and minor parties. They had a significant influence on shaping the political agenda in the United Kingdom. Their special role is largely due to the specifics of the British government. In recent decades, the unitary country has been actively practicing decentralization and transferring more and more powers to its historical provinces, in which the ideas of nationalism and separatism, which were promoted by the SNP in Scotland and Plaid Camry in Wales, are gaining increasing popularity. All this undoubtedly complicated the relationship between the center and these Celtic regions. Devolution, which began in the late 1990s, was supposed to smooth out these trends, allowing local authorities to realize the nationalist potential in the development of regional authorities, which were created in Scotland and Wales. However, in reality, Brexit and its consequences have led to an obvious strengthening of trends towards federalization in the United Kingdom. However, it was not linear.

In Scotland, during the period under review, the level of support for the idea of independence by the population was constantly changing, and rather towards an increase in the number of people opposing independence. However, in general, Scottish society is divided approximately in half on this issue, and the results of the polls are highly dependent on the current situation.

In Wales, although separatist sentiments were growing, they were still less pronounced than in Scotland. Given the geographical factor and the traditionally strong position of the Welsh Conservative Party in general parliamentary elections, the prospects of secession for the region are small. In this context, it is interesting to note the growing popularity of the Tories in Scotland, where throughout the period under review there were changes in the configuration of the party subsystem. This was especially evident following the results of the Holyrood elections in 2016 and the House of Commons elections in 2017. Despite all the difficulties associated with

Brexit, the Conservative Party managed to oust Labor and become the second party in the region after the SNP. The rise in popularity of the Conservative Party in the Celtic regions has indeed become an important trend. It seemed that Brexit, on the contrary, was supposed to undermine its position in those provinces where separatist ideas are strong, which was aggravated by the crisis in connection with leaving the EU.

In general, the two-party system in Great Britain fully reflects the nature of its political system and is historically objective. At the same time, third and minor parties, including regional ones, are an integral part of the country's existing party-political system. They play a special role in shaping the political agenda, influence the decision-making process in the country, and, depending on the circumstances, stabilize or, on the contrary, adjust the party system. Brexit, undoubtedly, has aggravated the existing contradictions between the center and the regions, as well as the economic situation in them, provoking an increase in centrifugal tendencies in the country.

Thus, the study, using the example of Brexit, demonstrates how a large-scale crisis, provoked by a number of external and internal factors, can affect the political situation in the country and the functioning of its party system. During the period under review, the issue of the United Kingdom leaving the EU dominated British political discourse.

The results of the 2016 referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the EU and the subsequent struggle over how the country should leave the European integration project provoked the most acute and longest political crisis in the last century. He, in turn, became a serious challenge to the British party and political system. It is important to note that all this happened against the backdrop of a return to the classic version of bipartisanship that occurred in 2015. In fact, we can talk about the emergence of a dilemma - will the traditional system be able to cope with a new dangerous challenge or will it once again undergo radical modernization.

In general, several factors became the main challenges for British bipartisanship during the period under review.

Firstly, the result of the referendum itself (votes “for” and “against” were distributed almost equally) provoked an intense inter-party political struggle on the issue of the country’s exit from the EU.

Secondly, the discussion about how to build new relations with European partners has become the cause of serious internal party contradictions and disagreements among both the Tories and Labor. The lack of unity in the ranks of the country's most massive political forces potentially threatened with serious splits and destabilization of the entire system. Let us draw attention to the fact that different visions of the process of the country’s exit from the European integration association passed through party lines, affecting both the two main parties and party groups within them. As a result, this resulted in the creation of a new political force - the “Independent Group for Change”, which, although it existed for less than a year, became an important phenomenon for that time.

Third, Brexit has opened a new window of opportunity for third and smaller parties in the UK, whose role has been steadily declining since 2015. In the context of a growing political crisis, they could act not only as forces of opposition pressure, generators of alternative ideas, dominant or significant players at the regional level, but also permanent or temporary allies of leading parties on a national scale. In 2017, for example, the Conservative Party was only able to form a Government thanks to a support agreement with the DUP.

Fourthly, the country’s politics were also influenced by the coronavirus pandemic. B. Johnson's actions during this period negated his successes in completing the process of the country's exit from the EU, which for several years was the cause of a serious domestic political crisis. However, the intensity of inter-party contradictions, on the contrary, has decreased. At the very beginning, in conditions of uncertainty, the pandemic created an existential danger to society. Under these conditions, the country's leading parties demonstrated greater rapprochement than when discussing issues related to Britain's exit from the EU in Parliament.

Fifthly, the economic problems faced by the country in the post-Covid period have shown the vulnerability of Britain and, in particular, its party system, given that the United Kingdom has found itself in a more dire situation compared to other leading economies in the world.

However, it was Brexit that became a real test of strength for Britain and its political elites, as it simultaneously affected a number of areas and areas of activity, both parties and other political and economic institutions of the country. In this context, it can be noted that Brexit has touched the very foundations of intra- and inter-party disagreements. This thesis seems all the more true because this crisis had deep historical roots and was in some sense unique.

Returning to the hysterical context, we can also state that the UK party system was characterized by the greatest turbulence during the reign of the coalition government from 2010 to 2015. For a country with a traditional two-party system, this was truly a great test. Due to the increased role of right-wing forces, the two main political parties were forced to respond to the changing demands of the population, as well as changes in the global economy and international relations. Labor was most in demand amid the growing share of white-collar workers at the beginning of the 21st century, offering the population a program that met the challenges of our time. However, they faced a decline in popularity during the economic crisis of 2007-2010, because they obviously could not cope with it. The Conservative Party fully and solely returned to power in 2015. The Tories succeeded in this largely thanks to the promise to hold a national referendum on Britain's membership in the EU. In this sense, Brexit has become a kind of product of the evolution of the country's party system. After a forced coalition with the Liberal Democrats, the Conservatives had to offer the electorate an idea that was relevant enough to strengthen their position.

Assessing the specifics of the functioning of the party-political system in Great Britain in 2015–2022 in general, it can be stated that, despite numerous and quite serious internal and external challenges, it has demonstrated its stability. Even the deepest political crisis caused by disputes over how to implement the United

Kingdom's exit from the EU could not reverse the country's post-2015 trend toward a return to traditional bipartisanship. In this context, we can conclude that despite the fact that Brexit, the coronavirus pandemic and modern socio-economic problems of 2015-2022. Although they were some of the most powerful challenges to the party-political system in recent British history, it proved resilient enough to survive them without revolutionary changes. Thus, we can conclude that, despite the acute crisis caused by Brexit, bipartisanship in Great Britain during the period under review not only survived, but also continued to strengthen.

As you know, on July 4, 2024, general parliamentary elections were held in Britain, the results of which are interesting to evaluate in the context of the study. As a result of the elections, the Labor Party led by K. Starmer won a landslide victory. The Conservatives had their worst showing in their history, winning just 23.7% of voter support and 121 seats in the House of Commons to Labour's 33.7% and 411 seats. ¹Such election results showed that Tory policies, primarily ignoring political traditions, as well as the general fatigue of the electorate from internal political chaos, led to an unprecedented decline in the popularity of the Conservative Party, including in the Celtic regions, in which the Tories lost the votes of almost their entire electorate.

However, the past elections are especially notable for the results of minor parties. The Reform the United Kingdom party received the support of 14.3% of voters (including almost half of the Conservative electorate in the center and north of England) and 5 seats in Parliament, surpassing even the UKIP in its most successful year, 2015. ² The party, as already noted, occupies a center-right position. She advocates strengthening Britain's sovereignty and tightening immigration laws³.

Against the backdrop of the growing popularity of the Reform the United Kingdom party, as well as the complete failure of the Tories in the Celtic regions,

¹Cracknell R., Baker C. General election 2024 results. [Electronic resource]. URL : <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10009/CBP-10009.pdf> (accessed: 18.07.2024).

²Ibid.

³Our Contract with You. Reform UK Manifesto. [Electronic resource]. URL : https://assets.nationbuilder.com/reformuk/pages/253/attachments/original/1718625371/Reform_UK_Our_Contract_with_You.pdf?1718625371 (accessed: 08.07.2024)

the Conservative Party will apparently have to once again reconsider its ideological guidelines and the specifics of working with voters.

However, the historical development of the party system in Britain involves a periodic transfer of power from one leading party to another, and the past elections showed that the two-party system has again demonstrated its stability. At the same time, the majoritarian electoral system has determined the distribution of seats in the House of Commons in such a way that the issue of maintaining the two-party system in its current form remains relevant. The growing popularity of the Lib Dems in swing districts in the future may once again revive the idea of a two-and-a-half party system.

Approbation of the thesis

- report at the seminar of the Higher Party School of the United Russia Party “Political Leader” on the topic: “Specifics of conducting an election campaign on the example of political parties in Great Britain” (Moscow, June 9, 2022);
- report at the international conference “Europe-Asia: Dialogue of Civilizations” on the topic: “The role of responsible political parties in the development of intercivilizational dialogue in the Greater Eurasia space” (Minsk, June 23, 2023).

List of the author’s publications relevant to the thesis

Nazaruk T.V. Transformation of the Role of Third and Minor Parties in the Political and Party System of Great Britain in 2010-2022 // *Contemporary Europe*. 2022. No. 5. pp. 195–209.

Kovalev I. G., Nazaruk T. V. The Main Trends in the Development of the UK Party-Political System after the 2019 General Parliamentary Elections // *Analysis and Forecasting*. IMEMO Journal. 2023. No. 1. pp. 76-86.

Nazaruk T.V. Specifics of the party-political system of Wales at the present stage // *Social Sciences and Contemporary World*. 2024. No. 2. pp. 134-147.